

Own your dream car with Sayyarati Auto Loan

from Bank Muscat

Bank Muscat. Better Everyday.
Terms and conditions apply.

Mawarid records 352 wild plant species

Our Correspondent
Muscat

A nationwide study conducted between 2018 and 2024 has recorded 352 wild plant species, including 18 classified as endangered in International Union for Conservation of Nature's Red List, and collected 174 varieties of seeds.

Led by Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation's Oman Centre for Animal and Plant Genetic Resources (Mawarid), 81 collection missions across 231 sites in 50 wilayats were conducted during the project. Researchers are compiling data into a genetic resources database with 883 entries and 17,623 recorded readings of targeted plant genetic resources.

The project aims to preserve Oman's biodiversity, particularly species at risk due to climate change and human activity. Collecting seeds ensures their survival and potential future cultivation. With Oman's plants exposed to extreme conditions such as drought and rising temperatures, researchers are studying their ability to adapt. This information contributes to sustainability efforts and strategies

HIGHLIGHTS

81 collection missions from 2018 to 2024

231 sites visited across 50 wilayat

883 entries to genetic resources database

18 endangered species listed on IUCN Red List

for managing environmental changes.

Beyond conservation, the project seeks to enhance Oman's agricultural and economic sectors. The team is securing plant-based resources for food, medicine and industry. A proposed agreement with Oman

Palm Development Company aims to cultivate selected plants for oil extraction, supporting their commercial use.

The collected seeds also serve as a safeguard against environmental disasters, ensuring the ability to restore plant populations in case of sudden ecological

changes. The database provides critical information to facilitate rapid recovery efforts when needed.

Scientific research is another key component of the project. The stored seeds provide material for studies on genetic traits and agricultural improvements. The project has contributed to multiple scientific publications, including research on the chemical composition of wild lavender, exploring its medicinal and aromatic properties.

Many of Oman's plant species hold cultural and agricultural significance, with some found nowhere else in the world. Mawarid is working to preserve these species while promoting awareness through school and university lectures, field visits and media campaigns. Project representatives have engaged with students and the public through television and radio interviews, as well as newspaper reports, highlighting the importance of Oman's plant biodiversity.

As efforts continue, the project underscores Oman's commitment to safeguarding its natural resources and ensuring their sustainable use for future generations.

Oman, Iran pledge dialogue to address regional issues

Muscat – H E Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, met Dr Abbas Araghchi, Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran, in Muscat on Sunday.

The two ministers discussed strengthening bilateral ties between Oman and Iran and explored avenues for increased cooperation across various sectors. They also exchanged views



on key regional and international developments.

In light of ongoing geopolitical challenges, both leaders stressed the need to foster conditions that support diplomatic solutions. They underlined the importance of utilising dialogue and peaceful means to address pressing issues and ease tensions in the region. The meeting was attended by senior officials from both countries.

GCC expats remitted RO50.6bn in 2023

Muscat - The total remittances sent by expatriate workers in Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries reached RO50.6bn (US\$131.5bn) at the end of 2023, according to data released by GCC Statistical Center.

The figure places the GCC countries at the top of the global remittance rankings, ahead of the United States.

However, the data also reveals a slight dip in remittances compared to previous year. The total amount sent in 2023 decreased by nearly US\$500mn, or 0.4%, following significant increases in 2021 and 2022 - 9.2% and 3.8%, respectively.

While the share of remittances in the Gulf's GDP has been declining, it remained relatively stable in 2023. The share dropped from 8.1% in 2020 to 6% in 2022, before rising slightly to 6.2% in 2023.

India is one of the top beneficiaries. In 2022, the foreign inward remittances to India from the UAE as a share of remittances from across the world was 18%, the highest among other GCC nations. Saudi Arabia and Kuwait followed with over 5.1% and 2.4% share respectively. Next was Oman (1.6%) and Qatar (1.5%); data for Bahrain was unavailable.

02

Ramadan - Reduce waste, respect and self-restrict

04

MSX to launch Promising Companies Market in 2025

THIS RAMADAN, CHOOSE THE
PERFECT DRIVE WITH HAVAL JOLION

INCLUDED IN PRICE

4 YEARS* / 50,000 KMS*
SERVICE PACKAGE

1 YEAR* REGISTRATION
& INSURANCE

PRICE
INCLUSIVE
OF VAT

45%#
BUY-BACK OPTION
3 years/60,000 kms
(INCLUDED IN PRICE)

UP TO 500 OMR\$
LULU VOUCHER &
PETRO CARD TO ALL NEW BUYERS
(INCLUDED IN PRICE)

The offer is valid from 16th February to 30th April 2025 on retail purchases only. Government organizations, ministries, and RAC customers are not included. *Service, insurance, registration, and VAT are included in the price for all models. #Buyback is applicable for 3 years or 60,000 km, whichever comes first, as per the signed contract. S OMR 200 Lulu voucher and OMR 100 fuel card (M95) are available for Jolion, H6, and H6 GT for MY 2025 models only. OMR 400 Lulu voucher and OMR 100 fuel card (M95) are available for H7, H9, Tank 300, and Tank 500 for MY 2025 models only. Lulu vouchers and fuel cards are not applicable to commercial vehicles and MY24 & MY23 models.

YOUR JOURNEY
BEGINS HERE

EASY AUTO FINANCING WITH BANKDHO FAR

VISIT YOUR NEAREST BRANCH
AND APPLY TODAY!

بنك ظفار
BankDhofar

2479 1111

www.bankdhofar.com

Ar-Rayyan initiative strengthens community bonds

Muscat - Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs in North Batinah is promoting religious awareness through an initiative called 'Ar-Rayyan' during Ramadan. The programme aims to create a spiritual atmosphere with events catering to different segments of society.

Khalid al Hosni, Director of Department of Endowments and Religious Affairs in North Batinah, informed that the initiative encourages cooperation between institutions and the community. "It seeks to promote humanitarian and Islamic values while enhancing social responsibility and voluntary charitable work, emphasising traditional Omani customs." Ar-Rayyan includes religious evenings combining education and inspiration, Quran study circles focused on recitation and interpretation, and gatherings to strengthen social bonds.

Hosni noted that Ar-Rayyan aligns with the recently launched 'Rakeezah' programme, which aims to strengthen national identity and encourage a balanced approach to life. It includes intellectual activities targeting different community groups through educational and recreational engagements, while also highlighting the role of mosques and local communities in promoting religious awareness and moral values.

Reduce waste, self-restrict and respect

Wastage is a growing concern during Ramadan, with excessive quantities of food often leading to unnecessary waste. Beyond food, social habits also come under scrutiny during the holy month, as patience, kindness and self-discipline are tested in daily interactions. How can people be more mindful of their consumption and behaviour? Here is what *Muscat Daily* readers said -



YOUR SAY

Ahmed al Harthy
Taxi driver

Planning meals in advance and cooking only what is needed can significantly reduce food waste. Sharing excess food with those in need is another great way to ensure nothing goes to waste. Additionally, we must drive safely, especially during iftar rush hour, to prevent accidents and ensure everyone reaches home safely.

Saeed al Balushi
PRO

People should buy and cook in moderation rather than indulge in showing off. Encouraging children to understand the value of food from a young age is crucial. Also, misbehaviour in public places like mosques and markets should be addressed - Ramadan is about respect and discipline, not just fasting.

Maryam al Habsi
Private sector employee

We should store and reuse leftovers creatively instead of throwing these away. If everyone donates a portion of their iftar meals, it will make a huge difference. Also, people should be more mindful of their temper - Ramadan is about self-restraint, controlling road rage and frustration in traffic jams.

Rajesh Menon
Sales executive

Buffets at restaurants often lead to food wastage. Owners should implement better portioning strategies. Families should also educate children on the value of food. A little patience and consideration can make Ramadan a peaceful experience for all. Let's take things as they come and be more calm.

Priya Sharma
Homemaker

Instead of lavish iftar spreads, preparing simple, healthy meals will reduce waste and benefit health. Leftover food should be packed and shared with neighbours or the underprivileged rather than discarded. Also, let's remember that Ramadan is about kindness - misbehaving with service staff must be avoided.

Ayesha al Zadjali
Homemaker

Restaurants and households should encourage portion control and distribute leftover food to charity. Patience and kindness reflect the true spirit of Ramadan. Additionally, we must not lie and be kind to even strangers.

SEND US ON OUR
NEW
WHATSAPP NO
91953774

NEXT ON YOUR SAY

Introduction of flexible working hours during Ramadan helps mitigate peak-hour traffic jams. Should the authorities consider making flexible working hours a standard practice beyond Ramadan?

SEND YOUR COMMENTS

Share your comments in not more than 50 words along with your full name and profession before next Sunday, 10am, via WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram or [muscatdaily@apexmedia.co.om](mailto:apexmedia.co.om) The views stated here are those of the respondents and not endorsed by Muscat Daily.

the Nawabs

Indian Cuisine of Royals

Immerse yourself in the regal world of Lucknow's Mughlai and Awadhi cuisine at The Nawabs. Our passionate chefs bring together the finest ingredients and traditional cooking techniques to create an extraordinary culinary experience. Each dish is prepared with precision, using handpicked spices and age-old recipes passed down through generations.

RAMADAN
IFTAAR BUFFET

OMR 5 per person
OMR 3 for Children 6 - 14 years
Children below 6 years eat for free

*All prices are subject to 5% VAT
**Avail a special discount for group bookings

For Reservations,
2448 0786 9090 0786

Check out our Exclusive Ramadan Buffet Menu

@thenawabsoman

CHANGAN

UNI-K

This Ramadan Experience
the Art of Automotive Luxury

EMI
OMR 192' for 6 years

2.0L Turbo Engine, 233 hp, 8-Speed AT, 4WD

RAMADAN OFFERS

FREE SERVICE 5 Years / 105,000 Kms*

FREE INSURANCE*

FREE REGISTRATION*

FREE WINDOW TINTING AND PAINT PROTECTION*

VAT (5%) INCLUSIVE IN VEHICLE PRICE

SUPER WARRANTY 6 YEARS / UNLIMITED MILEAGE**

Offer valid from 20th February to 20th April 2025 on all models purchased through the CHANGAN AUTO Showroom Retail Offer. #Whichever is earlier. Periodic Maintenance Service only. Offer includes only 10,000 kms service intervals. *For 1st year, Oman & UAE only. **Window Tinting and Ceramic Coating warranty will be 3 years against manufacturing defects and will be fitted at our own Service Centres. *Whichever is earlier. *Easy Monthly Installment is calculated based on 20% down payment for 6 years loan tenure. Subject to credit approvals from Banks only. Applicable on vehicles purchased for personal use. Images shown are for illustrative purpose only. Specification may vary as per the model variant. To know more, please visit the CHANGAN Showroom.

Arabian Gulf Automobiles and Equipment LLC

Showrooms:
Qurum 94641010, Mawaleh 97888180, Nizwa 96628940
Sohar 95351200, Salalah 96629050, Ibbi 96628930,
Barka 96629010, Sur 96628920

800 508000
9662 8909

@changanoman
www.changanoman.com

Municipality
urges proper
disposal of
food waste

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Muscat Municipality has called on residents to ensure food waste is disposed of in tightly sealed bags during Ramadan to uphold environmental cleanliness and public health.

In a recent advisory, the municipality emphasised that proper disposal of food waste helps minimise pollution and control unpleasant odors.

'This simple habit can make a big difference in reducing pollution and unpleasant odors,' the municipality stated.

The reminder comes as households prepare large meals for Ramadan, which can lead to increased food waste if not managed responsibly. Authorities have urged residents to adhere to waste management practices to support community well-being.

Winter tourists from Europe surge in Dhofar

Our Correspondent
Salalah

Dhofar governorate is experiencing a surge in winter tourism, drawing visitors from Europe and beyond. Known for its rich heritage, archaeological landmarks, and natural landscapes, Dhofar is becoming a key destination for organised tourist groups from Germany, France, Italy, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland and Switzerland.

