





# OMAN

## PRAYER TIMINGS



|                       |         |
|-----------------------|---------|
| Dhuhr .....           | 12:19pm |
| Asr .....             | 3:45pm  |
| Maghrib .....         | 6:24pm  |
| Isha .....            | 7:34pm  |
| Fajr (Tomorrow) ..... | 4:52am  |

# Oman joins world in preserving glaciers, global water resources

This year's theme reflects the growing challenges posed by climate change and glacier melting



*Times News Service*

**MUSCAT:** The Sultanate of Oman joined countries around the world in celebrating World Water Day under the theme “Preserving Glaciers,” observed annually on March 22.

Zaher bin Khalid Al Sulaimani,

Zaher bin Khalid Al Sulaimani,

Chairman of the Omani Water Association, emphasised the importance of safeguarding global water resources.

He highlighted that this year's theme reflects the growing challenges posed by climate change and glacier melting, which impact

the ecosystem.

He explained that glaciers act as natural reservoirs of freshwater, playing a vital role in feeding rivers and lakes and directly influencing global water security.

However, the accelerating melting of glaciers due to climate change

and rising temperatures threatens water supplies and increases the risks of natural disasters such as floods and sea-level rise.

Al-Sulaimani stressed that Oman, under the leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, accords significant attention to

environmental and water sustainability. The Sultanate supports international efforts to mitigate climate change effects and preserve water resources for the future generations.

The Omani Water Association continues to raise awareness about water sustainability, enhance scientific research in water management, and support national and international initiatives aimed at protecting natural resources.

Al-Sulaimani urged everyone to take responsibility for the environment and water conservation and contribute to efforts to combat climate change and preserve freshwater resources, ensuring a sustainable future for generations to come.

It is worth noting that World Water Day aims to draw attention to the importance of freshwater.

advocate for sustainable management of water resources, and encourage action to address the global water crisis in line with the sixth Sustainable Development Goal: water and sanitation for all by 2030.

The world's glaciers continue to vanish at an alarming rate, with five of the past six years witnessing the most rapid retreat on record, the first-ever World Day for Glaciers, observed on Friday, serves as a stark reminder of the crisis.

Between 2022 and 2024, glaciers suffered their largest three-year mass loss ever, raising concerns about water shortages, rising sea levels, and increasing natural disasters, according to a new report by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the World Glacier Monitoring Service (WGMS). —Agencies



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# Financial sustainability will be a challenge for Indian schools in remote areas: Dr. Sivakumar

With over 30 years in the education field, the outgoing Indian Schools Board chairman speaks to *Times of Oman* on various subjects during an interview

Times News Service

**MUSCAT:** In a candid conversation, Dr. Sivakumar Manickam, the outgoing Chairman of the Board of Directors of Indian Schools in Oman, reflects on his leadership journey over the past few years.

A passionate advocate for academic excellence and the growth of the education sector, Dr. Manickam's leadership has shaped the Indian School system in Oman over the past four years, navigating significant challenges while pioneering initiatives that continue to impact the community.

With over 30 years in education, his focus on fostering quality learning environments and providing accessible education remains a hallmark of his career.

He shares his perspectives on the future of Indian Schools, the role of technology in education, and the impact of community-driven schools on the Indian diaspora in Oman.



Here are excerpts from the conversation:

**Q: What were the key priorities when you first assumed the role of chairman, and how have they evolved over your tenure?**

A: When I took over as chairman in April 2021, Indian Schools in Oman were still grappling with the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. The immediate priority was to address the academic disruptions and the financial challenges schools and families faced. We were fortunate to have the Indian Schools Virtual Learning Environment (ISOVLE) already in place, which allowed us to swiftly transition to online learning and minimise academic losses.

Simultaneously, we worked

with our stakeholders to ease the financial burden on families by offering flexible fee payment plans, recognising the difficulties many were experiencing. Throughout my tenure, the focus was always on improving the quality of education while making it accessible to the largest number of students, regardless of their background or financial capacity.

At the time of my takeover, the Indian Schools were already a major force in the region's educational landscape, catering to over 47,000 students across 22 schools in Oman.

This success, I believe, is a result of the collective efforts of many - teachers, parents, and the community - who have worked tirelessly to provide an inclusive and afford-

able education for every child. We owe a great deal to the wisdom of the late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Said, whose vision for the educational sector laid the foundation for these institutions, and to His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik for continuing to uphold this legacy. Together with the Ministry of Education in Oman and the Embassy of India, we've been able to navigate challenges, particularly those brought about by the pandemic, and continue to offer high-quality education.

**Q: What are the most significant achievements of the board under your leadership?**

A: During my time as chairman, the board launched several key initiatives designed to

foster collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking - skills essential for the 21st century. Programmes such as the Indian Schools Talent Fest (ISTF), Indian Schools Film Fest (ISFF), and Mon Avis have become vital platforms for our students to showcase their talents and broaden their horizons.

We also prioritised technological advancements, with ISOVLE enabling Indian Schools to integrate digital learning long before the pandemic, and capacity-building workshops for teachers to enhance their teaching skills. Additionally, our Psychometric Assessments for Career Path Selection have supported over 10,000 students in making informed decisions about their futures.

**Q: What challenges did you face as chairman, and how did you navigate them?**

A: One of the most significant challenges was addressing the diverse needs of the Indian community in Oman, which spans a wide spectrum of economic backgrounds. To overcome this, we worked closely with school management committees to ensure that every child's educational needs were met, regardless of the school's size or location.

We also faced the task of providing quality education in remote areas, which led to the establishment of Indian School Dugm, the 22nd community school. This school now serves children from diverse nationalities, reinforcing our commitment to providing equitable education across Oman.

**Q: What lessons have you learned about effective governance in an educational institution?**

A: Effective governance in edu-

cation requires a collaborative approach. Engaging all stakeholders - teachers, students, parents, and the wider community - helps in building a shared vision and maintaining transparency. It's crucial to adapt to changing circumstances, whether due to technological advances, policy shifts, or emerging educational needs. Ultimately, the key is data-driven decision-making, ensuring that actions are based on evidence and lead to measurable improvements.

**Q: What do you see as the biggest challenges facing the school(s) in the coming years?**

A: The biggest challenges ahead will be embracing technological changes while ensuring that students from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds have equal access to these advancements. Additionally, fostering inclusivity will remain critical as schools work to accommodate students with varying needs and abilities. Financial sustainability will also be an ongoing challenge, especially for schools in remote areas with limited resources.

Lastly, we must continue to prioritise the mental health and well-being of students, ensuring that schools provide a supportive environment where students can thrive academically and emotionally.

**Q: What's next for you after stepping down from this role?**

A: I look forward to continuing my journey in academic leadership, focusing on research and contributing to higher education, particularly in the field of educational technology. I am committed to sharing my experiences and knowledge to support the growth of educational systems and to help shape the future of learning.

## MINISTRY OF ENERGY AND MINERALS

# Focus on raising production capacity

**<FROM A1** In a statement to the Oman News Agency, he said that these include Block 18 in the Sea of Oman, Block 36, Block 43, and Block 66 onshore. He further added that a number of companies operating in the exploration, drilling, and development of the energy sector have expressed keen interest in competing for these blocks.

He added that the application period for these areas will be until June, after which negotiations will begin with the selected



companies.

He explained that the Ministry of Energy and Minerals is focusing

tating the development process, not only in new exploration areas but also in older producing fields that are currently facing production hurdles.

He further elaborated that has added three key incentives to attract bidders. These include the use of the royalty system to facilitate commercial activity, the inclusion of OQ B as an optional partner in this regard, and the possibility of utilising the produced gas in direct manufacturing or integrated projects.

- ONA

## NIZWA

# Event organised to promote tolerance

**NIZWA:** The Directorate of Endowments and Religious Affairs in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate organised the third edition of the "Nizwa Acquaintance" event in the Wilayat of Nizwa.

The event comes as part of its efforts to promote the values of religious tolerance and coexistence, and to introduce the Islamic values that characterise Omani society, targeting non-Muslim residents of the

governorate.

Saad bin Sulaiman Al Kindi, Head of the Department of Introduction to Islam and Cultural Exchange at the Department of Endowments and Religious Affairs in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, emphasised that this event reflects Islamic principles calling for peaceful coexistence and highlights the true image of Islam, which is based on mercy and tolerance. -ONA

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» WORDS OF WISDOM

FAITH AND CONSEQUENCE:  
WHEN FALSE IDEALS LEAD TO RUIN



We did not wrong them; it is rather they who wronged themselves. And when the command of your Lord came to pass, the gods besides Allah whom they had called upon, did not avail them in the least. They added nothing to them except ruin. (Quran 11:101)

» IFTAR RECIPE Naseera Noushad

2 PERI PERI CHEESY BREAD CUP



INGREDIENTS

- Oil - 4-5 tbsp
- Green chili - 3 tbsp
- Finely chopped ginger - 1 tbsp
- Finely chopped garlic - 1 tbsp
- Chopped onion - 2.5 cups
- Bell peppers - 1 cup
- Coriander leaves - 1/2 cup
- Peri peri powder - 1.5 tbsp
- Salt - as per taste
- Mayonnaise - 1/4 cup
- Grated mozzarella cheese - 1.5 cups
- Milk - 5 tbsp
- Bread slices - as needed
- Oil - for deep frying
- Maida - 4 tbsp
- Water - 1/2 cup
- Bread crumbs - as needed
- Chopped coriander leaves - as needed

METHOD

- Heat oil in a pan. Add green chili, chopped ginger, and

garlic. Sauté until aromatic.

- Add chopped onions and cook until translucent.

- Add bell peppers, coriander leaves, peri peri powder, and salt. Sauté well.

- Stir in mayonnaise, mozzarella cheese, and milk. Mix until creamy and set aside.

• Make the Bread cup

- Flatten bread slices and shape them into small cups using a mold or hand.

- Dip each cup in the maida slurry, then coat with breadcrumbs.

- Deep fry until golden brown and crisp.

• Assemble:

- Fill each bread box with the prepared peri peri cheesy mixture.

- Garnish with chopped coriander leaves and serve hot.

» GOOD DEEDS

THE POWER OF GIVING: HOW  
RAMADAN STRENGTHENS  
COMMUNITY AND CHARITY

Ramadan, the holy month of fasting, prayer, and reflection, is also a time of immense generosity and social solidarity. It is a period when communities come together to support those in need, reinforcing the values of compassion, kindness, and selflessness. Central to this spirit of giving is Zakat, the obligatory charity in Islam, alongside Sadaqah, voluntary charity. These acts of giving not only uplift individuals in need but also strengthen the bonds within society, ensuring that the spirit of Ramadan extends beyond personal devotion to collective welfare.

THE ESSENCE OF GIVING  
IN RAMADAN

Ramadan is not only about refraining from food and drink during the day but also about developing a heightened sense of empathy and gratitude. Fasting allows individuals to experience hunger and discomfort, creating a deep sense of awareness of the struggles faced by the less fortunate. This experience naturally cultivates a spirit of giving, prompting people to engage in acts of charity and community service. Charity in Ramadan is considered especially rewarding. Muslims believe that the rewards of good deeds are multiplied during this sacred month, making it an opportune time to give generously. Many people make it a priority to give Zakat during Ramadan, ensuring that their wealth benefits those in need at a time when it is most impactful.

ZAKAT: A PILLAR OF  
ISLAM THAT UPLIFTS  
COMMUNITIES

Zakat, one of the five pillars of Islam, is a mandatory form of charity that requires Muslims to give a portion of their wealth—typically 2.5% of their savings—to those in need. It is not merely an act of generosity but an obligation designed to promote social justice and economic balance. By redistributing wealth, Zakat helps reduce poverty, support the underprivileged, and ensure that wealth circulates within the community rather than remaining concentrated among the few.

During Ramadan, many people choose to fulfill their Zakat obligation, knowing that their contribution can help alleviate



the suffering of those who struggle to afford basic necessities such as food, clothing, shelter, and healthcare. The beneficiaries of Zakat typically include:

- The poor and needy
- Orphans and widows
- Refugees and displaced individuals
- Those burdened by debt
- Students and scholars lacking financial support
- People who have converted to Islam and require assistance
- Humanitarian efforts such as disaster relief and medical aid

By fulfilling their Zakat duty, Muslims actively contribute to poverty alleviation and economic stability, ensuring that no member of society is left behind.

SADAQAH: VOLUNTARY  
GIVING THAT  
TRANSFORMS LIVES

While Zakat is a structured form of charity, Sadaqah is voluntary and can be given at any time in any amount. Sadaqah can take many forms beyond financial assistance, including providing food for the hungry, helping build schools and mosques, supporting medical treatment, or even simple acts of kindness such as offering a smile or words of encouragement.

During Ramadan, Sadaqah takes on even greater significance. Many people prepare and distribute iftar meals (the evening meal to break the fast) for the poor and underprivi-

leged, ensuring that no one goes hungry. Mosques, community centers, and charitable organizations arrange mass iftar gatherings, welcoming people of all backgrounds to share in the blessings of Ramadan. In addition, many engage in Sadaqah Jariyah, a form of ongoing charity that provides long-term benefits, such as building wells for clean drinking water, funding education programs, or establishing sustainable businesses for struggling families. These initiatives create lasting social impact and continue to benefit communities even after Ramadan ends.

COMMUNITY SERVICE:  
STRENGTHENING BONDS  
AND CREATING CHANGE

Beyond financial contributions, Ramadan is also a time for volunteering and community service. People dedicate their time and effort to supporting those in need in various ways, such as:

- Feeding the Hungry: Many individuals and organisations organise food drives, distributing essential groceries to low-income families, refugees, and the homeless.
- Supporting Orphans and the Elderly: Visiting orphanages and elderly care homes becomes a common practice, as people offer companionship, gifts, and emotional support to those who may feel lonely.
- Medical Assistance: Doctors and healthcare profession-

als often provide free medical check-ups, medicines, and treatments to those who cannot afford healthcare.

• Clothing and Shelter Drives: Ramadan inspires initiatives to provide warm clothing, shoes, and shelter for the underprivileged, especially in areas affected by war, conflict, or natural disasters.

These acts of service build stronger, more compassionate communities where individuals look out for one another. They also remind people that Ramadan is not just about personal spiritual growth but about uplifting those around them.

THE RIPPLE EFFECT  
OF GENEROSITY

The charitable actions taken during Ramadan create a ripple effect that extends beyond the holy month. When individuals witness acts of kindness, they are inspired to give more, help more, and do more. This culture of generosity fosters unity and social harmony, creating a society that values compassion and mutual support.

Furthermore, the principles of Zakat, Sadaqah, and community service teach valuable lessons about wealth, responsibility, and empathy. They encourage people to see their financial and social privileges as tools for making a difference rather than merely personal gain. This shift in mindset ensures that the legacy of Ramadan's generosity continues throughout the year.

A MONTH OF GIVING,  
A LIFETIME OF IMPACT

Ramadan is a time of deep reflection, gratitude, and generosity. Through Zakat, Sadaqah, and community service, Muslims strengthen their bond with God while simultaneously improving the lives of those around them. The collective impact of these charitable acts reduces inequality, fosters social cohesion, and uplifts communities.

As Ramadan reminds us, true success is not measured by how much wealth one accumulates but by how much one gives to uplift others. By embracing the power of giving, individuals can transform lives—not only during this holy month but throughout the year, ensuring that the values of compassion, kindness, and generosity remain at the heart of society.

Contributed by Bhavna Batra

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NOWRUZ

HM sends greetings to Iran

**MUSCAT:** His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of congratulations to President Masoud Pezeshkian of the Islamic Republic of Iran on the occasion of the Iranian New Year (Nowruz). In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere greetings and wishes to the president and his country's people further progress and prosperity.

ONA

FIREWORKS

Two arrested for smuggling

**MUSCAT:** The Police Command of North Al Sharqiyah Governorate has apprehended two individuals for possessing fireworks with the intent to sell them illegally. The suspects had smuggled and stored the fireworks in a commercial unit in the Wilayat of Sinaw, posing a significant risk to the safety of the premises and people in the area. — *Times News Service*

Omani ports' contribution to trade tops OMR16bn

Omani ports last year witnessed a remarkable increase in terms of handling goods worth over OMR137 million tonnes, an increase of 15% compared to 119 million tonnes in 2023

Times News Service

**MUSCAT:** Seaports of the Sultanate of Oman has led the trading activity accounting for nearly OMR16.5 billion, or 77 percent of the total trade volume in 2024, according to Mohanna bin Musa bin Baqer, Director General of Ports at



the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology. Muhanna bin Moosa bin Baqer, Director General of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, said that the Omani ports play a vital role in exchange of trade between Oman and other countries and are considered one of the sectors supportive economic diversification.

The Omani ports have coped with the qualitative shift in the regional and international trade by being at the centre of the world shipping lines.

Handling goods

He said that the Omani ports last year witnessed a remarkable increase in terms of handling goods worth over OMR137 million tonnes, an increase of 15% com-



pared to 119 million tonnes in 2023. Handling liquid goods at Sohar Port increased by 72 percent while the goods handled at the ports of Salalah and Al Suwaiq increased by 10 percent each, he said, adding that the goods of all types handed at Duqm Port increased by 152 percent, which reflects the development of operations and the increase in the demand for the integrated services of the port. The number of ships anchored at the Omani ports during 2024, increased by 1.5% to over 12,000 with 4.2 million containers handled by the ports of Salalah and Sohar where 3.3 million containers were handled at Salalah port and over 942,000 containers handled at Sohar port. On the marine tourism, he said that in 2024, the ports of Sultan Qaboos, Khasab and Salalah received 114 tourist vessels carrying over 416, 000 tourists.

Mega ships

On the expansion and development of the ports and services, he said that the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology signed last year a concession agreement with "Asyad Ports Company" for the development, management and operation of Al Suwaiq Port to enable the port receive mega ships and handle all types of goods. The ministry has completed the project on development and expansion of the container terminal at Salalah Port which is project to increase the capacity to 6.5 million containers, he added.

23<sup>rd</sup> March

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Advertisement No. 6/2025

Muscat Municipality invites interested companies to the following bidding

| Sl No. | Bidding No.      | Bidding description                                                                                                       | Document fee | Deadline for obtaining bidding docs. | Deadline for Inquires submission | Deadline for submission |
|--------|------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1      | 12/2024 ReTender | Design, construct and operate slaughter house in plot no. (185) at Quriyat                                                | R.O. 790     | 08/4/2025                            | 10/4/2025                        | 28/4/2025               |
| 2      | 14/2024 ReTender | Manage and operate service building in Fins Rest area at Quriyat                                                          | R.O. 25      | 08/4/2025                            | 10/4/2025                        | 28/4/2025               |
| 3      | 1/2024           | Manage and operate cafe in plot no. (1023) at Al Qurum, with an area of 630 m².                                           | R.O. 25      | 08/4/2025                            | 10/4/2025                        | 28/4/2025               |
| 4      | 2/2024           | Manage and operate of two (2) kiosks on plot No.(651) in Bausher Heights, Wilayat Bausher, with an area of 12m² per kiosk | R.O. 25      | 08/4/2025                            | 10/4/2025                        | 28/4/2025               |
| 5      | 3/2024           | Manage and operate cafe in plot no. (1023) in Sur Al-Hadid at Al Seeb, with an area of 97m².                              | R.O. 25      | 08/4/2025                            | 10/4/2025                        | 28/4/2025               |
| 6      | 4/2024           | Selling of used spare parts, oil drums and used (Oils, Batteries and Tires)                                               | R.O. 25      | 08/4/2025                            | 10/4/2025                        | 28/4/2025               |

Registered companies with Muscat Municipality which are Specialized in above bids are invited to participate as per the following procedures:

1. Company registration with Muscat Municipality must be valid to obtain the bid document.

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4. The tender document will be provided to the company via email.

5. 2:00 PM on the above mentioned dates, is the last timing for obtaining Bidding Documents.

6. Documents must be enclosed in a plain closed envelope (without any company information) and place in the box located in building (A) in Muscat Municipality, Head Office, Darsait.

NOTES:

1. Companies which are not registered in Muscat Municipality or their registration has been expired shall register through the municipality's website ([www.mm.gov.om](http://www.mm.gov.om)).