Marwan bin Abdul Hakim al Ghassani, Director of Promotions in Dhofar's Directorate General of Heritage and Tourism, highlighted the ministry's efforts to position Dhofar as a leading destination on regional and international tourism maps.

"We are intensifying our promotional efforts during the winter season, recognising it as an ideal time for attracting global tourists," he said. "This includes conducting familiarisation trips, hosting media delegations, and engaging with regional and international tourism offices."

The ministry's strategy also includes participating in global tourism exhibitions, broadcasting promotional advertisements in key markets, and publishing features across various media platforms. Social media campaigns are playing a significant role in enhancing Dhofar's visibility.



We are intensifying our promotional efforts during the winter season... we are conducting familiarisation trips, hosting media delegations, among others

MARWAN AL GHASSANI

Ghassani pointed to the introduction of direct flights from Uzbekistan and Belarus to Salalah Airport as a recent success. "Last year, charter flights brought in over 70,000 tourists, and early indicators suggest that this season will witness even higher numbers," he added.

Alawi bin Mohammed

Ba'alawi, a local tour guide, noted the steady growth of winter tourism in Oman. "The sultanate's security, stability and internationally recognised archaeological sites make it a preferred destination for tourists," he said.

Ba'alawi also emphasised tourism's role in supporting the local economy by providing jobs

for tour guides and drivers. "These professionals are carefully selected to reflect the true image of Dhofar and Oman," he said, stressing the importance of authentic, high-quality service in promoting the region.

Visitors are drawn to Dhofar's historic and cultural sites. Ancient locations such as Al Baleed, Sumhuram, and Al Shisr offer insights into the region's past, while the forts of Taqah and Mirbat stand as enduring symbols of its history. The Museum of the Land of Frankincense adds to the visitor experience, showcasing Dhofar's role in the ancient incense trade. Traditional markets like the gold and silver souqs and the natural beauty of the Jabal Samhan Reserve enhance the region's appeal.

OCCI to explore role of tax policies in economic development today

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) will host its third Ramadan Evening on Monday, spotlighting the critical role of tax policies in promoting economic development.

The session on 'Taxes and their Impact on Economic Development' will be held under the patronage of Dr Said bin Mohammed al Sagri, Minister of Economy. The discussion will explore how effective tax frameworks can enhance financial sustainability, maintain fiscal balance, and support the financing of national projects.

It will also delve into the broader implications of tax policy on Oman's business environ-

Ramadan Evening series provides business owners with a platform to address challenges and propose solutions

ment and investment landscape. The Ramadan Evening series, designed to encourage dialogue between the public and private sectors, provides business owners with a platform to address challenges and propose practical solutions. The initiative aligns with OCCI's strategic focus on fostering understanding of policies and legislation shaping Oman's economic framework.

The concluding session of the series will be held on Wednesday, under the theme 'The Economic Importance of Local Content'. It will introduce strategies to develop local content, underscore its role in strengthening the national economy, and highlight its significance in empowering small and medium-sized enterprises.

OCCI's Ramadan evenings support Oman Vision 2040, which prioritises enhancing the business environment, attracting investment, and promoting economic diversification. The discussions cover key sectors including manufacturing, energy, mining, logistics, transportation, tourism, food security, innovation, technology, trade, education, health and finance.



ظفار للأغذية والاستثمار (ش م ع)
DHO FAR FOODS AND INVESTMENT (SAOG)
P.O. Box 1220 – PC 211 – Phone 23225381 – Fax 23225258

Notice and Invitation to Attend the Annual General Meeting

The Board of Directors of Dhofar Foods and Investment (SAOG) is pleased to invite the esteemed shareholders to attend the company's Annual General Meeting, scheduled to be held at 3:00 PM on Sunday, 30/03/2025, via the electronic platform for general meetings, which can be accessed through the website of Muscat Clearing & Depository Company (www.mcd.om). If the legal quorum for holding the meeting is not met, the second Annual General Meeting will be held on Wednesday, 2/04/2025, at 3:00 PM, through the same electronic platform, to discuss the following agenda:

Annual Ordinary General Meeting Agendas:

1. Approval of the Board of Directors' resolution to appoint BDO LLC as the external auditor for the financial year ending on 31/12/2024.
2. To consider and approve the Board of Directors' report on the company's activities and financial position for the fiscal year ending 31/12/2024. (Annex 1)
3. To consider and approve the Management Discussion & Analysis Report of the company for the fiscal year ending 31/12/2024. (Annex 2)
4. To consider the Auditor's Report and to approve the Financial Statements (Balance Sheet and Profit and Loss Account) of the Company for the financial year ended 31 December 2024. (Annex 3)
5. To ratify the sitting fees paid to the board of directors and its subcommittees during the financial year ended 31 December 2024, and determine the sitting fees for the financial year 2025 as recorded in (Annex 4)
6. Briefing the General Assembly on the transactions conducted by the company with related parties during the fiscal year ending 31/12/2024. (Annex 5)
7. Review and approve transactions that the company will conduct with related parties during the fiscal year ending 31/12/2025. (Annex 6)
8. Review and approve the proposal to allocate RO 5,000 for corporate social responsibility initiatives during the fiscal year ending 31/12/2025. (Annex 7)
9. Appoint an auditor for the fiscal year ending 31/12/2025 and determine their fees. (Annex 7)

In accordance with the company's Articles of Association and the regulations for holding general meetings using modern technology, as issued by the Financial Services Authority, please note the following:

1. Only a legal entity has the right to delegate a natural person to attend the General Meeting and vote on its behalf through electronic means, provided that this natural person has an investornumber with Muscat Clearing & Depository Company.
2. Voting on any agenda item begins no earlier than three days before the General Meeting date and remains open until the voting process concludes on the day of the meeting. If a shareholder's stock balance increases or decreases during this period, the previous votes will be canceled, and the shareholder must recast their vote on the day of the General Meeting.

For any inquiries, please contact the Company Secretary at 99750028 or Email: board.secretary@dcfoman.com

Arab Human Rights Day focuses on 'Right to Food'

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Omani Human Rights Commission (OHRC), in collaboration with the Foreign Ministry, marked Arab Human Rights Day on Sunday with a symposium held at the Diplomatic Club in Muscat.

The event, held under the patronage of H E Sheikh Khalifa bin Ali al Harthy, Undersecretary for Political Affairs at the Foreign Ministry, was centred around the theme 'The Right to Food'.

The symposium aimed to raise awareness of the right to food as a fundamental human



right, in accordance with international and regional human rights conventions. It also highlighted Oman's efforts to promote food security through national policies and its humanitarian contributions, especially in relation to the Palestinian people.

Saleh Yahya al Maskari, head

of the Department of Global Affairs at the Foreign Ministry, stressed that the right to food is not only about food availability but also about its diversity, affordability, and accessibility. "The worsening food crisis in Gaza, exacerbated by the closure of crossings and the denial of hu-

manitarian aid, represents a clear violation of international conventions and humanitarian law, which mandates that basic needs be provided to civilians without obstruction," he said.

He added that Oman continues to prioritise food security and is advancing efforts to strengthen the system in line with Oman Vision 2040, focusing on resilient agri-food systems capable of meeting global challenges. Dr Rashid bin Hamad al Balushi, Chairman of OHRC, noted that the observance of Arab Human Rights Day reaffirms Arab nations' commitment to upholding human rights principles.

MoL reports thousands of violations in Dhofar in 2024

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Labour (MoL) has released the findings of its inspection campaigns conducted in 2024 in Dhofar, showing significant non-compliance with the country's labour laws.

The inspections, carried out by the Joint Inspection Team Office in the General Directorate of Labour in Dhofar Governorate, totalled 1,599 campaigns across various private sector establishments.

A total of 3,853 violations were recorded during the inspections.

Among the violations, 499 workers were found to have abandoned their jobs, while 768 were discovered working for employers other than those to whom they were registered.

Additionally, 1,886 cases involved workers who were self-employed or held expired residency permits. Also 810 individuals were deported.

The ministry had referred 453 labour-related cases to the Public Prosecution for further legal action.



شانغري لا ر الزمعة مسقط
SHANGRI-LA
BARR AL JISSAH
MUSCAT



CELEBRATE THE SPIRIT OF
Togetherness

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

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

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

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

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

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

☎ 24776565 📞 79269247



جهاز الضرائب
TAX AUTHORITY



Announcement

The Tax Authority would inform taxpayers who are subject to Income Tax, and their fiscal year ends on **December 31, 2024**, to file their tax returns and pay their tax dues as follows:

- ▶ Establishments which are subject to **(3%)** of income tax shall file their tax returns no later than **March 30, 2025**.
- ▶ Taxpayers paying **(15%)** of income tax should file their tax returns no later than **April 30, 2025**.

All tax returns should be submitted according to the forms set for that purpose using the Tax Authority's online portal at **www.taxman.gov.om**

We hope all taxpayers comply with filing their tax returns on the deadline.







MSX to launch Promising Companies Market in 2025

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) is planning to launch a submarket, the 'Promising Companies Market,' this year to attract private and family-owned companies, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and startups with a market capitalisation of no less than RO500,000 to list on the exchange.

The establishment of the Promising Companies Market was decreed by Royal Decree No. 18/2025, issued in February. This reflects the royal vision to support the private sector and SMEs, enhance the business environment, and ensure the growth and sustainability of entrepreneurial companies, contributing to the diversification of the national economy.

In a statement to Oman News Agency, Haitham bin Salim al Salmi, CEO of the Muscat Stock Exchange, said the Promising Companies Market is expected to launch this year following the issuance of the executive regula-



The Muscat Stock Exchange has recently held meetings with more than 10 companies, and it is expected that a number of them will be listed in conjunction with the market's launch

HAITHAM BIN SALIM AL SALMI

tions by the Financial Services Authority (FSA).

"The Muscat Stock Exchange has recently held meetings with more than 10 companies, and it is hoped that a number of them will be listed in conjunction with the market's launch," Salmi said.

He explained that the new submarket aims to attract private companies and franchisees that meet the requirements for direct listing. Salmi added that the market will enable companies to benefit from the services available on the Muscat Stock Exchange, whether through subscriptions to finance their projects or exits, in addition to being listed directly on the stock exchange.

The Muscat Stock Exchange CEO pointed out that this market will be available to qualified investors and will feature several flexible incentives and requirements compared to the main market of the stock exchange. This will allow private companies and SMEs to list securities, raise capital, or issue debt instruments such as bonds and sukus.



Renewable energy in GCC to grow by 14% annually: IEA

Abu Dhabi, UAE - The International Energy Agency (IEA), in its latest Electricity 2025 report, has predicted significant growth in the renewable energy sector across the GCC and the Middle East region in the coming years.

Renewable generation is forecast to grow by approximately 14% per year during 2025-2027, albeit from a low baseline, with its share increasing from 5% to 7%, the IEA noted.

The report states that solar PV will dominate growth, with its share of renewable generation rising from around 55% to nearly 70% by 2027.

According to the IEA report, the United Arab Emirates has seen substantial gains in solar PV generation, accounting for the majority of solar growth in the region, with an annual average

growth rate of 23% for solar between 2025 and 2027.

The report further highlights, "Nuclear energy also played a more prominent role in power generation in 2024, increasing by 20% year-on-year, led by the UAE," which continues to enhance the contribution of nuclear power to a diversified and sustainable energy mix.

It also stated that gas-fired power generation grew by 2.9% in 2024, remaining the primary source of power in the region, and is forecast to accelerate to an average annual growth rate of 5.3% during 2025-2027. This is in line with government policies promoting further fuel switching from oil to gas, with its share of the electricity mix rising from 68% to 73%.

WAM

Private financings gain popularity among GCC issuers: S&P



Dubai UAE - Private capital financings are becoming an important funding source for issuers in the GCC region, according to S&P Global Ratings.

S&P's analysis of private financing transactions shows that private financiers have expanded their reach over time to provide funding to more mature and established companies, not just those at early development stages. Established companies received 79% of private financings in December 2024, up from 31% in 2015.