2. For technical support, please contact Muscat Municipality through this email ([crm@mm.gov.om](mailto:crm@mm.gov.om)).

3. If the bidders have any inquiries regarding the scope of the work, they have to sent their inquiries through the following e-mail ([mais.h.alnofli@mm.gov.om](mailto:mais.h.alnofli@mm.gov.om))

4. 10:00 AM on the above submission mentioned dates, is the last timing for receiving bids. Offers submitted after the above mentioned date & time shall not be accepted for any reason.

5. Muscat Municipality has the right to accept or reject any offer without assigning any reason.

Website: [www.mm.gov.om](http://www.mm.gov.om)

HAZARDOUS WASTE

Agreement signed with be'ah for healthcare waste management

**MUSCAT:** Oman Environmental Services Holding Company (be'ah) signed an agreement with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources to provide services of healthcare waste collection, transport and treatment. The agreement deals with the management of waste generated by government veterinary clinics affiliated with the ministry. The agreement reflects efforts to enhance environmental sustainability and ensure the safe and sound management of this type of hazardous waste. The agreement was signed by Dr. Ahmed Nasser Al Bakri, Un-



dersecretary for Agriculture at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, and Jassim Mohammed Al Wahaibi, General Manager of Healthcare Waste Management at be'ah. -ONA

FOOD WASTAGE

Awareness drive

**MUSCAT:** Muscat Governorate has launched a multilingual awareness campaign entitled "Take Just What You Need" to raise awareness about preserving food and reducing food waste. This campaign aims to address the issue of food waste by encouraging people to buy or prepare only the amount of food they need, thereby reducing the excess that goes to landfill.

Printed and published by:  
**Muscat Media Group**  
Post Box: 770,  
Postal Code: 112

Founder: Essa bin Mohammed Al Zedjali  
Chairman / Editor-in-Chief: Mohamed Issa Al Zadjali  
Deputy Editor-in-Chief: Anees bin Essa Al Zedjali  
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**ADVERTISING:** Telephone: 24726666, Fax: 24812624, E-mail: advertising@timesofoman.com  
**CIRCULATION:** Telephone: 24726666, Fax: 24818270, E-mail: circulation@timesofoman.com

80TH ANNIVERSARY

Oman advocates dialogue and peaceful solution to conflicts

Times News Service

**MUSCAT:** The Sultanate of Oman joins its Arab counterparts in celebrating the 80th anniversary of the founding of the Arab League, reaffirming its continued support to the organisation since joining in 1971. Oman remains committed to fostering joint Arab action and strengthening the principles of Arab solidarity and regional stability to achieve the aspirations of the Arab nations for progress, development, and prosperity. Abdullah bin Nasser Al-Rahbi, Oman's Ambassador to Egypt and its Permanent Representative to the Arab League, emphasised Oman's belief in the importance of the Arab League as a unifying framework for Arab states. He highlighted Oman's dedication to supporting the League's role and enhancing its mechanisms to better address regional and international challenges. Al-Rahbi stressed that Oman plays a pivotal role in various issues within the Arab League, whether political, economic, or cultural. Oman has consistently been a voice advocating dialogue and peaceful solutions, contributing to bridging differences between Arab nations on contentious issues. Its active participation in the League's committees reflects its commitment to advancing joint Arab work. Al-Rahbi underlined that experiences have shown the importance of achieving consensus on policies and strategies that serve national interests without harming collective Arab interests, and vice versa. Such consensus, he said, would undoubtedly be an effective tool



for addressing current challenges, whether political or economic. In an era of interconnected global challenges, he noted the need to update the Arab League's mechanisms both substantively and procedurally. A committee is working on a document to develop the framework for joint Arab action, aiming to refine ideas and elevate the League's operations. Al-Rahbi emphasised the priority of integrating digital technologies to accelerate communication, co-operation, decision-making, and monitoring, particularly in economic and social domains. He also advocated for adopting a mediation system to resolve disputes in a manner that upholds mutual interests, focusing on the concept of "consensus" and promoting executable ideas and initiatives without creating additional bureaucratic structures. Regarding economic integration, Sheikh Faisal bin Omar Al-Marhoon, Head of the Arab Affairs Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, underscored the importance of promoting joint economic projects such as the Greater Arab Free Trade Area, electrical connectivity, food secu-

riety, and maritime and land transport. These strategic initiatives, he explained, would connect markets, facilitate investment exchanges, and foster comprehensive development and economic stability across member states. They would also ease the movement of people, industries, and products while leveraging the complementary cultural and tourism resources of Arab countries. Sheikh Faisal emphasised the adoption of diplomatic and economic initiatives to strengthen the region's significance in the global economy. The Arab region, he said, represents a significant human and geographical force that could be classified as a major economic bloc if its member states achieve integration. Oman has attended all Arab summits since the Algiers Summit in 1973, up to the recent extraordinary Arab Summit in Cairo in March 2025. Oman prioritises Arab unity in its foreign policy and views coordination and consultation among Arab countries as indispensable for achieving solidarity and addressing international changes and challenges. This approach, he affirmed, is deeply rooted in Omani policy, as reflected in the speech of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on January 11, 2020, in which His Majesty declared: "On the Arab front, we will continue to support the Arab League, work with our brothers, the leaders of Arab countries, to achieve the goals of the Arab League, elevate the lives of our citizens, distance this region from conflicts and disputes, and work towards achieving economic integration that serves the aspirations of Arab nations."

MARCH 23  
PAKISTAN DAY

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**Ramadan Iftar Program**

The Prophet (ﷺ) said "Whoever breaks the fast for a fasting person, will have a reward similar to his reward, however, nothing is detracted from the reward of a fasting person".

The Oman Charitable Organization is pleased to announce that it will receive donations for Ramadan Iftar Program in Sultanate of Oman for the year 1446 AH AD 2025

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Ministry of Health

**NOTICE**

**(Auction No.1/2025)**

**The Ministry of Health would like to invite Renting of Cafeteria in the central laboratory in Al-Khoud area in Muscat Governorate Bidding is for medium and small enterprises and Riyada cardholders.**

Interested Companies and establishments may collect the documents and specifications of this Auction from the Directorate of Purchase & Tenders at General Directorate of Financial Affairs at Ministry's Headquarters in Al Khuwair.

- The fee for the documents is 10 R.O and can be collected during official working hours (8:30 AM - 12:30 PM) until **Thursday, March 27, 2025**, when purchasing the bidding documents; they must bring proof that the company is registered with the Tender Board of the category of medium and small companies (SME) or holders of a valid Riyada card.
- The offers must be enclosed in sealed envelopes duly signed and stamped in the original form shall be addressed to **H.E. The Chairperson of the Tender Committee**, clearly stating the title: "Auction No.1/2025" for Renting of Cafeteria in the central laboratory in Al-Khoud area in Muscat Governorate.
- The offers must be valid for 90 days. Envelopes shall not bear any sign that refers to bidder's name or identity.
- The Offers shall be deposited at the Purchase and Tender Department in Directorate of Financial Affairs by **10: 00 am on Wednesday, April 23, 2025**.
- Offers submitted after the deadline will not be considered.
- The Ministry reserves the right to reject any bids without providing reasons.



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SPORTS

# Jaber hails Oman’s resilience after stunning draw against South Korea

Red Warriors keep their hopes alive for a place in the fourth round and next play hosts Kuwait in Group B on Tuesday

Times News Service

**MUSCAT:** Oman head coach Rasheed Jaber expressed his immense pride in his players after they secured a stunning 1-1 draw against powerhouse South Korea in their AFC Asian Qualifiers – Road to 26 Group B clash at Goyang Stadium in Goyanag, South Korea, on Thursday.

Ali Al Busaidi's late equaliser ensured Oman left Korea with a valuable point, keeping their hopes of qualification alive in a challenging group. While the result was a setback for the hosts, for Oman, it was a moment of triumph and a testament to their growing strength under Jaber's leadership.

"It was a very tough match. We knew we were up against one of the strongest teams in Asia, a team with players who can change the game at any moment," Jaber said after the match.

"But we stayed focused, disciplined, and never gave up. That is the character of this team."

South Korea, led by captain Son Heung-min, took the lead in the 41st minute through Hwang Hee Chan, and for much of the match, it seemed like they would walk away with all three points.

However, Oman remained resilient, striking back in the 80th minute through Al Busaidi, who fired home a powerful shot after a well-worked move.

Jaber praised his players for their determination, noting that such performances reflect the hard work put in during training.

"We knew what to expect. South



Korea are an exceptional team, and taking a point here is never easy. But we believed in ourselves. Even after conceding, we remained confident, and that belief paid off," he said.

On the tactical approach, Jaber highlighted Oman's disciplined defensive setup. "We had a plan to stay compact, frustrate their attack, and then find our chances. In the first half, they capitalised on a mistake, but in the second half, we played with more confidence and took our opportunity when it came."

For Oman, the result signals a hope. Jaber, who has been instru-

mental in shaping the team's identity, sees this as another step in the right direction. "A point against a team like South Korea, in their home stadium, speaks volumes about our progress. We still have a long way to go, but this shows that Oman is ready to compete at the highest level."

With the draw, South Korea remain top of Group B with 14 points, while Oman stay in contention with a crucial match against Kuwait coming up on Tuesday in Kuwait.

Jaber believes that the team

must build on this result. "This is just the beginning. We have to take this energy into our next matches. The road to qualification is not easy, but we have shown that we belong here."

As Oman prepare to face hosts Kuwait, Jaber remains optimistic of securing a spot in the fourth round. "Every game is a new challenge. But if we play with this same spirit and determination, I believe we can continue to achieve great things."

The top two teams in the group at this stage, South Korea (14

points) and Jordan (12 points), are set to secure direct qualification for the 2026 World Cup, while the next two at this stage, Iraq (12 points) and Oman (7 points), will progress to the fourth round.

Kuwait currently sit in fifth place with five points, while Palestine occupy the bottom spot with three points.

The teams finishing third in each of the three groups in the third round will advance to the fourth round, where they will be divided into two groups.

The winners of these groups will

also secure a spot in the 2026 FIFA World Cup, while the second-placed teams from each group will face off in a two-legged play-off in November 2025 to determine which team will move on to the inter-confederation play-offs.

Japan became the first team from Asia to qualify for the 2026 FIFA World Cup on Thursday from Group C with 19 points.

Following Tuesday's match, Oman will host Jordan on June 5 before concluding their campaign with an away fixture against Palestine.

PATTAYA IS THE HOST VENUE

## Oman thrash Vietnam 7-1 in AFC Beach Soccer Asian Cup opener



Times News Service

**MUSCAT:** Former Asian champions Oman, under coach Talib Hilal, delivered a commanding performance in their opening match of the AFC Beach Soccer Asian Cup Thailand 2025, drubbing Vietnam 7-1 in Pattaya, Thailand, on Friday.

With this impressive win, Oman will look to maintain their momentum when they face Malaysia next on Sunday in Group D, while Vietnam aims to regroup and bounce back against Bahrain on Sunday. Bahrain beat Malaysia 4-3 in another pool match.

It took Oman less than ten seconds to break the deadlock, as Abdullah Masoud Salim opened the scoring.

Salim controlled Khalid Khamis Al Oraiimi's overhead cross, evading two Vietnam defenders before placing the ball into the bottom right corner past goalkeeper Nguyen Anh Quang.

The West Asians doubled their lead just six minutes later through a well-taken penalty by Sami Fail Al Balushi, which sailed past Quang and into the back of the net.

Oman continued to press forward, with Salim coming close to scoring his second in the 10th

minute, but his shot struck the woodwork.

Vietnam's best chance of the first period came in the final moments when Quang's long-range effort was denied by the crossbar.

The second period saw Oman extend their advantage further, with Mushel Hilal Al Araiimi's stunning long-range strike finding the net to make it 3-0. Vietnam, under coach Van Duc, struggled to break through Oman's resolute defence.

The Abdullah-Al Oraiimi combination remained a constant threat. Moments later, Abdullah scored his second goal of the game, con-

verting from Al Oraiimi's precise corner kick to put Oman firmly in control.

Vietnam showed some signs of life in the third period when Phan Dat headed in a goal from Ho Quoc Hung's well-delivered corner kick, reducing the deficit to 4-1. However, Oman quickly regained their dominance.

With six minutes remaining, Ahmed Rabi'a Al Owaisi converted a penalty to give Oman their fifth goal. The final minutes were a flurry of action as Musallam Mahfoodh Al Araiimi netted twice in quick succession, sealing a comprehensive 7-1 victory for Oman.

TWO-TIME WORLD CHAMPION

## Heavyweight boxing legend George Foreman dies aged 76



**HOUSTON:** George Foreman, the two-time world heavyweight champion and Olympic gold medalist, who returned to the sport to regain his title at the improbable age of 45, and who parlayed his fame and his amiable personality into a multimillion-dollar grill business, died on Friday night in Houston. He was 76.

Known as "Big George," Foreman built one of the most remarkable and enduring careers in boxing, later transforming himself into a successful entrepreneur and beloved public figure.

Foreman first made his mark on the global stage by winning the heavyweight gold medal at the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City. He turned professional soon after, embarking on a dominant streak that saw him win 37 consecutive fights. In 1973, he cemented his place among boxing's greats by defeating the undefeated Joe Frazier in Kingston, Jamaica, knocking him down six times in the first two rounds to claim the world heavyweight title.

A year later, Foreman's reign was halted in one of the most iconic bouts in boxing history - the 1974 "Rumble in the Jungle" against Muhammad Ali in Kinshasa, Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of the Congo). Despite being the favourite, Foreman was outmaneuvered by Ali's 'rope-a-dope' strategy and was knocked out in the eighth round. That fight became legendary, not just for its outcome, but for its place

in sports and cultural history.

Following another loss, Foreman retired in 1977. He remained out of the ring for a decade before making a stunning comeback in the late 1980s. In 1994, at the age of 45, Foreman reclaimed the heavyweight title with a knockout victory over Michael Moorer, becoming the oldest heavyweight champion in history. His return was not just a sporting triumph but a testament to perseverance and reinvention.

Tributes poured in from across the sporting world. Former heavyweight champion Mike Tyson hailed Foreman's influence, saying, "His contribution to boxing and beyond will never be forgotten." *The Ring* magazine, often referred to as the "Bible of Boxing," described him as "one of the greatest heavyweights of all time."

Born on January 10, 1949, in Marshall, Texas, Foreman grew up in the segregated American South, raised by his single mother along with six siblings. A troubled youth, he dropped out of school and turned to street crime before discovering boxing - a turning point that reshaped his destiny.

Foreman retired from boxing for good in 1997, finishing with a record of 76 wins, including 68 knockouts, and only five losses.

Reflecting on his historic defeat to Ali decades later, Foreman once said, "It was the best thing that ever happened to me," crediting it as a moment that led him to his greater purpose in life. - Agencies

CHANNEL PARTNER MEET

Hikvision Oman, the world's leading digital security solutions providers of CCTV cameras and others security solutions, Ezviz and GPT group jointly hosted their highly anticipated Channel Partner Meet recently at Movenpick hotel, Ghala.

MARKET  
BUSINESS & FINANCE



AHLI ISLAMIC MONEY MARKET

As part of its commitment to achieving significant milestones in the Islamic banking sector, the ahli islamic Money Market Fund has announced that its managed assets have surpassed the OMR50 million mark, just one year after its launch.



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# Net profits of MSX-listed firms soar 52.6% to OMR1.34 billion

The total number of Muscat Stock Exchange companies that reported profits last year was 69, compared to 68 companies that reported profits in 2023, according to data compiled by the Oman News Agency based on the preliminary financial results of 90 public joint-stock companies whose fiscal year ended last December



mance, with some moving from losses to profits.

Statistics compiled by the Oman News Agency based on the preliminary financial results of approximately 90 public joint-stock companies whose fiscal year ended last December revealed improved performance for most companies in the banking, industrial, investment, service, and telecommunications sectors.

The total number of companies that reported profits last year was 69, compared to 68 companies that reported profits in 2023, excluding the financial results of funds and companies that were not listed on the stock exchange during 2023.

OQ Exploration and Production (OQEP) topped the list of companies with the highest net profits, at OMR326.5 million. Bank Muscat reported profits of OMR225.5 million, while Bank Sohar International profit was OMR100.2

million. Omantel registered net profits of OMR69.4 million, National Bank of Oman (NBO) reported net profits of approximately OMR63.1 million.

OQ Gas Networks net profit was OMR47.8 million, Bank Dhofar net profit was 43.6 million, while Ahli Bank reported a net profit of OMR 41.6 million. Ominvest reported net profits of approximately OMR35.9 million, while Oman Arab Bank (OAB) reported net profits of OMR30.4 million.

Preliminary data showed that losses recorded by public joint-stock companies decreased last year to approximately OMR38.1 million, compared to losses of OMR50.6 million in 2023. However, the number of companies that recorded losses last year increased to 21, compared to 20 companies that recorded losses in 2023.

Last year, five companies turned from losses to profits, most notably

## MSX rises by 0.53% in weekly trading

Times News Service

**MUSCAT:** The Omani stock market showed positive performance during the week with a gain of 0.53%, breaking its streak of successive weekly losses after reaching an important support level dating back to November 2022, according to an industry watcher..

“Meanwhile, the Omani stock market has experienced some challenges, having lost some ground since the beginning of the year. The market rebounded thanks to a substantial increase in trading activity, with both the volume and value of traded shares surging by more than 100%,” said Abdullah Mahfoodh Al Wahaibi, Coach and analyst in global financial markets.

The week’s market reaction occurred against a backdrop of generally negative market sentiment, with several factors at play. Geopolitical tensions and global economic uncertainty continue to increase, exacerbated by the weight of tariff risks on investor confidence. “However, some positive elements



provided limited support, including stabilizing oil prices. The latter saw small gains this week although they remain at relatively low level,” he further added.

Like other regional markets, the Oman stock market might require new catalysts and reduced external pressures to establish sustainable support for a meaningful rebound. Oil prices, while traditionally a strong driver for regional economies, continue to see an

uncertain outlook and could limit the stock market’s ability to recover.

All sectors in the Omani stock market demonstrated positive performance this week. The Industrial sector led the gains with a 0.69% increase, with notable performers including Oman Cement rising 6.19%, Oman Cables Industry advancing 6.67%, and Voltamp Energy climbing 6.45%. These industrial companies showed particularly strong momentum among the broader market gains.

The Financial sector posted modest but positive growth, rising by 0.32% overall. Bank Muscat and Sohar International Bank emerged as the most actively traded stocks this week, increasing by 2.35% and 4.03% respectively.

The Services sector followed the positive trend with a 0.29% increase. Key performers in this sector included OQ Gas Networks with a 1.55% gain, Oman Telecom rising by 2.74%, Al Suwadi Power advancing by 1.54%, and SMN Power Holding adding 0.31%.

STATISTICS

## Oman’s domestic production and imports of natural gas top 4 billion cubic metres



**MUSCAT:** Oman’s total domestic production and imports of natural gas increased by 9.5 percent to 4.604 billion cubic metres by the end of January 2025 compared to 4.205 billion cubic metres to the same period in 2024.

Statistics issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) show that industrial projects accounted for 52.6 percent of natural gas use in the Sultanate of Oman by the end of January 2025 using 2.423 billion

cubic metres.

Total natural gas consumption for oil fields amounted to 1,146,600,000 cubic metres, power generation plants 1,014,300,000 cubic metres and industrial zones 20 million cubic metres.

It is noteworthy that non-associated natural gas production, including imports, amounted to 3.51 billion cubic metres, while associated production amounted to 1.90 billion cubic metres. - **ONA**

EXPERTS

## AI adoption key to SMEs growth in India

**NEW DELHI:** Artificial Intelligence (AI) is rapidly evolving and continuously changing the landscape for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in India and can boost efficiency & business growth for SMEs, according to the leaders who converged at Nasscom Global Confluence 2025 in New Delhi.

The event, designed to empower Indian technology companies for global success, witnessed the leaders discuss the roadmap of connected systems in the era of AI and its impact on SMEs in India.

The rise of AI technologies, particularly Agentic AI, presents

a unique opportunity for SMEs to innovate and scale without the traditional constraints of workforce size and unlock new opportunities, the experts highlighted.

The experts reiterated the growing need to leverage AI and called for its rapid adoption by SMEs in India to support their business growth.