"On the demand side, private capital financing can be an alternative funding source for compa-

nies that are underserved by banks. On the supply side, regional private capital providers for GCC corporates, including sovereign wealth funds, will continue to diversify their geographic exposure to avoid over-relying on a single economy or region," S&P Global Ratings credit analyst Mohamed Damak said.

Private companies received most of the private capital financing in the GCC region, with investments concentrated on the largest deals. Over the past decade, the top 10 transactions accounted for about 80% of the total annual volume of private capital financings.

Omantel Innovation Labs showcases Omani startups at Mobile World Conference

Muscat, Oman - Omantel Innovation Labs announced its participation at 4 Years from Now (4YFN), the startup arm of the prestigious Mobile World Congress (MWC) event in Barcelona, Spain. The globally acclaimed event gathered industry leaders, technology innovators, and visionaries to showcase the latest advancements in mobile technology and digital innovation.

This year Omantel Innovation Labs showcased four graduates from its programmes, demonstrating local talent in the areas of AI, drones, data analytics, and e-procurement. In addition to having a space within the Omantel Innovation Labs booth, the startups also pitched their solutions on the 4YFN stage where they captivated audiences and sparked interest among global investors and technology leaders, showcasing Oman as a hub for technological excellence and entrepreneurial ambition.

Speaking on the participation,



H E Ghada al Said, Senior Manager of Omantel Innovation Labs, said, "It's a pleasure to be back at 4YFN to showcase Omani startups on a global platform. The startups that were selected represent the variety of startups within our portfolio, already have customers beyond Oman and are ready to scale. This event comes as part of our commitment to bridging local innovation

with global opportunities to advance Oman's digital transformation journey."

The four participating startups were: Bidbid, A B2B fintech and e-procurement platform revolutionising live bidding processes; iLab Marine, an automated underwater inspection platform for the maritime logistics sector; Orki, which is empowering individuals and online businesses

with AI-driven agent teams; and Zabonex, an Omantel employee-born startup that helps FMCG manufacturers and retailers to recapture the full value of their perishable products, reduce food waste and manage their stock through ML-powered dynamic distribution and sales prediction.

Additionally, Omantel Innovation Labs reaffirmed its strong collaboration with Alai'an, an in-

ternational alliance of telecom leaders, with whom Omantel partnered last year. This partnership focuses on advancing startup ecosystems through mentorship, funding, and global market exposure. Such collaborations continue to enrich the Lab's capabilities in empowering startups to scale and succeed.

Through its continued participation in prestigious global events like MWC and 4YFN, Omantel Innovation Labs reinforces its standing as a key player in the global tech ecosystem. By showcasing Oman-based startups on such an international platform, the Labs position Oman as a hub for innovation and entrepreneurship, while demonstrating their ability to bridge local talent with global opportunities. Strategic collaborations, such as Omantel's partnership with Alai'an, further underscore the Labs' commitment to connecting Oman's innovations with world-leading tech ecosystems.

COMMENTARY

OMAN'S AIR CONDITIONING MARKET



ALI MOHAMMAD
AKBAR KHAN

When I first arrived in Oman two years ago, I heard a local joke: "Oman has three types of weather - Hot, Hotter, and Too Hot!" This is no joke; particularly during the summer, when temperatures can exceed 50°C, air conditioners are essential. As temperatures rise, so does the demand for cooling solutions. By 2025, Oman's air conditioning market is projected to reach \$129mn, despite challenges in value growth and changing consumer preferences. Rapid technological advancements, a focus on energy efficiency, and growing price sensitivity will be pivotal in shaping the future of Oman's AC landscape.

Oman's air conditioning market is experiencing significant fluctuations. In 2022, the market peaked at \$231mn, driven by soaring demand for cooling solutions. However, in 2023, it faced a sharp decline, dropping about 36% to \$147.7mn. This downturn resulted from various factors, including price-sensitive consumers, global economic challenges, and increased competition from budget-friendly

Oman AC market: 2025 projections	
Metric	Value
Projected Revenue (2025)	\$129mn
Annual Growth Rate (2025-2030)	6.10%
Per Household Revenue (2025)	\$139.45
Projected Volume (2025)	307,200 units
Projected Volume Growth (2026)	4.20%
Average Volume per Household	0.28 pieces

alternatives.

Despite these setbacks, 2024 has brought a glimmer of hope, with a 13% rebound to \$168mn. Yet, caution is warranted as projections for 2025 indicate another decline to \$129mn, a 23% drop from the previous year. This trend suggests that while unit sales may stabilise, market value is under pressure from consumers focused on affordability and the rising popularity of energy-efficient options. Oman's air conditioning market is in transition, with a story that is far from over.

Oman's AC market is on the up, thanks to a few big trends. First off, energy efficiency is a

huge focus. With electricity prices going up, more people are looking for ACs that save them money in the long run. Manufacturers are catching on, using smarter tech and better refrigerants to meet this demand. Speaking of smart tech, the rise of smart homes is also pushing people towards ACs that can be controlled remotely and come with features like energy management and self-diagnostics.

On top of that, sustainability is becoming more important, and eco-friendly refrigerants like R-32 are gaining traction as people become more aware of environmental issues. Of course, price is still a big factor, so distributors need to find a balance between offering high-tech, energy-efficient models and affordable options. It's clear that the future of ACs in Oman is all about smart, sustainable, and cost-effective solutions.

These figures highlight the market's long-term growth potential, with a 6.1% CAGR expected from 2025 to 2030. The estimated sales of 307,200 units projected for 2025 indicate a positive trajectory.

The Road Ahead

Oman's air conditioning market is entering an exciting period of transformation. While challenges remain, particularly in value growth, innovation is driving the shift. The increasing demand for energy-efficient products presents unique opportunities for consumers and distributors alike.

Looking ahead to 2025, a turning point is on the horizon. Distributors must adapt quickly to the changing landscape and cater to the growing appetite for smart, eco-friendly, and cost-effective AC solutions. As temperatures rise and the need for cooling systems continues, the future of Oman's AC market looks promising for those ready to navigate these evolving trends.

The views and opinions expressed in this column are solely those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of Muscat Daily or Apex Press & Publishing

Trump tariffs prompt backlash against US goods

Arthur Sullivan

Trump administration's uncompromising approach to trade tariffs appears to have sparked a trend in opposition: boycott campaigns against American products from consumers and companies

Scandinavian countries and Canada are at the forefront of a growing international trend, in which some consumers are shunning US goods because of President Donald Trump's decision to place tariffs on a range of products from all over the world.

Several Facebook groups have been set up in recent weeks aimed at organising boycotts and campaigns. A Swedish group called "Bojkotta varor fran USA" in Swedish, meaning "Boycott goods from the US," had almost 80,000 members at the time of writing.

It describes its purpose as to "protect democracy, self-determination and security," and says it hopes boycotts will put pressure on the Trump administration. The use of the American platform Facebook is justified as it is "the best weapon," it added. Several similar Canadian groups have started on Facebook, while a French group called "BOYCOTT USA: Achetez Français et Européen!" - BOYCOTT USA: Buy French and European! - has over 20,000 members.

There also appears to be support for a similar stance in Germany. A survey by the research group Civey for the business newspaper Handelsblatt found that 64% of Germans would prefer to avoid US products, if possible. A slim majority said Trump's policies are already influencing their choices when shopping. Tesla sales drop amid Musk



wrath

There is limited data available so far to show if such campaigns are having an impact. However, one of the US products with an especially tangible link to the Trump administration is Tesla. The electric car brand is run by Elon Musk, a senior adviser to Trump currently tasked with run-

ning the newly established Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE).

Tesla sales in Europe plummeted in January, according to data from the European Automobile Manufacturers' Association, dropping 45% from the same period in 2024. Tesla sales in Europe fell throughout 2024, down

13% across the European Union.

Van Dyk said boycotts have become popular across the political divide, pointing to the example of the boycott of Bud Light beer in the US which began in April 2023.

The boycott came in response to a Bud Light ad campaign fronted by a transgender person,

which led to a backlash and boycott from American conservatives and a significant drop in sales for the beer.

Anti-Trump sentiment Sentiment against US goods appears to be particularly strong in Canada. Trump has plowed ahead with 25% tariffs, against Canada despite the countries being long-standing allies and sharing a nearly 9,000-kilometer border.

Trump has also repeatedly talked about making Canada the US' 51st state and has referred to the country's outgoing prime minister, Justin Trudeau, as "Governor Trudeau" in an apparently public and intended display of disrespect.

That has all led to a serious backlash from Canadians. Rising anti-Trump sentiment has seen the Liberal Party, previously run by Trudeau and now by incoming

prime minister Mark Carney, stage a dramatic recovery in polls. In early 2025, it trailed the Conservative Party by 25% but a stunning turnaround now sees it leading many polls.

That mood is increasingly reflected among consumers. Dylan Lobo runs a website called "Made in CA," which aims to provide an online directory of Canadian-made goods. He told Business Insider magazine that his website had recently seen a major surge in traffic.

"There's a lot of patriotism right now in this country," he told the magazine. "There's a huge sense that Canadians want to support other Canadians."

Several apps have even emerged, such as Buy Beaver and Maple Scan, that help shoppers identify US products when shopping. DW



شركة عمان والإمارات للاستثمار
OMAN & EMIRATES INVESTMENT HOLDING CO. SAOG

Board of Directors' Report - 2024

Honorable Shareholders,

On behalf of the Board of Directors of Oman & Emirates Investment Holding Company (O&E), I present the Annual Report for 2024 containing the audited financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2024. An overview is provided below on the macroeconomic and business environment the Company faced during the year, the challenges encountered, the mitigating actions taken and the overall financial performance.

Business Environment in Retrospect

Economic growth in the GCC region rose to 3.7% in 2024 and is expected to accelerate in the coming years, rising to 4.5% in 2025 and, according to the GCC Statistical Center, the region's GDP is expected to grow 3.5% in 2026. This accelerated growth was attributed to an increase in oil production in the coming two years and a continued recovery in key sectors including tourism, transportation and infrastructure. The report also expects the GCC region's growing non-oil sector to significantly boost GDP growth going forward.

Oman's economy maintained steady growth in 2024, supported by a strong performance in non-petroleum activities, despite a decline in oil sector revenues and foreign direct investment flows which reflects weaker investor sentiment. Oman needs to attract more foreign capital and strengthen trade partnerships. The inflation rate averaged 1%, indicating stable consumer prices.

By the end of 2024, MSX Index recorded a growth of 1.4%, ADX a decline of 1.7% and DFM showed a growth of 27.0% compared to 2023 during which MSX recorded a decline of 7.1%, ADX a decline of 6.2% and DFM a growth of 21.7% respectively. The stock market is viewed as an indicator of economic growth, a vital part in monetary policy and its stability or volatility is monitored as a development indicator.

Financial Strategy during 2024

Cash flow management was the highest priority during 2024. Management maintained a balanced financial strategy between reduction in costs and bank borrowings and providing financial support to enable implementation of the turnaround plans of three investee companies. This has been a year of strategic decision-making, with a focus on stabilizing and strengthening our portfolio of investments. We have taken proactive steps to support a subsidiary and associates facing financial challenges, ensuring long-term value creation for our stakeholders.

For over two decades, the Company and its Shareholders benefited from the interest-free Soft Loan extended by the two Governments. The fifth tranche was due in November 2024, but negotiations are being held to reschedule the outstanding RO 5 million over a longer period.