During the discussion on ‘Engineering the connected AI Future: Building Smarter Systems Together’, Jagdish Mitra, Founder and CEO, Humanize Tech, discussed the transformative potential of AI for SMEs, suggesting

that SMEs can now scale without needing large workforces. He said, “This is a watershed moment for SMEs. I strongly believe India will leapfrog through the ingenuity of its SME ecosystem. AI and cloud-driven models now allow founders to achieve scale 100x faster with far fewer resources.”

The experts also highlighted that the models should be trained on datasets that are relevant to specific populations or local regions, as existing models may be biased towards data from different contexts (e.g., Western datasets).

The leaders called for more col-

laboration between governments and enterprises to democratize data, enabling innovation and research in AI.

Anurag Sahay, Managing Director- AI and Data Science, Nagarro, highlighted that while data is abundant and renewable, its quality is crucial for effective AI model building. The process of cleaning and preparing data is labor-intensive, often consuming a significant portion of resources. He said, “The interesting thing is that while data is a new oil, data is renewable! We can create data, generate data and also synthesize data.” - **ANI**

MADAYN



## Platform to enhance local content in government procurements launched

**MUSCAT:** The Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn) launched a platform code-named “Rabt” (connectivity) to enhance its partnership with the Secretariat General of the Tender Board.

The ceremony was held under the auspices of Eng. Salim bin Nasser Al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals. The platform aims to enhance integration between government departments and the private sector by maximising the outcome of localized industries and link them to government tenders and procurements. It also

contributes to upgrading the competitiveness of local products and services in local markets.

The platform showcases more than 5,000 industrial products and services provided by more than 300 factories and companies operating in Madayn’s industrial cities. It provides a comprehensive database that supports government procurement.

The ceremony also saw the signing of outsourcing agreements between contractors who win local tenders and local suppliers—a step forward in enhancing the national economy. - **ONA**

MARKET

# ahli islamic Money Market Fund surpasses OMR50mn in assets

The fund also achieved an annualised return of +5.1% during the first 12 months of operations, generating a net profit of OMR 861,417 for 2024

Times News Service

**MUSCAT:** As part of its commitment to achieving significant milestones in the Islamic banking sector, the ahli islamic Money Market Fund has announced that its managed assets have surpassed the OMR 50 million mark, just one



year after its launch. The fund also achieved an annualized return of +5.1% during the first 12 months of operations, generating a net profit of OMR 861,417 for 2024. These results reflect the confidence investors have placed in the Fund and the appeal of its Sharia-compliant investment strategy.

Hanaa Mohammed Al Kharusi, Senior General Manager - Wholesale Banking, stated: "At ahlibank, we take pride in the success of the ahli islamic Money Market Fund, which has exceeded OMR 50 million in assets in its first year. The fund has maintained stability with low volatility, contributing

to steady returns, in addition to its commitment to ethical financial practices. Furthermore, we are proud that our investor base is well-diversified, comprising both institutional and individual investors, which highlights the fund's broad appeal and reliability. This achievement reflects the excellence and innovation embraced by the bank and underscores its ability to provide secure, advanced investment solutions that meet the needs of our customers, balancing strong returns with limited risks, further reinforcing our position as a leading financial institution in the region."

Echoing the same, Noora Sabah Jawad Sultan, Chairperson - ahli islamic Money Market Fund, said: "At ahli islamic, we take pride in the performance of this exceptional fund, which stands out due to its unique structure. This fund provides an attractive alternative to demand deposit accounts, offering investors high liquidity and a flexible solution for managing their financial allocations in bank deposits. Moreover, the fund focuses on investing in high-credit-rated market instruments, ensuring that investors' funds are exposed to securities of investment-grade quality, thereby enhancing the achievement of optimal risk-adjusted returns, in line with the highest banking standards."

It is worth mentioning that the ahli islamic Money Market Fund,

is the first of its kind in the Sultanate of Oman to comply fully with Sharia principles.

The fund focuses on investing in short-term, low-risk instruments, such as Islamic bank deposits, Islamic bonds (Sukuk) and other permissible assets, with the aim of achieving returns while maintaining a high level of liquidity. The fund seeks to provide a secure and reliable alternative to traditional deposit-based financial instruments. Additionally, it follows a rigorous investment strategy that prioritizes high-quality financial instruments, ensuring full adherence to Sharia standards while minimizing fluctuations and enhancing stability.

In light of these successes, the ahli islamic Money Market Fund remains committed to providing innovative and highly liquid investment solutions that cater to investors seeking an alternative to demand call accounts. As it continues to deliver stable returns, the fund further solidifies its position as the preferred choice for managing short-term funds in compliance with Sharia principles.

STRATEGIC COLLABORATION

## MCBS, Heilongjiang University to promote academic, cultural exchange



**MUSCAT:** The Modern College of Business and Science (MCBS) and Heilongjiang University have signed a Memorandum of Collaboration (MoC), marking the beginning of a transformative educational partnership.

This strategic alliance establishes a comprehensive framework for cross-institutional academic enrichment and cultural exchange, uniting educational traditions from Oman and China.

The collaboration is designed to strengthen academic engagement by enhancing programme

delivery, supporting faculty professional development, and fostering research opportunities. A key focus will be on cultural exchange through a range of initiatives, including seminars, workshops, exhibitions, and conferences.

Additionally, both institutions will collaborate on joint publications, contributing to knowledge-sharing and a deeper mutual understanding. This partnership reflects a shared commitment to academic excellence and cross-cultural dialogue, creating meaningful opportunities for students,

faculty, and researchers from both institutions.

Dr. Moosa Al Kindi, Dean of MCBS, expressed his enthusiasm about the partnership, stating: "This collaboration with Heilongjiang University marks an important step in our mission to provide students and faculty with enriching international experiences. By fostering academic exchange, cultural awareness, we aim to equip our students with the skills and global perspectives necessary for success in today's interconnected world. We are excited

about the opportunities this partnership will bring to both institutions."

This MoC establishes MCBS commitment to elevating higher education through strategic academic alliances and cross-cultural engagement. Students will benefit from the cultural immersion opportunities, enhancing their global competency and career prospects. The initiative seeks to facilitate scholarly exchange while strengthening international academic networks' appreciation for diverse cultural perspectives.

RECOGNITION

## Bank Muscat crowned for Innovative Community Driven Initiatives and promoting sustainable development

**MUSCAT:** Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in Oman, has been honoured with the Innovative Community Driven Initiatives award for 2025 at the Oman Forum.

This prestigious recognition, presented by Alam al-Iktisaad Wal A'mal (AIWA) magazine under the auspices of Sheikh Khalid bin Hilal Al Mawali, Chairman of the Shura Council, celebrates the Bank's pioneering efforts in implementing quality initiatives that have fostered a positive and sustainable impact. Zuwaina bint Abdullah Al Sharji, Assistant General Manager of Central Operations & Change Management at Bank Muscat, received the award on behalf of the Bank.

The Forum, titled "Promoting Local Content: Towards a Sustainable and Diversified Economy," addressed critical topics such as the implementation of national policies for local content



as a strategic tool for economic diversification, strengthening Omani industries, encouraging local projects, reducing import dependence, maximizing local resources, and supporting innovation and entrepreneurship.

Assistant General Manager of Central Operations & Change Management at Bank Muscat, expressed her pride in receiving the award, highlighting that it reflects Bank Muscat's success in developing innovative com-

munity initiatives that merge social impact with sustainability. She emphasised the Bank's commitment to empowering various groups and supporting projects that make a tangible difference in people's lives, thereby setting a benchmark for responsible community work. Al Sharji reiterated the Bank's dedication to continuing this approach, which plays a significant role in bolstering the national economy and promoting sustainable development.

DIGITAL SECURITY SOLUTIONS

## Hikvision Oman hosts Channel Partner Meet

**MUSCAT:** Hikvision Oman, the world's leading digital security solutions providers of CCTV cameras and others security solutions, Ezviz and GPT group jointly hosted their highly anticipated Channel Partner Meet recently at Movenpick hotel, Ghala.

Prominent dealers, distributors and partners from across the region gathered at the event which was attended by Tate Wu, GM-Hikvision, Pradeep Tripathi, Chairman-GPT Group & Glen Jin, Business Head- Ezviz.

The speakers shared valuable insights into the growing importance of security in an increasingly digital world. Their participation added immense value to the proceedings and highlighted the significance of collaboration between leading tech companies and security professionals.

Attendees were introduced



to a variety of groundbreaking solutions and products that will shape the future of surveillance technology. Hikvision technical team threw light on several new products, including smart security cameras, new age Networking products and integrated software solutions, aimed at improving the efficiency and effectiveness of security systems in

various sectors.

As the event came to a close, Hikvision & Ezviz reaffirmed its commitment to its dealer network and outlined plans for future collaboration. The companies pledged to continue investing in dealer training, technical support, and marketing initiatives to ensure that its partners have the tools they need to thrive.

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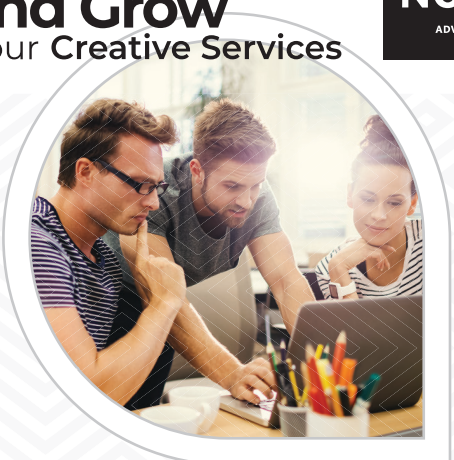
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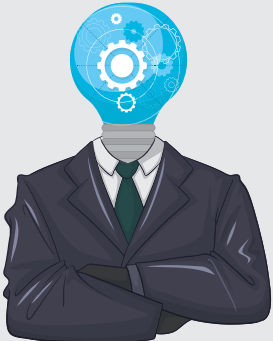
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LIFESTYLE

# MELTING ARCTIC ICE DISRUPTS GLOBAL WEATHER: STUDY

Their findings, published in Communications Earth & Environment today, suggest that Arctic ice loss disrupts atmospheric circulation and influences extreme weather events worldwide

A new study revealed that Arctic sea ice loss is altering global weather patterns, contributing to drier conditions in some parts such as California while increasing winter humidity in parts of Europe. Researchers from the Barcelona Institute for Global Health (ISGlobal) used advanced climate models to isolate the effects of melting ice. Their findings, published in Communications Earth & Environment today, suggest that Arctic ice loss disrupts atmospheric circulation and influences extreme weather events worldwide.

The study shows that reduced sea ice leads to drier winters in the southwestern U.S., particularly in California, while Spain and Portugal may experience wetter winters. These shifts result from changes in surface reflectivity, ocean insulation, and salinity, which impact global air and ocean currents. Scientists emphasize that Arctic ice loss is just one factor influencing climate, alongside greenhouse gas emissions and oceanic feedback. However, their research helps refine predictions by distinguishing the Arctic's role in global weather patterns. - **UNA**

SPORTS

Piastri claims first career pole in thrilling Chinese GP qualifying

McLaren driver edged past Mercedes' Russell and team-mate Norris at the Shanghai International Circuit on Saturday

**SHANGHAI:** McLaren's Oscar Piastri secured his maiden Formula 1 Grand Prix pole position in a dramatic qualifying session for the Chinese Grand Prix on Saturday, edging out Mercedes' George Russell and team-mate Lando Norris in a tightly contested battle at the Shanghai International Circuit.



Piastri, who had previously taken two pole positions in sprint races, delivered a stellar performance in Q3, with both of his final laps fast enough to clinch the top spot. His best effort of 1m33.125s was 0.082 seconds clear of Russell, who surprised many by splitting the McLarens.

"It means a lot," said Piastri. "In Q3, I just found a lot of pace. Q1 and Q2 were a struggle, but the car came alive, and I think I did too. The laps were a little scruffy, but I'm just pumped to be on pole." Russell said. "One of the hardest qualifying sessions I've done in a long time. I was trying all sorts with my tyre prep, and nothing seemed to click. I took a different approach on the last lap, had a big moment at Turn One, but somehow it all came together. I was really surprised to



be between the McLarens, and I'm buzzing for tomorrow." Max Verstappen, who has dominated the season so far, could only manage fourth place in his Red Bull, finishing ahead of Ferrari's Lewis Hamilton, who earlier in the day had won the sprint race from pole position. The seven-time world champion was 0.286 seconds off Piastri's time and revealed that setup changes made after the sprint had not improved the car's balance.

"We made some changes, but nothing major," Hamilton explained. "The car was really hard to drive - it wasn't hugging the road. I don't know how that will affect our race pace, but today showed how difficult it is to follow in these cars." Charles Leclerc, sixth in the other Ferrari, was just 0.094 seconds behind Hamilton and emphasized the need to understand the car's fluctuating performance.

"As a team, we maximised what we had, but we need to understand where the potential of the car has gone," Leclerc said. "Both Lewis' and my laps weren't that bad, but there's something missing." Rookie standout Isack Hadjar delivered an impressive performance, putting his Racing Bulls car in seventh, ahead of Mercedes' Andrea Kimi Antonelli. Yuki Tsunoda (Racing Bulls) and Alex Albon (Williams) rounded out the top 10.

CHINESE GP

Hamilton triumphs in sprint

**SHANGHAI:** Lewis Hamilton claimed his first victory for Ferrari in only his second outing for the team, delivering a commanding performance in the sprint race at the Chinese Grand Prix on Saturday.



The seven-time world champion held off an early challenge from Red Bull's Max Verstappen into the first corner and never looked back, expertly managing his tyres to control the race from the front. Verstappen initially looked capable of challenging Hamilton but soon struggled for pace, falling into the clutches of McLaren's Oscar Piastri. The young Australian bided his time before executing a decisive move on the reigning champion into Turn 14 with five laps remaining, securing second place. McLaren's Lando Norris, who endured a tough race, managed to salvage a single point by passing Aston Martin's Lance Stroll in the closing stages.

Hamilton's victory marked a strong recovery after a disappointing Ferrari debut in Australia, where he qualified eighth and finished tenth. His triumph in China was a testament to his race craft and tyre management skills, earning praise from his race engineer Riccardo Adami for a "masterclass in tyre management" on a day when most drivers struggled with tyre degradation. Soaking in the cheers from the grandstands, Hamilton relished the moment as he stepped out of his car on the pit straight.

"I woke up feeling great today," Hamilton said. "The first race was difficult, and I really feel a lot of people underestimated the steep climb it takes to settle into a new team. The engineers and mechanics have done a great job fine-tuning the car, and it felt fantastic today. There's so much grip on this new tarmac, but I think everyone struggled." Verstappen appeared in contention early on, but Hamilton steadily pulled away after eight laps. The Dutchman soon found himself under pressure from Piastri, who methodically closed the gap before making his move on lap 14. Piastri was pleased with his performance, saying, "It was a really productive sprint. Finishing second is a great result, and I learned a lot. As much as the result, the way I got the result was the encouraging thing. We didn't quite have the pace for Lewis, but we have some ideas to improve."

CONMEBOL WORLD CUP QUALIFIERS

Almada's crucial strike puts Argentina on brink of 2026 World Cup qualification

**MONTEVIDEO:** Argentina are on the brink of clinching qualification for the 2026 World Cup after beating Uruguay 1-0 in Montevideo on Friday. The World Cup holders, who are top of South America's 10-team qualifying group, were missing Lionel Messi, Lautaro Martinez and Paulo Dybala because of injury. But winger Thiago Almada, who is on loan at Lyon from Botafogo, fired in a 25-yard strike to stun the home crowd in the 68th minute. "When one player is missing, another comes in," said coach Lionel Scaloni. "How can I not be satisfied, not just for the result but for how they gave it their all. The satisfaction comes from the fact that the team played a complete match." Uruguay beat Argentina 2-0 in Buenos Aires in last November's reverse fixture, and had come into Friday's game five points behind them in second place. Argentina avenged that defeat as Almada, 23, fired beyond the dive of Uruguay goalkeeper Sergio Rochet and into the top corner. Nicolas Gonzalez was sent off deep into stoppage time for a high challenge but Argentina held on to go six points clear of Ecuador, who beat Venezuela 2-1 with former West Ham and Everton forward Enner Valencia scoring both goals. Almada was playing for Atlanta United when he received a late call-up for the 2022 World Cup, becoming the first active MLS player to win a World Cup.



There are five qualifiers remaining and the 2022 winners can secure their place at next year's World Cup with a victory at home to third-placed Brazil on Tuesday. Elsewhere, Brazil defeated Colombia 2-1 to keep their hopes intact for a World Cup spot. The match was marred by Brazil and Liverpool goalkeeper Alisson Becker's injury. Alisson has since returned to Liverpool after sustaining a "suspected concussion". The 32-year-old was substituted late on in the 2-1 World Cup qualifying win over Colombia on

Friday after a nasty clash of heads with former Tottenham defender Davinson Sanchez. "Alisson suffered a head injury and was replaced due to a suspected concussion," Brazil's team doctor Rodrigo Lasmar said after the match. Alisson will definitely miss Tuesday's World Cup qualifier in Argentina, but Liverpool will hope he is available for their first game back after the international break - against Everton at Anfield on April 2.

AFRICA WORLD CUP QUALIFIERS

Osimhen inspires Nigeria as Salah leads Egypt to victory

**KIGALI:** Victor Osimhen marked his return with a match-winning brace as Nigeria secured a crucial 2-0 victory over Rwanda in Kigali, while Mohamed Salah guided Egypt to another win in their World Cup qualifying campaign on Friday. Osimhen, absent from Nigeria's previous qualifiers due to injury, opened the scoring in the 11th minute, converting Ademola Lookman's free-kick. He doubled the lead in first-half stoppage time, racing past the defense to slot home.



The win moves Nigeria to fourth in Group C, four points behind leaders South Africa. Bafana Bafana moved to the top of the group with a 2-0 victory over Lesotho, as Relebohile Mofokeng and Jayden Adams found the net in the second half.

Meanwhile, Salah was instrumental in Egypt's 2-0 triumph over Ethiopia. The Liverpool star struck early before setting up Zizo to secure the points before halftime, giving Egypt a five-point lead in Group A.



In Group E, Morocco avoided an upset against Niger with a dramatic 2-1 win in Ouja. Leicester's Bilal El Khannouss netted a stoppage-time header after Ismael Saibari had earlier canceled out Youssef Oumarou's opener.

Elsewhere, Ghana overpowered Chad 5-0 in Accra to move two points clear in Group I, while African champions Ivory Coast edged Burundi 1-0 in Group F through Evann Guessand's early strike. Algeria reclaimed the Group G lead with a 3-1 victory over Botswana in Francistown, with Mohamed Amoura scoring twice after the break. Guinea were held to a goalless draw by Somalia.

Equatorial Guinea's Emilio Nsue marked his return from a FIFA-imposed ban with a goal in a 2-0 win over São Tomé e Príncipe. With only the nine group winners securing automatic qualification for the 48-team World Cup, the race for spots remains highly competitive. The four best second-placed sides will enter intercontinental playoffs.

**Friday's African World Cup Qualifying collated results:** Group A: Burkina Faso 4 Djibouti 1, Ethiopia 0 Egypt 2; Group B: DR Congo 1 South Sudan 0; Group C: South Africa 2 Lesotho 0, Rwanda 0 Nigeria 2; Group E: Niger 1 Morocco 2; Group F: Burundi 0 Ivory Coast 1; Group G: Botswana 1 Algeria 3, Guinea 0 Somalia 0; Group H: Equatorial Guinea 2 São Tomé e Príncipe 0; Group I: Ghana 5 Chad 0.

# Hamad International Airport unveils state-of-the-Art Concourses D and E

This development elevates traveller comfort and further establishes Doha as a key global aviation hub

**RAHUL DAS**  
rahuldass@timesofoman.com

**DOHA:** Hamad International Airport (DOH), ranked as the World's Best Airport and Airport Shopping by Skytrax 2024, has officially unveiled its highly anticipated Concourses D and E, marking a major milestone in its expansion and increasing its capacity to over 65 million passengers annually.

This development elevates traveller comfort and further establishes Doha as a key global aviation hub. The expansion project, which began in 2018, has now been completed with the opening of Concourse D and E, marking the culmination of the airport's ambitious development plan.

This milestone represents the final phase of a transformational journey initiated in 2022 with the unveiling of the ORCHARD, a 6,000-square-meter indoor tropical garden.

The new concourses integrate seamlessly into the existing terminal, introducing cutting-edge tech-



nology and enhanced facilities to meet growing passenger demand.