Financial Performance

The results of the Company's investments are outlined in greater detail in the body of this Annual Report. A snapshot of the Group's financial statements for 2024, consolidating the results of the Parent Company, its Subsidiary and Associates, reflects the sustained efforts in handling business challenges under the prevailing economic environment. The performance highlights during 2024 are summarized as follows:

- The Group recorded a Net Profit of RO 363,085 during 2024 attributable to owners of the Parent Company compared to a Net Profit of RO 179,933 during 2023. The Parent Company achieved a Net Profit of RO 701,012 during 2024 compared to a Net Profit of RO 346,334 during 2023.
- The Shareholders' Equity increased slightly to RO 22,784 million as of 31 December 2024 from RO 22,421 million as of 31 December 2023, against Share Capital of RO 12,187,500, registering an increase in equity of 1.62%.
- The aggregate value of the Group's investments decreased to RO 30,902 million as of 31 December 2024 from RO 31,176 million as of 31 December 2023.
- The Parent Company's total borrowings reduced from RO 7,655 million as of 31 December 2023 to RO 7,127 million as of 31 December 2024 and consists of RO 5.0 million Government Soft Loan, bank loans for operations amounting to RO 1,441 million and the Head Office Building Loan of RO 0.686 million.
- Against the Net Equity of RO 24,351 million of the Parent Company, the Debt-to-Equity Ratio stood at 0.29 at end 2024, down from 0.32 in 2023.

In summary, the Parent Company performed better than 2023 with higher than expected income from dividends, lower costs and better anticipated results from Associates, particularly from Oman Fibre Optic Co. SAOC. Despite the massive impact of a very challenging prevailing environment over the past years, the Company's overall financial structure is now better balanced to face future sustained income uncertainties. The investment environment presents opportunities that we have now started exploring.

Results of the Group

The following table provides the Company's financial development snapshot showing the earnings per share and gearing ratios over the past five years:

Particulars	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Equity Share Capital	12.187	12.187	12.187	12.187	12.187
Net Equity	19.551	21.073	23.157	22.421	22.784
Investments	43.771	38.690	32.540	31.176	30.902
Net Profit / (Loss) Before Tax	(1.931)	2.168	1.774	0.402	0.363
Book value per share – RO	0.160	0.173	0.190	0.184	0.187
Earnings per share – RO	(0.014)	0.013	0.017	0.0015	0.003
Debt/ Equity Ratio	1.26	0.79	0.40	0.32	0.29

Investment Portfolio at Year End

The Management Discussion & Analysis Report describes the sectoral diversification of the Parent Company's portfolio. As of the reporting date, the Company's total investment portfolio carries a value of RO 28.88 million, of which RO 24.88 million (86%) is concentrated in four key assets: 33.91% in tourism and hotels, 20.38% in the banking sector, 18.86% in fibre optic manufacturing, and 12.86% in asset management companies. The remaining RO 4.0 million is diversified across various other sectors, ensuring a balanced approach to risk management and long-term growth opportunities.

Management will continue to prioritize reshuffling the portfolio with asset classification by risk and liquidity (e.g. equities/ stocks, fixed income/ bonds and cash equivalent or money market instruments) and building a portfolio base consisting of readily liquid with regular income and return generating assets.

Strategic Support for Distressed Investments

As part of our commitment to sustainable growth and responsible investment management, the Board resolved to provide financial and operational support to three key portfolio companies undergoing financial distress. These strategic interventions are designed to restore viability and enhance value creation for our shareholders.

1. Omani Euro Food Industries Co. SAOG

Our subsidiary engaged in the production of baby food products has been facing significant operational and financial difficulties. The Board endorsed a comprehensive turnaround plan aimed at streamlining production processes, enhancing brand positioning, and optimizing cost structures. Strategic initiatives, including process efficiencies, product innovation, and targeted marketing efforts, will be implemented to reposition the company for sustainable profitability. O&E holds 80.84% stake in this subsidiary.

2. National Aluminium Products Co. SAOG

This aluminium extrusion investee company, where O&E holds 13.3% stake, has been challenged by liquidity constraints and an unsustainable debt burden on the verge of shutting down. In response, jointly with its board, we have engaged all year long with government agencies for support not to let this unique manufacturing company

fall, with financial institutions to negotiate and secure a viable debt restructuring arrangement and with other major shareholders to contribute additional funding, the latter being a condition precedent imposed by the banks to restructure outstanding obligations and the government to extend facility. The Board, along with the other major shareholder, has approved a capital injection plan to support working capital needs and stabilize operations, ensuring that the company can capitalize on market opportunities while restoring financial health.

Aluminium demand is expected to rise, particularly for renewable energy projects and construction, presenting opportunities for Oman's aluminum sector to expand exports.

3. Oman Hotels & Tourism Co. SAOC:

Our associate company in the tourism sector, where we hold 31.72% stake, is in the process of remodeling a key hotel property to enhance its competitive positioning. However, delays in project completion due to funding constraints have impacted progress. Recognizing the potential long-term value of this investment, the Board has approved financial support to facilitate the timely completion of the remodeling efforts. This will enable the company to enhance its service offerings, attract premium clientele, and improve revenue generation in a recovering travel market. This being an associate company, the forthcoming Annual General Meeting includes a Related Party Transaction agenda item being presented for approval in compliance with the ninth principle of the Code.

Commitment to Sustainable Growth

While addressing these challenges, our focus remains on maximizing shareholder value through prudent capital allocation, risk management, and operational excellence. The Board is confident that these strategic interventions will yield positive results, restoring financial health and driving long-term returns across our investment portfolio.

Disclaimer of Opinion on the financial statements of a Subsidiary (FINCORP)

During the year ended 31 December 2024, the auditors of our subsidiary, The Financial Corporation (FINCORP), issued a disclaimer of opinion on the subsidiary's financial statements. The disclaimer was issued due to the auditors being unable to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence to verify the subsidiary's payable and receivable balances as of 31 December 2024, primarily because of incomplete confirmation procedures. The affected balances primarily relate to "Trade and Other Receivables" stated at RO 0.902 million and "Trade and Other Payables" stated at RO 0.771 million, which were impacted due to identified inappropriate transactions that continue to be verified by an independent forensic audit firm appointed by the Board of FINCORP. However, based on the findings of the forensic auditors to date, FINCORP has made a provision of RO 600,000.

Despite these uncertainties, all other assets, including bank balances and cash of RO 1.6 million and investments of RO 5.9 million, amounting to a total of RO 7.5 million, are correctly stated. FINCORP's net equity stands at RO 7.09 million as per the reported financial statements.

We have disclosed the nature of the disclaimer and the associated uncertainties in our consolidated financial statements. We acknowledge the impact of these discrepancies and would like to assure shareholders that this matter is being actively addressed. The board and Management of FINCORP are working diligently to resolve the issue, and we anticipate that the verification of these balances will be completed during 2025. The board of FINCORP is committed to strengthening internal controls to prevent recurrence and enhance financial transparency.

While this matter has introduced some uncertainty, in the worst-case scenario outcome, it may reduce the Parent Company's investment in FINCORP to the maximum extent of RO 3.6 million out of a Net Equity of RO 24.3 million as of 31 December 2024. We will continuously update the shareholders on the above matter during our quarterly reporting.

Head Office building

The Head Office building is occupied by reputed tenants on long-term tenancy agreements, but a few vacant units remain to be filled.

Corporate Governance

Management continues to uphold the sound corporate culture established in the Company as manifested by shared values and transparent governing policies. Our Company's governance system has been fully integrated with ethical business practices, which meet the high standards expected by the Authorities.

Internal Control Systems and their adequacy

The Company has a robust internal audit system and strict adherence is monitored to ensure compliance with the procedures and operating systems. There was no breach of internal control during 2024.

Global Outlook 2025 and Sector Specific Trends

The Board recognizes key uncertainties and risks that may impact on our investment strategy and portfolio performance. Looking ahead to 2025, the global economic landscape remains dynamic, shaped by key macroeconomic trends, geopolitical shifts, and technological advancements. On sector specific trend...:

- The baby food sector is expected to witness increased demand due to rising health-conscious consumer preferences and demographic shifts. Companies that emphasize innovation, sustainability, and digital distribution will have a competitive edge.
- The aluminum market is poised for growth, supported by the renewable energy transition and infrastructure investments. However, supply chain disruptions and raw material costs will remain key concerns.
- Oman's tourism sector is set to expand with major infrastructure projects, including luxury resorts, eco-tourism initiatives, and cultural heritage developments. Hotels that enhance customer experience and leverage technology will gain a competitive advantage.
- The banking industry is expected to maintain stable growth driven by digital transformation and increasing financial inclusion, but interest rate fluctuations will influence profitability.
- The demand for fibre optic infrastructure is set to rise significantly due to the acceleration of 5G networks, smart city initiatives, and digital transformation across industries. Increased investment in high-speed broadband and data centers will drive expansion in this sector.

The investment environment presents both challenges and opportunities, requiring strategic agility and resilience. Starting 2025, the objective remains to ensure predictable and stable cash flows to cover all operating costs and start investing to achieve capital growth that reflects consistent earnings per share.

People:

On behalf of the Board, I express appreciation for the dedication and the transformational results delivered by the Executive Management and all employees of the Company during the difficult times experienced by the world over the past years. The Company embraced a working environment and a culture that focused sharply on transformation and sustainability.

Acknowledgment

On behalf of the Board, I express our sincere gratitude to His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik, Sultan of Oman, and His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the United Arab Emirates, for their support. May God's grace be bestowed on them towards having a good health and long life to achieve greater success in all their endeavours.

I also take this opportunity to convey our heartfelt gratitude to the Governments of the Sultanate of Oman and United Arab Emirates, to the Financial Services Authority, banks for their support, and to Shareholders for their continued involvement with the Company.

Mohamed Abdulla Al Khonji

Chairman

12th March 2025

P.O. Box 2205, Ruwi, Postal Code 112, Sultanate of Oman
Tel: +968 24489458, Fax: +968 24489465,
E-mail: oeiooman@omantel.net.om
Website: www.omanemirates.com

Consolidated and separate statement of financial position as at 31 December 2024

	31 December 2024	Group 31 December 2023	Parent 31 December 2024	Parent 31 December 2023
ASSETS				
Cash and bank balances	2,155,379	1,419,372	412,139	266,746
Trade and other receivables	1,338,029	1,307,712	175,021	74,976
Inventories	292,582	446,409	-	-
Investments at fair value through profit or loss	13,852,346	14,731,511	10,012,944	10,375,967
Investment in associates	17,049,614	16,444,544	15,241,212	14,611,372
Investment in subsidiaries	-	-	3,630,363	3,852,231
Investment property	2,702,250	2,826,450	2,432,250	2,556,450
Property, plant and equipment	1,758,187	1,993,075	272,836	326,283
Right-of-use assets	358,975	372,270	-	-
Deferred tax assets	46,507	61,071	-	-
TOTAL ASSETS	39,553,869	39,602,414	32,176,765	32,064,025
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES				
Capital and reserves				
Share capital	12,187,500	12,187,500	12,187,500	12,187,500
Legal reserve	5,062,733	5,062,733	4,062,500	4,062,500
Retained earnings	5,533,574	5,170,489	8,101,053	7,400,041
Total capital and reserves of the Parent Company	22,783,807	22,420,722	24,351,053	23,650,041
Non-controlling interest	3,088,911	3,380,490	-	-
TOTAL CAPITAL AND RESERVES	25,872,718	25,801,212	24,351,053	23,650,041
LIABILITIES				
Lease liability	401,564	400,615	-	-
Bank borrowings	68,608	94,144	-	25,836
Term loan	2,127,371	2,629,917	2,127,371	2,629,917
Trade and other payables	2,430,608	2,023,526	698,341	758,231
Loan from Government	8,301,526	5,000,000	4,308,120	4,648,526
Deferred Government grants	351,474	3,653,000	691,880	351,474
Total liabilities	13,681,151	13,801,202	7,825,712	8,413,984
TOTAL EQUITY AND LIABILITIES	39,553,869	39,602,414	32,176,765	32,064,025
Net assets per share	0.187	0.184	0.200	0.194

Consolidated and separate statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income for the year ended 31 December 2024

	Year ended 31 December 2024	Group Year ended 31 December 2023	Parent Year ended 31 December 2024	Parent Year ended 31 December 2023
Income				
Net investment income	1,165,962	1,100,900	587,586	382,634
Share of profit from investment in associates	1,261,925	948,346	1,159,342	682,315
Share of (loss)/profit from investment in subsidiaries	-	-	(221,869)	256,197
Gross profit on sale of food products	56,290	211,975	-	-
Other income	106,339	56,832	68,000	1,737
Total income	2,590,516	2,318,053	1,593,059	1,322,883
Expenses				
Salaries and other related staff costs	(761,710)	(781,401)	(317,160)	(348,425)
Administrative expenses	(784,698)	(738,993)	(350,154)	(395,753)
Directors' remuneration	-	(51,100)	-	(68,000)
Provision for claims	(600,000)	-	-	-
Total expenses	(2,146,408)	(1,571,494)	(667,314)	(812,178)
Net income	444,108	746,559	925,745	510,705
Finance costs	(358,038)	(297,670)	(224,733)	(164,371)
Profit before tax for the year	86,070	448,889	701,012	346,334
Income tax	(14,564)	(17,296)	-	-
Net profit after tax and total comprehensive income for the year	71,506	431,593	701,012	346,334
Net profit after tax attributable to:				
Parent Company	363,085	179,933	701,012	346,334
Non-controlling interest	(291,579)	204,760	-	-
	71,506	384,693	701,012	346,334
Earnings per share - basic and diluted	0.003	0.001	0.006	0.003

Note: The complete Financial Statements of the Company in Arabic or English will be made available to any shareholder on request.