The terminal now spans 842,000 square meters—a 14% increase—while the addition of 17 new aircraft contact gates increases the total to 62, nearly 40% more than before, ensuring greater connectivity, streamlined operations, and significantly reducing bus transfers.

Qatar Airways Group Chief Executive Officer, Engr. Badr Mohammed Al-Meer, said: "Hamad International Airport is more than a gateway; it is a vital pillar of Qatar's growth and global connectivity. I am pleased to see this expansion project, with conclusion of both concourses going live, which

I have personally been involved with since 2018. While many global airport expansions have faced delays, we are proud to have delivered this major development ahead of schedule. This achievement reflects our commitment to operational excellence and strategic planning. This is not just about increasing capacity—it is about strengthening the entire Qatar Airways network, enhancing operational resilience, and supporting Qatar's economic growth in line with the Qatar National Vision 2030. This development allows us to meet the evolving demands of global travel while reinforcing Qatar's position as a leading aviation hub."

**Operational excellence**

Hamad International Airport Chief Operating Officer, Mr. Hamad Ali Al Khater, said: "Our focus is to deliver operational excellence that supports both current demands and future growth. The opening of Concourses D and E marks a significant milestone in expanding our capacity and enhancing operational efficiency. This combined development streamlines passenger flow, optimises resource management, and strengthens airline connectivity, ensuring smoother and more efficient passenger services."

The newly inaugurated Concourses D and E feature the following enhancements:

**Seamless boarding Through smart technology**

The new concourses feature cutting-edge self-boarding systems, streamlining the boarding process for a faster, more efficient journey. Smart technology enables swift document verification, reduces wait times, and ensures smooth transitions from terminal to aircraft.

**Enhanced connectivity and global reach**

The expansion of Hamad International Airport with Concourses D and E significantly strengthens connectivity for both passengers and airlines. With increased gate capacity and optimised flight operations, the airport can accommodate a greater number of international carriers and offer more direct routes to key global destinations.

**Elevating the passenger journey**

The expansion prioritises passenger comfort and convenience, offering upgraded facilities to cater to diverse traveller needs.

A wider selection of premium retail outlets and global dining brands enhances the leisure experience, while ergonomically designed seating.

With the D&E Expansion, Qatar Duty Free is unveiling over 10 new retail outlets food and beverage venues, enhancing the airport's retail space by 2,700 square meters. This initiative further cements Hamad International Airport's standing as a beacon of innovation, a world-class destination for shopping, dining, and unforgettable experiences.

**A commitment to sustainability**

Hamad International Airport remains a leader in sustainable aviation, with Concourses D and E designed to meet GSAS 4-Star Design & Build Certification and aiming for LEED Gold Certification. The development incorporates energy-efficient systems, innovative water management solutions, and optimised thermal comfort strategies, reinforcing the airport's alignment with global sustainability objectives.

Accessibility is a core focus, with universal design principles ensuring a seamless experience for all travellers.

Features such as hearing loops, barrier-free pathways, spacious seating areas, and dedicated assistance services underscore the airport's commitment to creating a traveller-centric environment.

**A landmark expansion beyond Concourses D and E**

The opening of Concourses D and E marks the final phase of Hamad International Airport's broader expansion, which has introduced several landmark enhancements. At the heart of this transformation is the ORCHARD, a lush indoor tropical garden that redefines the passenger experience with its serene ambience and natural beauty. The Central Concourse has been expanded to improve passenger flow and operational efficiency, while an enhanced retail and dining portfolio now features an array of global luxury brands and diverse food and beverage offerings.

## RESEARCH FINANCING



## Crucial mRNA vaccine research at risk in the US

**WASHINGTON DC:** The United States has undergone several changes in foreign and domestic policy since US President Donald Trump took office in January. Scientists who rely on federal grants for their work have been particularly hard hit by new regulations and cuts introduced under the administration.

Already, researchers across several fields, including health and gender identity, climate and environment, and medical research disciplines have had research financing taken away.

Recently, research on vaccine hesitancy suffered this fate. More than 30 grants for researching public mistrust of immunisations have been terminated, according to several US media outlets.

Amid these cuts, the role of Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. — a vocal vaccine sceptic — looms large.

According to KFF Health News, acting National Institutes of Health (NIH) director Matthew Memoli requested details on "grants, contracts or collaborations" on mRNA vaccine research be provided to Kennedy and the White House.

Similar requests reportedly preceded the administration's decision to scrap support for vaccine hesitancy research.

Researchers speaking on condition of anonymity also told US media that NIH officials advised them to remove mRNA references from their grant applications.

But a stop to mRNA research would have far-reaching consequences since the technology is at the forefront of current medical developments.

**mRNA, the basis for two COVID vaccines**

mRNA technology's biggest claim

to fame is as the basis for the COVID-19 vaccines created by BioNTech-Pfizer and Moderna within a year of the coronavirus pandemic. The researchers behind the technology were also awarded a Nobel Prize in Medicine.

**Many other vaccines**

Instead of using an inactivated version of the virus as with many other vaccines — and AstraZeneca's first-released COVID jab — the BioNTech-Pfizer and Moderna shots contained mRNA, or messenger RNA.

mRNA is a genetic molecule occurring in multicellular organisms, including plants, animals and fungi. It acts as a genetic script — giving a template for the body to produce proteins that perform specific and essential functions.

COVID vaccines containing an mRNA script prompt the body's cells to produce proteins identical to the spike proteins on the outer shell of the coronavirus. It means the vaccinated person's immune system has a target to identify and immediately attack the pathogen in the event of an infection.

These vaccines were highly effective in protecting against severe symptoms and likely saved countless lives.

Claims by conspiracy theorists that the shots altered the DNA of recipients made many people distrustful of the vaccines. This fear is unfounded, since mRNA vaccines don't enter the nucleus of cells, where our primary genetic information is stored.

But mRNA-based malaria vaccines are in development.

They could help fight the mosquito-borne disease that kills roughly 600,000 people every year, between two-thirds and three-quarters of whom are children under five. — **W**

## ISRAELI BOMBING

# Medical, emergency teams retrieve bodies of nine Palestinians in Gaza

**GAZA:** Medical and emergency teams on Saturday recovered the bodies of nine slain Palestinians, including five children and a woman, after Israeli bombing targeted a house east of Gaza City, according to WAFA correspondent.

He said that the bodies of nine Palestinian civilians were successfully recovered from under the rubble of the house targeted by the occupation forces at dawn in the al-Tuffah neighborhood in the east. The house belonged to the al-Mashharawi family. They were transported to the Baptist Hospital in the city.

Israel unilaterally ended the Gaza ceasefire agreement and resumed its aggression on the Strip on Tuesday, March 18, carrying out a wave of bloody airstrikes across the Strip and killing hundreds of Palestinians, including over 100 children.

Israel has waged a military onslaught on the Strip since October 2023, killing over 49,617 Palestinians, mostly women and children, and injuring over 112,950 others.

**Israeli forces continue large-scale military onslaught on Jenin**

The Israeli occupation forces continued their aggression on the city of Jenin and its camp for the 61st consecutive day, amidst bulldozing and burning homes,



and converting others into military points. This morning, the occupation forces detained three Palestinian citizens from the town of Ya'bad, south of Jenin, after storming the town and raiding homes. Since the beginning of the aggression on the city and camp, they have intensified their raids on towns and villages in the Jenin Governorate, launching widespread detention campaigns, conducting field investigations, and raiding and searching homes.

Last Wednesday, the occupation forces issued demolition notices for approximately 66 homes in the neighborhoods of Al-Hawashin, Al-Aloub, Azzam

Mosque, Jourat Al-Dhahab, and Harat Al-Samran. The occupation forces continue to send military reinforcements accompanied by bulldozers to Jenin camp, while bulldozing and destroying streets and paving new roads.

The occupying forces also continue to fire live ammunition around Jenin camp and infantry units continue to move inside the camp and in its alleys and neighborhoods.

During the 61 days, the occupation forces rounded up approximately 227 citizens from the Jenin Governorate and conducted dozens of field investigations with citizens. According to the Jenin

Municipality, the occupation forces have bulldozed 100% of the streets in Jenin camp and nearly 80% of the city streets, while the residents of 3,200 homes have been displaced from the camp.

The ongoing Israeli aggression on the city and camp of Jenin has resulted in 34 fatalities, with nearly dozens were reported injured or detained.

**Foreign Ministry slams Israel's deliberate targeting of Turkish-Palestinian Friendship Hospital in Gaza**

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates condemned the Israeli occupation army's deliberate targeting of the Turkish-Palestinian Friendship Hospital in the Gaza Strip.

In a statement, the Ministry said that targeting and destroying hospitals, health centers, and medical and emergency personnel constitutes a war crime and a crime against humanity punishable under international law.

The Ministry further slammed this attack as a systematic attempt to deepen the genocide and displacement of the Palestinian people and annex their homeland. It falls within the framework of the occupation's policy of using starvation, deprivation of medical care, and denial of basic human rights as weapons of war. — **W**

## HEATHROW

# Air India resumes normal operations at London airport after power outage

**NEW DELHI:** Air India on Saturday announced that its flights to and from London Heathrow (LHR) are back on schedule after a brief disruption caused by a power outage at the airport on Friday.

Sharing the post on X, the airline confirmed that Saturday's flight AI111 departed on time, and all other flights to and from London are expected to operate as scheduled.

"Our operations to and from London Heathrow (LHR) have recommenced after the disruption at the airport yesterday due to a power outage. Today's flight AI111 was on schedule and other flights, to and from London, are expected



to operate as per schedule," the post stated.

"AI161 of 21 March, which was diverted to Frankfurt, is expected to leave Frankfurt at 14:05 pm local time," it added.

In another incident on March 10, an Air India flight from Chi-

cago to Delhi was forced to return to its departure airport after multiple lavatories on board became unserviceable, as reported by the crew, due to clogged toilets caused by improper waste disposal.

The investigation by the concerned authorities revealed that

the lavatories became unserviceable as polythene bags, rags, and clothes were flushed down and got stuck in the plumbing.