Muscat Municipality marks Arab City Day promoting resilient cities

The Sultanate of Oman, represented by Muscat Municipality, joined its Arab counterparts in celebrating Arab City Day, observed annually on March 15.

This year's theme - Resilient and Enduring Cities - highlights 58 years since the founding of the Arab Towns Organization in 1967. Through its efforts, Muscat Municipality seeks to share expertise, leverage global experiences, and drive growth and prosperity while achieving national development goals.

In his speech on the occasion, Abdulrahman Hisham al Asfour, Secretary-General of the organisation, emphasised the significance of smart cities, stating: "This year's theme reflects a deep awareness that cities represent the future of global life. With growing global challenges - climate change, health crises, urban expansion, and geopolitical shifts - the need for resilient cities is more urgent than ever."

Asfour added that resilient cities rely on sustainable urban planning, robust infrastructure, economic diversity, community engagement, and smart technology. These factors enhance adaptability and ensure cities can withstand environmental, economic, and social shifts.



This year's theme - Resilient and Enduring Cities - reflects a deep awareness that cities represent the future of global life. With growing global challenges the need for resilient cities is more urgent than ever

Ahmed Mohammed al Humaidi, Chairman of Muscat Municipality, stated, "Muscat Municipality's participation in Arab City Day reaffirms its commitment to adopting the best strategies for urban resilience and sustainability. This includes infrastructure development, service enhancements, proactive responses to environmental and economic challenges, and the creation of innovative solutions that contribute to societal well-being. "These efforts align with Oman Vision 2040, which aims to enhance quality of life, boost the sultanate's competitiveness, and build a future-ready, sustainable society and economy."

Resilient cities go beyond infrastructure; they integrate social, economic, and environmental elements that enhance their ability to adapt to crises and challenges.

Muscat Municipality continues to improve quality of life through balanced urban planning, efficient resource management, and the implementation of smart solutions, ensuring a more sustainable and thriving city. Recognising the vital role of organizations in urban development, Muscat Municipality became a member of the Arab Towns Organization in 1971. Since then, it has strengthened international cooperation with cities, institutions, and organisations to enhance collaboration, share expertise, and advance sustainable urban development, ultimately driving growth.

Adams Sons Quran Competition

Adams Sons Quran Competition held its 21st edition of the competition on Thursday under the patronage of H E Dr Mohamed bin Said al Mamari, Minister of Endowments and Religious Affairs along with other honourable delegates.

Adams Sons Quran Competition which started in 2004 focuses on encouraging young teenagers and adults reciting the Quran in a perfect tone, as well encouraging the memorisation of the Holy Quran.

The programme started with the welcome remarks from Ismail Mohamed Adam al Saigh, Managing Director of Adam's Sons Jewellery. The competition consisted of four categories - Full Quran Hifz, Quran Hifz 15 Juz, Tilawa for the ages 15 and above and finally Tilawa for the ages 15 and below, around 200 participants, from eight nationalities, were registered in the competition and all were examined by a panel of well-known Sheikhs in the country.

This year Adam's Sons Quran Competition upgraded its registration process to be filled digitally.

Bank Muscat recognised as 'Best Large Call Centre' at Middle East level

Bank Muscat Contact Centre, has been recently awarded the prestigious 'Best Large Call Centre' award at the INSIGHTS Middle East- Regional Call Centres Awards, one of the most respected recognitions in the customer service industry, highlighting the bank's unwavering commitment to delivering exceptional customer service and enhancing the customer experience at every touchpoint.

The bank's contact centre is the largest centre in the banking sector in Oman. It provides various services around the clock and all days of the week to ensure various banking services and facilities are delivered to customers more quickly and efficiently.

The INSIGHTS Middle East-Regional Call Centers Awards, are renowned for their rigorous evaluation process, which includes comprehensive assessments and benchmarks across a variety of customer service metrics. Recognised globally, the awards are dedicated to acknowledging the best in customer service, celebrating establishments that exemplify quality, efficiency, and innovation in their customer support functions.

The award recognises organisations that demonstrate excellence in key areas, including customer satisfaction, operational efficiency, innovation in customer service processes, and employee engagement. Bank Muscat stood out for its commitment to personalised customer interactions, use of advanced technology, and consistent efforts to improve response times and resolution accuracy, all of which contribute to a seamless and rewarding experience for customers.

"This prestigious award is a testament to the hard work, dedication, and customer-first approach that define our contact centre team," said Talal Abdul Hameed al Zadjali, Deputy General Manager - Operations, Bank Muscat.

"We continuously strive to innovate and enhance our service delivery, making sure that our customers receive the highest level of support and satisfaction.



This recognition from INSIGHTS reinforces our commitment to excellence and motivates us to push the boundaries of what exceptional customer service can be. I would like to thank our Contact Centre Team for their dedication to apply the bank's vision and enhance customer experience," he added.

Bank Muscat is proud of this achievement and remains dedicated to advancing its customer service standards. Looking forward to the future, the bank is committed to building on this success and continuing its journey of excellence in customer experience, leveraging new technologies and empowering its team to deliver unparalleled service for years to come. The bank strives to attract qualified and talented Omani cadres to the centers and upgrade its technologies. It operates the center with over 170 team members who demonstrate competency in running the center to provide the best service to customers.

Bank Muscat's contact center offers a wide range of services, including money transfers, information about the bank's products and services, inquiries about account opening procedures, credit card balance details and statements, loan information, fixed deposit interest rates, and currency exchange rates.

Additionally, Bank Muscat customers can request card cancellations, account statements, cheque requests, credit card statements, utility bill payments (such as electricity and water bills), and many other services designed to complete customer transactions accurately and promptly.



Muscat Governorate holds 'Treasury Programme' training

Muscat Governorate conducted a specialised training programme entitled 'Treasury Programme' within its efforts to enhance the operational and administrative efficiency of financial resources on Wednesday.

This programme targeted the administrative and financial affairs managers and accountants in walis' offices, to provide them with the required skills to deal with financial and administrative procedures efficiently.

Thus, ensuring their speed and accuracy. It also focused on educating them on methods to facilitate financial processes through the modern techniques of the 'Treasury Programme'.

As well as, reviewing the most important developments related to the programme, especially the specification of expenditure areas according to the budget type.

This programme is part of a series of training programmes delivered by the governorate within its continuous efforts to develop its employees' skills and its commitment to achieve institutional excellence and improve the efficiency of government performance.

Drive in luxury with exclusive Ramadan offers from Lynk & Co

This Ramadan, Lynk & Co invites you to seize the season with exclusive offers that make owning luxury more attainable than ever. Enjoy our limited-time Ramadan deals from February 24 to April 15. These offers combine attractive starting prices with a suite of tailored benefits on all models, ensuring every journey becomes a celebration of innovation, style and performance.

During this festive period, benefit from unbeatable deals including four years of free unlimited service, a comprehensive six-year extended warranty covering unlimited kilometres and six years of AAA roadside assistance. With flexible trade-in options and attractive starting



prices across our entire lineup, there's never been a better time to upgrade your drive.

Notably, the newly launched Lynk & Co 06, a sporty SUV, is available at an irresistible starting price of just RO6,966.

Experience the perfect blend of style, performance and innovation with Lynk & Co's diverse

lineup. The Lynk & Co 01 dazzles with its sleek design and smart connectivity, perfect for urban adventures.

The 03 and 03+ models deliver exhilarating sporty performance and cutting-edge technology for a racing drive, while the robust Lynk & Co 05 offers both power and refined luxury

for those with a taste for adventure. The spacious Lynk & Co 09 provides unmatched comfort and versatility for family journeys and the Lynk & Co 06 stands out with its sporty design and competitive pricing, making it an irresistible choice for drivers seeking both innovation and value.

Every vehicle purchased during this special Ramadan season comes with a comprehensive benefits package designed to provide ongoing value and peace of mind. Enjoy four years of free unlimited service package to keep your vehicle in pristine condition along with a six-year warranty that covers unlimited kilometres and includes reliable roadside assistance.

These outstanding after-sales benefits, combined with flexible trade-in options ensure that upgrading to a Lynk & Co is both rewarding and hassle-free.

Vocational, technical education aligns with labour market requirements

The Ministry of Education (MoE), represented by the Directorate-General of Vocational and Technical Education, continues to implement its plans aimed at enhancing vocational and technical education, in line with labour market requirements and achieving the goals of Oman Vision 2040.

As part of the ongoing implementation of this educational path, the current academic year has witnessed a series of development activities and projects targeting business administration, information technology, and engineering and industrial specialisations, along with preparations are underway to receive students for the upcoming academic year 2025-26.

The directorate has delivered to students in private training institutions all the second semester books in engineering and industrial specialisations, which include: engineering maintenance, mechanical manufacturing engineering, occupational health and safety, maintenance of solid structures, lifting and lowering operations, welding, and metal forming.

These curricula were prepared under the supervision of



the Oman Energy Association (OPAL), and scientific and technical review by experts from the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Education. Work is currently underway to prepare and equip the curricula for grade 12 for the first and second semesters to ensure the continued development of this track.

In preparation for the academic year 2025-26, and the

registration of students wishing to join the vocational and technical education track in the offered specialisations targeting 150 students in business administration and information technology, and 600 students in engineering and industrial specialisations, the directorate implemented a number of awareness and educational programmes in post-basic education schools in the gover-

norates of Muscat and North Batinah, in cooperation between the Centre for Career Guidance and Student Counseling, and the relevant departments in the two governorates.

These programmes included field visits to schools to introduce students and parents to vocational and technical education, and to provide the necessary support and guidance to those

wishing to register, in addition to the directorate's participation in the exhibition of university specialisations and training programmes organised by the Directorate-General of Education in North Batinah.

The directorate is also preparing to participate in the Muscat Book Fair in its 29th edition, with the aim of spreading awareness about vocational and technical



The current academic year has witnessed a series of activities targeting business administration, information technology and engineering specialisations

education to all segments of society. The directorate conducted technical and evaluation visits to schools implementing vocational and technical education in the fields of business administration and information technology, as well as private training institutions implementing engineering and industrial specialisations, to monitor the progress of the educational process and ensure the achievement of the desired objectives of this track.

Several meetings were held

with partners in the relevant authorities to discuss administrative and logistical aspects, and procedures for contracting with training institutions, in addition to coordination with the Ministry of Higher Education, Scientific Research, and Innovation, to ensure that outputs are aligned with the requirements of higher education and unified admission.

Oman is moving towards strengthening this educational path, making it a fundamental pillar in qualifying national cadres.

Malabar Gold & Diamonds ropes in Taageer Finance for jewellery financing

Malabar Gold & Diamonds, the 6th largest jewellery retailer globally with over 380 showrooms across 13 countries, has tied up with Taageer Finance Co to offer an easy jewellery financing facility for customers in Oman.

This collaboration will enable customers in Oman to purchase jewellery from Malabar Gold & Diamonds with financial support from Taageer Finance Co SAOG, making exquisite gold & diamond jewellery from Malabar Gold & Diamonds more accessible.

Under this agreement, Omani customers can avail of tailored loan solutions to finance their jewellery purchases, with a maximum loan tenure of up to eight years. The financing process is designed to be hassle-free and flexible, allowing customers to choose repayment plans that best suit their financial needs.

This initiative is aimed at making jewellery ownership easier, especially for those looking to purchase jewellery for special occasions such as weddings, festivals, and investment purposes.

Speaking about the partnership, Najeeb K, Regional Head of Malabar Gold & Diamonds - Oman, stated, "At Malabar Gold & Diamonds, our goal has always been to make jewellery shopping a seamless and rewarding experience. Through our partnership with Tageer Finance, we are offering our customers in Oman a convenient and structured financing solution that allows them to own their desired jewellery without financial strain.

"This initiative reflects our commitment to providing innovative and customer-friendly solutions while ensuring affordability and ease of purchase."

With this initiative, Malabar



Now Omani customers can avail of tailored loan solutions to finance their jewellery purchases, with a maximum loan tenure of up to eight years

Gold & Diamonds continues to strengthen its position as a customer-centric brand, providing not only exquisite jewellery but also value-added services that enhance the overall shopping experience. Customers can visit their nearest Malabar Gold & Diamonds showroom in Oman to learn more about the financing options available and take advantage of this exclusive facility.

Malabar Gold & Diamonds was established in 1993 and is the flagship company of Malabar Group, a leading diversified Indian business conglomerate.

With an annual turnover of US\$6.2bn, the company currently ranks as the 6th largest jewellery retailer globally and today has a strong retail network of 380 outlets spread

across 13 countries in addition to multiple offices, design centers, wholesale units, and factories spread across India, Middle East, Far East, the USA, the UK, Canada and Australia. The group, owned by more than 4,000 shareholders, has more than 22,000 professionals from over 26 countries working towards its continued success. Malabar Gold & Diamonds also features an online store www.malabargoldanddiamonds.com providing customers the opportunity to purchase their favourite jewellery at any time and on any day from the comfort of their homes.

The group also operates MGD - Lifestyle Jewellery, a retail concept offering trendy and light weight jewellery that represents the independent and the modern woman through its designs and collections.

ESG (Environmental, Social & Governance) has been the primary commitment of the group since its inception. The key ESG focus area of Malabar Group are Health, Housing, Hunger Free World, Education, Environment and Women empowerment. Malabar Group periodically strengthens its ESG goals to remain a socially responsible organisation.

Sohar International partners with Arabian Falcon Insurance Company

Reinforcing its commitment to delivering customer-centric financial solutions, Sohar International has partnered with Arabian Falcon Insurance Company to introduce a suite of exclusive insurance products.

Designed to provide both financial security and peace of mind, the newly launched Family Protection Plan and Life Protect offer comprehensive coverage at competitive rates, ensuring long-term financial well-being for customers. This strategic collaboration reflects Sohar International's commitment to going beyond traditional banking by integrating value-driven financial protection solutions.

The partnership aims to empower individuals and families with accessible, innovative, and inclusive insurance offerings that cater to their evolving needs.

Commenting on the partnership, Abdul Qader al Sumali,



Chief Retail and Premier Banking Officer, at Sohar International, stated, "At Sohar International, we believe that financial well-being extends beyond wealth management - it is about creating a robust safety net that enables individuals to plan for the future with confidence."

Through this strategic alliance with Arabian Falcon Insurance

Company, he said, the bank is redefining the role of banks in delivering integrated financial protection. "These exclusive insurance solutions ensure that our customers have seamless access to comprehensive coverage without the complexities traditionally associated with insurance products."

"This partnership underscores

our dedication to continuous innovation, providing meaningful solutions that support both individual aspirations and broader economic stability."

The newly introduced Family Protection Plan (FPP) and Life Protect offer several key benefits, ensuring flexibility and affordability for individuals aged 18 to 64, with a maximum coverage age of 65. Coverage options range from RO10,000 to RO50,000, allowing customers to tailor their plans based on their financial protection needs.

Customers wishing to benefit from these plans can visit the bank's branches or contact the bank's call centre.

Roland Zaatar, Chief Executive Officer of Arabian Falcon Insurance Company, said, "We are pleased to partner with a bank that prioritises financial security and shares our commitment to accessibility and inclusivity.

AWASR decorated with Ookla's 'Fastest Internet in Oman' Speedtest award

AWASR has marked another milestone in its journey as the sultanate's first specialised high-speed broadband Internet service provider, with its winning of the Ookla Speedtest 'Fastest Internet in Oman' award for the eighth year in a row.

Ookla is known as a global leader in connectivity intelligence that provides consumers, businesses, and other organisations with data-driven insights to improve networks and connected experiences. Their Speedtest Awards ceremony, which took place this year at the 2025 Mobile World Congress in Barcelona, Spain, once again served to reward fast Internet speeds and coverage that service providers are delivering to their customers.

For 2024, and now for the eighth year in a row, AWASR



were handed Ookla's Fastest Internet in Oman award, as a result of achieving the fastest download and upload speeds in Oman for their customers.

"It is once again an honour for our team to receive this prestigious award in 2025, which re-

flects our ongoing commitment to keep pushing the boundaries of high-speed broadband Internet, and faster connectivity in the sultanate," said Adnan Mohamed al Alawi, Chief Executive Officer of AWASR.

"The award also reflects our

ambition over the years to have a positive impact on the lives of people in all communities, and in all sectors of society and industry, across Oman; while further supporting our nation's digital transformation."

Eugen Comendant, Chief Commercial Officer, AWASR, added, "AWASR's brand philosophy and ambition is to ensure our customers 'Experience Better'. To be recognised on the world stage by Ookla as the Fastest Internet in Oman for the eighth year in a row is therefore another great milestone for our company and for our commitment to providing our valued customers in Oman with the Internet speed, reliability, and innovation they deserve. A big thank you to our customers, partners, and expert teams for making this possible."

US: Trump stalled by judge after using 1798 deportation law

Washington, D.C., US - A US federal judge intervened on Saturday to halt deportations after President Donald Trump invoked an 18th-century law in an attempt to expel Venezuelans from the country.

Trump invoked Alien Enemies Act of 1798 - a sweeping wartime power that gives the president greater freedom to enact mass deportations - in response to the gang known as Tren de Aragua.

The White House claimed Tren de Aragua was linked to the government of Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro.

Trump claimed the gang was 'conducting irregular warfare against the territory of the United States both directly and at the direction, clandestine or otherwise, of the Maduro regime'. But critics warned that it was unprecedented for a president to use the Alien Enemies Act in such a way.



US President Donald Trump

Critics warned it was unprecedented for a president to use Alien Enemies Act in such a way

"Invoking it in peacetime to bypass conventional immigration law would be a staggering abuse," the Brennan Center for Justice wrote.

It said Trump's decision was 'at odds with centuries of legislative, presidential, and judicial practice.'

Trump's deportation order, which was actually signed on Friday night, gave authorities the power to detain and expel all Venezuelans identified as members of Tren de Aragua who are aged 14 and up and are not naturalised US citizens or lawful permanent residents.

The order allowed authorities

to bypass regular immigration proceedings and removed legal protections for those targeted. Trump announced the move on Saturday.

However, hours later, it was challenged in a lawsuit filed by rights groups the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and Democracy Forward.

The ACLU noted that the law had only been invoked three times: most recently for the internment of Japanese-American

civilians during World War II, as well as during World War I and the War of 1812.

It also argued that Trump did not have the authority to use it against a criminal gang instead of a state. US District Judge James E Boasberg ruled that the ACLU had a reasonable chance of success on those arguments and halted deportations for people already in custody for up to 14 days.

DW

What to expect of EU's meet on Syria?

It is the first time that Syria will be formally represented in the meet

Brussels, Belgium - After the fall of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's regime in December 2024, the EU was quick to call for an 'inclusive transition' in the country that would guarantee the rights of minorities and women in particular.

Ahead of this year's conference in support of Syria in Brussels, Kaja Kallas, the EU's high representative for foreign affairs and security policy, said that it would be a 'moment of immense responsibility'.

She added that 'no effort' must be spared 'to assist an inclusive transition that gives all Syrians a chance to rebuild their country in line with their aspirations'.

She pointed out that this was 'a time of dire needs and challenges for Syria, as tragically evidenced by the recent wave of violence in coastal areas'.

The deadliest fighting since Assad's ousting has taken place this month, with supporters of the new government and the previous regime clashing in the northwestern coastal city of Latakia. According to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights in London, UK, several hundred civilians were killed in massacres. Those targeted are reportedly mostly from the Alawite ethnoreligious minority, to which Assad



Syria is in dire need of reconstruction after 15 years of conflict

The deadliest fighting since Assad's ousting has taken place this month, with supporters of the new government and the previous regime clashing in the northwestern coastal city of Latakia

also belongs.

The EU and its member states have condemned the violence in the strongest possible terms.

The atrocities seem to have been committed by armed groups supporting the security forces of the transitional government, which has created a committee tasked with investigating

the killings of civilians and said that those responsible will be held to account. The EU has welcomed this announcement.

To be represented formally for first time

Though the EU's annual Syria conference is being held for the ninth time this year, it is the first

time that Syria will be formally represented. EU officials have confirmed that Syrian Foreign Minister Asaad Shaibani is expected to attend.

The interim government is headed by Ahmed al-Sharaa, who made a name for himself as the leader of the Islamist militia Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), which toppled Assad's regime. HTS was close to the al-Qaeda terrorist network in the past, which is one of the reasons the EU has been reluctant to cooperate with the new government in Syria, said Kristina Kausch, a political analyst at the German Marshall Fund of the United States

think tank. She said that its participation in the conference was a 'broad step towards (its) international legitimisation'.

In addition to high-ranking participants from Syria and Europe, representatives from the US, the United Nations and Syria's neighbouring countries are also expected to attend. The conference will begin with a political part focusing on the transition process, at which European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen is expected to speak. Concrete pledges of donations will follow.

At the last conference in 2024, a total of €7.5bn

(US\$8.2bn) was raised to help displaced Syrians both internally and in Syria's neighbouring countries. It comprised €5bn in grants and €2.5bn in loans. The hope is to raise even more funds this year, considering the damages caused by almost 15 years of war.

It is estimated that 16mn of Syria's 23mn inhabitants are dependent on humanitarian aid. They need food, shelter and medical care.

Until recently, one of the most important donors to Syria alongside the EU has been the US. But US President Donald Trump has already announced cuts to humanitarian aid around the world.

One of the aims of the Brussels conference is to highlight the message that Syria continues to need aid.

Reconstruction funds

Kausch, whose research focuses on Europe's relations with its neighbourhood and broader geopolitical trends in the Middle East, emphasised that the conference aims to save the country from immediate collapse.

She told DW that the country's new rulers had very little experience of governing and previous sources of income had dried up.

The conference will also be about reconstructing the war-torn country. So far, according to an EU source, the bloc has held back from pledging aid for reconstruction because of the sanctions imposed on Syria but now commitments are being made to help provide basic services such as electricity, water and health care. The EU also wants to assist Syria to rebuild its labour market, by granting microloans, for example. The idea is that the country should become self-sufficient.

In February, the EU suspended sanctions in key areas of energy and transport for example. It also plans 'to facilitate financial and banking transactions associated with such sectors and those needed for humanitarian and reconstruction purposes'.

Kausch welcomed this as a positive step but said it was not enough for the medium-term reconstruction of Syria.

She said that the EU was pursuing a 'step-by-step' approach in its dealings with the transitional government.

DW

Pope remains in hospital as condition improves

Vatican City - Pope Francis continues to recover in a hospital in Rome but still needs medical treatment, according to statements on Saturday by the Vatican.