"We are aware of some social media posts about the unserviceable lavatories on AI126 operating Chicago to Delhi on 05 March 2025 that caused the flight's diversion back to its origin. We would like to confirm that as part of our investigation into the incident, our teams found polythene bags, rags, and clothes that had been flushed down and stuck in the plumbing. This led the lavatories to become unserviceable," Chicago O'Hare International Airport said. — **ANI**

ROUND-UP

GMC unveils exclusive Ramadan offers

With the theme “Unlock Exclusive Ramadan Offers with GMC Today,” this limited-time campaign provides 9 compelling reasons to drive home a GMC this Ramadan

**MUSCAT:** In celebration of the holy month of Ramadan, Moosa Abdul Rahman Hassan & Co., exclusive dealer of GMC in Oman has launched an exciting campaign offering exclusive benefits



and rewards to customers looking to own a GMC. With the theme “Unlock Exclusive Ramadan Offers with GMC Today,” this limited-time campaign provides 9 compelling reasons to drive home a GMC this Ramadan. This exclusive offer comes packed with incredible benefits, including a grand raffle draw where customers stand a chance to win exciting prizes:

- First Prize: A brand-new GMC Terrain
- Second Prize: A Trip to Paris for Couple

In addition, customers can enjoy a host of benefits, making this

Ramadan the perfect time to own a GMC:

- Assured Gift – Receive an Apple iPad
- Guaranteed Buyback – Enjoy peace of mind with GMC’s assured buyback option
- 6 Years Unlimited KM Warranty – Drive confidently with

long-term coverage

- 3 Years / 60,000 KM Service (which ever comes first) – Hassle-free service
- First-Year Registration & Insurance – Save on additional costs with complimentary registration & insurance
- VAT Included – No hidden costs, enjoy transparent pricing

Speaking about the campaign, Muhammed Faisal Nawaz, Marketing Manager of GMC Oman, said: “Ramadan is a time of generosity and new beginnings, and at GMC, we are excited to reward our customers with exceptional benefits.

“With a chance to win a GMC Terrain , an incredible trip to Paris, and exclusive offers on our entire lineup, this campaign is designed to make GMC ownership even more rewarding. We invite everyone to visit our showrooms and take advantage of these unmatched Ramadan deals before the offer ends.”

As part of the campaign, GMC

Oman offers attractive financing options with EMIs starting as low as RO 134 per month, making premium vehicles more accessible than ever:

- GMC Terrain – EMI starting from RO 134
- GMC Sierra – EMI starting from RO 221
- GMC Acadia – EMI starting from RO 254
- GMC Canyon – EMI starting from RO 261
- GMC Yukon – EMI starting from RO 300

“At GMC Oman, we believe in offering more than just vehicles—we provide an elevated ownership experience. From premium warranties and service contracts to flexible financing and guaranteed buyback, our Ramadan campaign ensures that every customer enjoys peace of mind, value, and the confidence that comes with driving a GMC.” Nawaz further added.

This exclusive Ramadan campaign is available across GMC showrooms in Oman.

NATIONAL BANK OF OMAN

NBO celebrates Mother’s Day with Iftar and special rewards for customers

**MUSCAT:** The National Bank of Oman (NBO) celebrated Mother’s Day by hosting an exclusive Iftar event at W Muscat for its highest-spending cardholders and their beloved mothers. The event recognised 12 winners, selected based on their spending using NBO Debit, Credit and Badeel Prepaid Cards; where they were presented with valuable gifts.

Commenting on the celebration, Maha Saud Al Raisi, Assistant General Manager and Head of Product, said: “At NBO, we believe in celebrating the moments that matter most to our customers. Mother’s Day is a special time to honour the love and sacrifices of mothers, and this campaign was our way of showing appreciation to those who trust us with their banking needs. Through initiatives like this, we reinforce our commitment to rewarding our customers and ensuring that every interaction with NBO is a rewarding experience.”

The Mother’s Day campaign aimed to reward loyal cardholders while encouraging seamless



and secure digital transactions. Through this initiative, NBO reaffirms its commitment to providing exclusive benefits and personalised experiences that bring families together.

INDIAN SOCIAL CLUB OMAN

Malayalam Wing appoints new leaders

**MUSCAT:** The newly elected office bearers of the Malayalam Wing of the Indian Social Club Oman, founded in 1996 as a cultural hub for the Kerala community, have assumed their roles for the 2025-2026 term.

The office bearers took the oath of office at a ceremony held at the Malayalam Wing office, attended by Indian Social Club General Secretary Shakeel, Malayalam Wing Observer Mariam Cherian, and other members of the Malayalam Wing.

Thajudheen K. A. is the Convener, Remya Denzil is the Co-convener, and Aneesh G. Pillai is the Treasurer. Other office bearers are: Krishnendhu S. (Jt Treasurer and Social Welfare Secretary), Sunilkumar Krishnan Nair (Sports, Literary and Drama Secretary), Sajimon Gopalakrishnan (Entertainment Secretary), Satheeshkumar K. (Cultural and Music Secretary), Vinoj Wilson (Children’s Wing Secretary) and Teena Babu (Women’s Wing Secretary).

During the ceremony, Shakeel and Mariam Cherian ensured un-



wavering support from the ISC office and management committee to the Malayalam Wing. Convener Thajudheen highlighted that the success of the Malayalam

Wing is the result of collective effort and collaboration among all its members.

The Malayalam Wing stands as one of the largest and most dynamic linguistic wings of the Indian Social Club. It has consistently provided a strong platform for fostering leadership in artistic, sports, cultural, and social activities among expatriate Malayalis in the Sultanate of Oman. Through its diverse programmes, the Malayalam Wing has played a key role in showcasing the rich cultural heritage of India, particularly Kerala, while strengthening the bonds between Oman and India.

CUTTING-EDGE TECHNOLOGY

Muscat Eye Laser Center redefines future of ophthalmology in Oman

**MUSCAT:** In the heart of Oman, Muscat Eye Laser Center (MELC) stands as the undisputed leader in ophthalmology, combining cutting-edge technology with world-class patient care. As the region’s premier eye care provider, MELC continues to set new benchmarks in ophthalmology, attracting patients from across the Middle East and beyond.

Founded in 2002 by visionary businessman Sameer Al Awam and globally renowned ophthalmologist Dr Maria Clara Arbelaez, MELC has grown into an internationally recognised centre of excellence. With state-of-the-art technology and an elite team of specialists, the center has performed tens of thousands of successful procedures, making it the most trusted name in eye care.

At the core of MELC’s groundbreaking innovations is Smart-Sight Lenticule Extraction, a next-generation, flapless laser procedure that offers minimal recovery time, a game-changer for athletes and individuals with active lifestyles. MELC remains the first and only clinic in Oman to offer this revolutionary treatment, reaffirming its position as a pioneer in ophthalmic advancements.

MELC is also at the forefront of pioneering advancements in intrastromal ring segment techniques, with a particular emphasis on biocompatible intracorneal ring segments.

With state-of-the-art technology and an elite team of specialists, the center has performed tens of thousands of successful procedures, making it the most trusted name in eye care

comes for every patient.

Furthermore, MELC takes great pride in fostering a culture of research and continuous learning. Under the leadership of CEO Sameer Al Awam and Medical Director Dr. Maria Clara Arbelaez, MELC actively encourages its doctors to participate in both local and international conferences, present research findings, and contribute to advancements in ophthalmology. These efforts have led to numerous awards, including Best Paper of Sessions at the American Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgery (ASCRS) and Best Poster of Session at the American Academy of Ophthalmology (AAO), further cementing MELC’s reputation as a global leader in eye care.

– Presented by the President of ISRS, New Orleans, USA

Best Doctor in Scientific Research (Oman) – Ministry of Health, Oman

Best Ophthalmic Clinic in Oman – Ministry of Health, Oman

“100 Colombianos” Award – Received from the President of Colombia for achievements in health care

Gold Medal Award for Contributions to Ophthalmology and Refractive Surgery – EyeAdvance, Mumbai, India

Best Paper of Session on several occasions at the American Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgery (ASCRS) Meetings, USA

**Achievement Award – American Academy of Ophthalmology**

Dr. Maria recently participated at the European Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgeons (ESCRS), where she delivered two impactful presentations. Dr. Maria spoke at the Global Refractive Symposium, where ESCRS, BRASCRS, (Brazilian Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgery) and ISRS (International Society of Refractive Surgery) joined forces to create an outstanding program that recognized and honored the most important pioneers in the field of refractive surgery.

Dr. Maria will receive the IIRSI Gold Medal in July this year, an award given by the Intraocular Implant and Refractive Society of India (IIRSI) to recognize contributions to the field of ophthalmology. The IIRSI is one of the largest societies of refractive and cataract surgeons. Her commitment to excellence in eye care, research, and innovation has played a pivotal role in MELC’s continued growth and global impact.

**Future of continued growth and innovation**

As MELC continues to push the boundaries of ophthalmology, it remains dedicated to transforming the lives of patients. With an unwavering focus on innovation, patient-centered care, and clinical excellence, MELC is not just shaping the future of eye care, it is leading it. With its exceptional growth, pioneering technology, and unwavering commitment to excellence, MELC is expected to continue this remarkable trajectory, expanding its global reach and setting even higher standards in ophthalmology. For those seeking world-class expertise and life-changing results, MELC remains the gold standard in the field.

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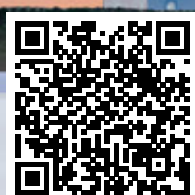
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L x W x H (mm): 4718 x 1880 x 1710



**B70S**

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1.5L Turbo Engine, 158hp,  
7-speed DCT

L x W x H (mm): 4555 x 1850 x 1515

CASH PRICE

**OMR 7,450\***

VAT INCLUDED



CASH PRICE

**OMR 7,150\***

VAT INCLUDED



**B70**

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1.5L Turbo Engine, 165hp,  
7-speed DCT

L x W x H (mm): 4810 x 1840 x 1455

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Terms and Conditions Apply. Offer valid from 20th February to 20th April 2025 on all models purchased through the BESTUNE Showroom Retail Offer. #Whichever is earlier. Periodic Maintenance Service only. Offer includes only 10,000 kms service intervals. @For 1st year, Oman & UAE only. ^For 1st year only. ^^Window Tinting warranty will be 3 years against manufacturing defects and will be fitted at our own Service Centres. \*Car price excludes cash gift. \*\*Whichever is earlier. Images shown are for illustrative purpose only. Specification may vary as per the model variant. For more information, please visit the BESTUNE Showroom.

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