The condition of the 88-year-old pope remains stable, according to the Holy See Press Office, that noted progress was observed in the past week and 'high-flow oxygen therapy continues, progressively reducing the need for non-invasive mechanical ventilation during the night'.

"The Holy Father still requires hospital medical care, as well as physiotherapy and respiratory physiotherapy. These therapies are currently showing further, gradual improvements," the Vatican stated.

Hospitalisation since February 14

Francis, the spiritual leader of Catholics and head of state of the Vatican, was unable to speak at two public events on February 9 and 12, indicating that he had



bronchitis and difficulty breathing. He asked aides to read the texts of his speeches.

On February 14, the pope was admitted to Gemelli Hospital and was reported to have a polymicrobial infection in his respiratory tract.

The Vatican announced February 18 that the pope had developed bilateral pneumonia and his clinical condition was complicated.

He had an asthma attack on February 22 and his condition was critical.

The Vatican noted that the pontiff, who had a bronchospasm crisis February 28, underwent bronchoaspiration, where mechanical ventilation was initiated and a positive response to the treatment was received.

His condition remained stable on March 1-2.

The world leader of the Catholics suffered acute respiratory failure twice and non-invasive mechanical ventilation was resumed March 3.

Anadolu Agency

Will rearmed Europe turn away from Asia?

Berlin, Germany - A few years ago, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen declared that the EU wanted to 'take a more active role in the Indo-Pacific'.

Now, the future of that commitment is in doubt as Europe is set to undergo a once-in-a-generation rearmament drive.

The United States under President Donald Trump has mused out loud about rolling back security guarantees, potentially leaving European states to shoulder the burden of an uncertain ceasefire in Ukraine and, eventually, other conflicts sparked by Russian President Vladimir Putin.

"We are in an era of rearmament," Von der Leyen said on March 4, as the Commission launched the 'ReArm Europe' programme, which aims to mobilise around €800bn (US\$873bn) over the next four years.

However, as European strategy focuses on its own backyard, support for Asian security could fall by the wayside.

Since 2021, most of the larger European states have adopted 'Indo-Pacific Strategies' and



A German sailor aboard a 2024 freedom of navigation mission in the South China Sea

pledged to uphold the international rules-based order in the region. "What happens in the Indo-Pacific region has indeed a direct impact in Europe due to our strong links in trade and foreign direct investment," the EU's then-foreign policy chief, Josep Borrell, wrote in November.

For example, Germany and several other European states have signed defence pacts with Vietnam, which has faced tensions with China for decades over disputed territory in the South China Sea.

The Philippines, whose maritime disputes with China have escalated since last year, signed defence agreements with the EU and the UK, while France is currently negotiating a visiting forces agreement to allow its troops access to Philippine military bases. France's nuclear-powered aircraft carrier, the Charles de Gaulle, took part in combat drills with Filipino forces for the first time a couple of weeks ago.

In recent years, warships from France, Germany, Italy, the

Netherlands, and the UK have exercised 'freedom of navigation' missions in the Indo-Pacific to counter China's claims over international waterways.

But with the dramatic reversal in US support for Ukraine and the Trump administration's lacklustre support for NATO, 'Europeans are going to be far more focused on supporting Kyiv and building up European defence capacity', Zachary Abuza, a professor at the National War College in Washington, told DW.

DW

Death toll from US-UK strikes on Yemen rises to 31: Houthis

Sanaa, Yemen - The death toll from Saturday night's US-UK airstrikes on multiple Yemeni cities has risen to 31, with 101 others injured, mostly women and children, the Houthi-run Health Ministry reported on Sunday.

Anis Al-Asbahi, the ministry's spokesperson, stated: "The massacres committed by the US aggression targeting civilian and residential areas in Sanaa, Saada, Al-Bayda, and Rada'a on Saturday resulted in 132 civilian casualties, including 31 martyrs and 101 wounded, most of whom are children and women."

He added that the figures are 'preliminary, as search efforts continue to recover victims following a series of US airstrikes targeting civilian sites'.

Asbahi condemned the attacks, calling them a 'full-fledged war crime added to the record of the criminal coalition of evil' and a 'blatant violation of all international laws and conventions'.

On Saturday, the Iran-backed Houthi group announced that US-UK airstrikes on Yemen killed 24 people, with at least 23 others wounded.

The Houthis warned Israel on March 7 to allow humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip within four days or face renewed maritime operations against Israeli-linked vessels.

The US launched airstrikes on Yemen's Houthis as President Donald Trump warned that 'hell will rain down' if the Iran-backed



The US launched airstrikes on Yemen's Houthis as President Donald Trump warned that 'hell will rain down' if the Iran-backed group continues attacks on Red Sea shipping

group continues attacks on Red Sea shipping.

The Houthis have been attacking Israeli-linked ships in the Red Sea with missiles and drones since late 2023, disrupting global trade, for what it said was a show of solidarity with the Gaza Strip.

The group halted attacks when a Gaza ceasefire was declared in January between Israel and Hamas. But it threatened to resume the attacks when Israel

blocked all aid into Gaza on March 2.

The Houthi Political Bureau described the strikes as a 'treacherous and sinful act of aggression and a full-fledged war crime'.

"Targeting civilians is further proof of American terrorism against nations and peoples that oppose it," it said in a statement.

"US-UK aggression was carried out in response to Yemen's sup-

port for the Palestinian people, but it will not deter Yemen from continuing its backing for Palestine and fulfilling its duty to support Gaza."

The Houthis warned that the 'aggression will not go unanswered, and our armed forces are fully prepared to respond to escalation with escalation'.

Trump said he ordered the military to launch 'powerful' and 'decisive' action against the

Houthis. "Your time is up, and your attacks must stop, starting today. If they don't, hell will rain down upon you like nothing you have ever seen before," Trump wrote on Truth Social.

Witnesses told Anadolu that airstrikes also hit the Geraf neighbourhood in northern Sanaa, resulting in powerful explosions.

Houthis had attacked Israeli-linked ships in the Red Sea with

missiles and drones since late 2023, disrupting global trade, in what is said was solidarity with the Gaza Strip.

The group halted the attacks when a Gaza ceasefire deal was declared in January. But it threatened to resume the attacks when Israel blocked all aid to the Palestine enclave after the end of the first phase of the three-phase deal on March 2.

Anadolu Agency

Syria: 16 dead in blast from 'old bomb'

Damascus, Syria - An unexploded bomb from Syria's 13-year conflict exploded in the coastal city of Lattakia, killing at least 16 people, the paramedic group known as the White Helmets said Sunday.

The explosion is thought to have been caused by a scrap dealer handling the old bomb. It destroyed a four-story building, tearing down concrete slabs and trapping residents beneath their crushed homes.

"Search and rescue operations continue to recover those trapped," the White Helmet said in a post on Telegram, reporting that at least 18 people had been injured. It posted a video on social media of people being pulled from the rubble alive.

Unexploded weapons from more than a decade of conflict continue to pose threats in war-torn Syria.

In February, the United Nations reported that about 100 people have died from unexploded ordnance over the last 13 years.

Since long-time president Bashar Assad was ousted in December, teams have safely disposed of over 1,400 unexploded devices.

DW

Pakistan: At least 7 troops killed, 43 injured in 'suicide bombing'

Karachi, Pakistan - At least seven paramilitary troops were killed and 43 others injured in a suspected suicide bombing in southwest Pakistan on Sunday.

The bombing targeted a convoy of Frontier Corps, a paramilitary force, in the remote Noshki district of southwestern Balochistan province, which touches neighbouring Afghanistan and Iran, local English daily Balochistan Express reported, citing a police officer.

Initial investigations suggest the incident was a suicide attack, Zafarullah Sumalani, a local police chief, said. Sumalani said the evidence from the site of the attack suggested that a suicide attacker rammed an explosive-laden vehicle into the Frontier Corps convoy.

In a statement, Interior Minister



ter Mohsin Naqvi confirmed and condemned the incident.

Officials fear a rise in the death toll as the condition of several injured at Noshki Civil Hospital was stated to be critical.

There was no official word on the number of casualties or their

identity. Footage aired on local broadcaster Geo News showed a badly charred bus lying on the roadside with a military troop standing nearby.

Balochistan Chief Minister Sarfraz Bugti condemned the attack and expressed sorrow over

the loss of life.

"Those who play with the peace of Balochistan will be brought to a tragic end," Bugti said in an official press release.

No group has so far claimed responsibility for the attack.

Anadolu Agency

North Macedonia: Around 50 people killed in nightclub fire

Kocani, Macedonia - A fire in a nightclub in the North Macedonian town of Kocani early on Sunday morning has killed at least 51 people and left dozens more injured. More than a thousand mostly young people were attending a concert by DNK, a popular hip-hop duo, when the fire broke out, the state news agency MIA reported.

"According to the data we have by now, 51 persons lost their lives, and more than 100 persons are injured and transported in the hospitals in Stip, Kocani and Skopje," Interior Minister Pance Toskovski said after visiting the scene of the fire.

He said the fire had been started by pyrotechnics used by clubgoers and that one man had been arrested in connection with the incident, without giving fur-



ther details. According to online media outlet SDK, the fire started at around 3am (0200 GMT).

It cited rescue sources as saying more than 100 people were also injured in the blaze.

Local media said the blaze quickly spread to the ceiling and roof of the club, identified by MIA as the 'Pulse' discotheque.

According to the head of DW's Macedonian Service in Skopje, Boris Georgievski, many people have now said on social media that the catastrophe was just waiting to happen, accusing authorities and companies of largely disregarding construction regulations in North Macedonia.

DW

IT'S SNOWING ON GREAT WALL



An aerial drone photo shows a section of the Great Wall after snowfall in Luanping County, north China's Hebei Province on Sunday (Xinhua)

US: Protesters demand release of Khalil

Washington, D.C., US - Protesters gathered on Saturday outside US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) headquarters in Washington, DC to demand the release of Palestinian activist Mahmoud Khalil - a green card holder and recent Columbia University graduate who helped organise campus protests last year.

Demonstrators later took to the streets, chanting: 'We want justice, you say how. Free Mahmoud Khalil now!' and 'Free all the students today'. Many held banners that read: 'Free Palestine', 'Release Mahmoud Khalil' and 'ICE off our campuses'.

Protests were also held in New York City, where demonstrators rallied in Times Square before marching through to Columbus Circle. Organisers



Protests were held across the US demanding the release of Palestinian activist Mahmoud Khalil

condemned Khalil's detention, arguing that his right to protest is protected under the First Amendment.

"Attacks on Mahmoud Khalil are not attacks on one individual, they are an attack on everyone who dares to stand up and speak for justice," said one protester.

The Columbia University graduate was arrested by ICE agents on March 8 at his university-owned apartment. The arrest was carried out following an order by US Secretary of State Marco Rubio to revoke his student visa and green card. The Trump administration has ac-

cused Khalil, who played a prominent role in pro-Palestinian demonstrations at the school last year, of engaging in 'activities aligned with Hamas' though no evidence has been provided. He is currently being held at an ICE detention centre in the state of Louisiana.

'We are not slaves': Greenland

Indigenous Inuit residents remain offended by Trump's renewed interest



The residents said US President Donald Trump is is dangerous for Greenland

Nuuk, Greenland – “Now it’s different. It could be positive and it could be negative in both ways, but I don’t know what the first results would be,” health worker Inge-Lene Sandgreen tells Anadolu on Greenland’s surprise election result.

After Greenland’s stunning election upset this week, indigenous Inuit residents say they remain offended by US President Donald Trump’s renewed interest in acquiring the island - just as they were when he first floated the idea in 2019

Speaking to Anadolu, Andreas Hojgaard, a resident of the capital Nuuk, called Trump ‘untrustworthy’ and ‘arrogant’, accusing him of trying to ‘steal our country from Denmark’.

“I think he is dangerous for Greenland,” he added.

Trump doubled down on his desire to annex Greenland, just a day after a staunchly pro-independence party won the most votes in the election

Hojgaard recalled how Trump’s attempt to buy Greenland had deeply offended the local population.

“We are not slaves,” he said. “We live in our own country, and we don’t buy or sell slaves in Greenland. And we felt like he thought we were just a bunch of slaves who live in Greenland.”

‘Enough is enough’

Trump doubled down on Thursday on his desire to annex Greenland, just a day after a staunchly pro-independence

party won the most votes in a closely watched election.

“We have to do it. We really need it for national security,” Trump told reporters while hosting NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte.

“That’s why NATO might have to get involved, in a way, because we really need Greenland for national security,” he added.

In response, Mute Egede, Greenland’s outgoing prime minister following a heavy election defeat on Tuesday, announced

plans to convene all party leaders in the local parliament, Inatsisartut, to discuss a formal response to Trump’s remarks.

Writing on Facebook, Egede denounced Trump’s renewed push for annexation.

“Now the American president has once again floated the idea of annexing us. I cannot accept that in any way,” he said.

“I respect the result of the election, but since I believe that I have an obligation as acting Chairman of the Greenland Government - I have asked the civil service to summon the party chairmen as soon as possible.”

“Because this time we must sharpen our rejection of Trump. We must not continue to be treated with disrespect. Enough is enough,” he added.

Hojgaard said the election re-

sults were unlike previous ones.

“It’s the first time I have seen this election being so different from the other elections, because the Siumut and Inuit Ataqatigiit, Atassut (parties) used to be the sovereign ... and now it’s very different,” he said.

Inge-Lene Sandgreen, an Inuit health worker, also noted a shift in political trends.

“It’s different because the first the elections results were the same for our 23 years. So now it’s different. It could be positive and it could be negative in both ways, but I don’t know what the first results would be,” she told Anadolu.

Hojgaard, like many other locals, emphasised that Greenland needs a stronger economy before considering independence from Denmark.

Anadolu Agency



Hungary: Orban vows crackdown on media, NGOs

Budapest, Hungary - Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban told a crowd of his supporters in Budapest on Saturday that he planned to crack down on politicians and journalists who receive funding from abroad.

Speaking at an event marking Hungary’s national day, he said it was time to eliminate what he called a ‘shadow army’ of NGOs, journalists, judges and politicians who he said were serving the interests of the EU and a ‘liberal American empire’.

“After today’s celebrations, comes the big Easter cleaning up as the bugs have survived the winter,” Orban said. “We will eliminate the whole shadow army ... who have supported the empire for money, against their own country.”

The right-wing populist, an ally of Donald Trump, has taken a tougher stance against foreign-funded media and NGOs since the US president’s inauguration in January.

He has also welcomed recent steps taken by Washington to dismantle USAID, claiming the development agency was being used to fund liberal causes in Hungary and undermine his government.

Last month, Orban announced plans to target foreign funding channelled to Hungarian media. His Fidesz party this week submitted constitutional changes that would allow the expulsion of Hungarian dual citizens if they are deemed to pose a threat to Hungary’s sovereignty or national security.

Orban’s party has also sought to target the LGBTQ+ community, saying the annual Budapest Pride event would be banned in public starting this year.

Orban has frequently clashed with the European Union. In his speech on Saturday, he reiterated his opposition to Ukraine joining the bloc and criticised Brussels for continuing to supply Kyiv with military aid in the war with Russia.

“The rulers of Europe decided that Ukraine must continue the war at all costs, and it will get a fast EU membership in exchange, using our money,” he said. “We can only have one answer to that: a Union but without Ukraine.”

Orban, who has ruled Hungary uninterrupted for 15 years, is currently facing pressure from an opposition movement led by moderate conservative and former Fidesz member Peter Magyar.

Peter Magyar.

DW

Russian, N Korean top diplomats meet

Seoul, South Korea - North Korea’s top diplomat Choe Son-hui met with visiting Russian Deputy Foreign Minister in Pyongyang, amid talks for a ceasefire in the Russia-Ukraine war, state media reported on Sunday.

Choe met with Andrey Rudenko on Saturday, a day after he arrived in Pyongyang, the official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) reported.

The talks were also attended by the North Korean Foreign Ministry officials and Russian Ambassador to North Korea Aleksandr Matsegora. No further details of the talks were provided.

Rudenko’s visit to Pyongyang, however, appears to be part of follow-up efforts for last year’s treaty, which calls for mutual assistance if either country is attacked, Seoul-based Yonhap



News reported.

It also comes after Ukraine agreed to a 30-day ceasefire proposed by the US last week.

The two officials served as the government representatives for the treaty’s ratification.

Rudenko also held separate talks with his North Korean counterpart, Vice Foreign Minister Kim Jong-gyu, on Saturday, and they reached a consensus on practical measures to strengthen bilateral cooperation in line with

their comprehensive strategic partnership treaty signed last June, according to the KCNA.

North Korea is believed to have dispatched more than 10,000 troops to Russia’s western front-line region of Kursk, according to Yonhap News.

Accusing Washington of increasing uncertainties for a nuclear war, North Korea’s state media warned on Sunday any US military reinforcements in the event of a war will be ‘wiped out’.

The warning comes amid Washington’s additional deployment of stealth fighter jets to Japan earlier this month.

A commentary carried by the KCNA criticised the recent deployment of a squadron of F-35B fighters to an air base in Iwakuni, Japan.

Anadolu Agency

A HOT SUMMER DAY IN INDIA



Women covering themselves with scarves to protect from the heat pass on a road on a hot summer day, in Surat, India on Sunday (ANI)

SpaceX Dragon spacecraft docks with ISS to bring back stranded astronauts

Washington, D.C., US - SpaceX Dragon spacecraft carrying NASA astronauts Anne McClain and Nichole Ayers, Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) astronaut Takuya Onishi, and Roscosmos cosmonaut Kirill Peskov docked with International Space Station, Space X CEO Elon Musk announced on Sunday.

In a post on X, Musk posted: “SpaceX Dragon docks with Space Station.”

In a statement, NASA stated: “NASA astronauts Anne McClain and Nichole Ayers, JAXA (Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency) astronaut Takuya Onishi, and Roscosmos cosmonaut Kirill Peskov arrived at the Inter-

national Space Station on Sunday, as the SpaceX Dragon spacecraft docked to the orbiting complex at 12:04am EDT, while the station was roughly 260 statute miles over the Atlantic Ocean.”

After SpaceX Dragon’s link-up to the forward facing port of the station’s Harmony module, the crew members aboard Dragon and the space station will start conducting standard leak checks and pressurisation between the spacecraft and the station in preparation for a hatch opening scheduled for approximately 1:45am (US time) on Sunday.

Crew-10 will join the Expedition 72 crew of NASA astronauts Nick Hague, Don Petitt, Sunita



Williams, and Butch Wilmore and Roscosmos cosmonauts Aleksandr Gorbunov, Alexey Ovchinnikov, and Ivan Vagner, according

to the statement released by NASA. The number of crew aboard the space station will rise to 11 people before Crew-9

members Hague, Williams, Wilmore, and Gorbunov return to Earth after the crew handover period.

On Friday, SpaceX and NASA launched a mission to bring back US astronauts Sunita Williams and Butch Wilmore from the ISS, where they have been stranded for nine months. The lift-off took place at 7:03 ET on Friday, with a Falcon 9 rocket carrying a Dragon spacecraft on the Crew-10 mission.

The launch came after US President Donald Trump urged SpaceX CEO Elon Musk to rescue the stranded astronauts sooner than NASA had planned. He has repeatedly accused former US President Joe Biden of abandoning them in space.

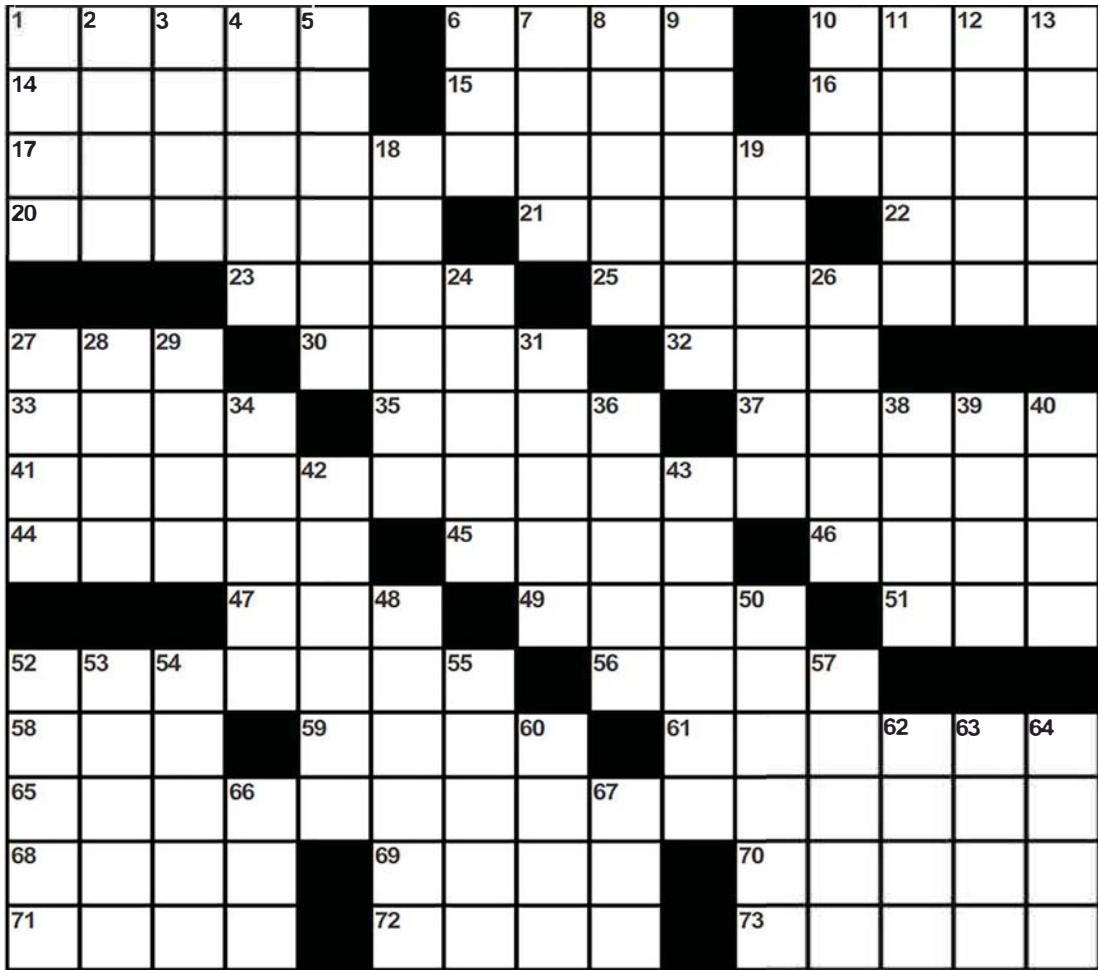
On March 7, Trump said that he has authorised Elon Musk to bring back American astronauts

- Sunita Williams and Butch Wilmore who have been stranded at the International Space station since June last year. Butch Wilmore and Sunita Williams have been stranded on the ISS for nine months after reaching there in June last year. They were supposed to stay there for about a week.

The astronauts were transported from Earth to the ISS aboard Boeing’s Starliner spacecraft. However, the spacecraft came back to Earth unmanned in September. This came after Starliner faced ‘helium leaks’ and ‘issues with the spacecraft reaction control thrusters’ while docking with the ISS, Fox News reported.

ANI

DAILY CROSSWORD



ACROSS
1) One submitting a 1040
6) Handle a pressing situation?
10) Emend a manuscript, e.g.
14) Jeweler's glass
15) Vegetarian staple
16) Coastal raptor
17) B
20) First and 15th of each month, for some
21) Big Indian
22) The "p" in mpg
23) Barely gets (with "out")
25) Powerball, e.g.
27) Roman goddess of abundance
30) Newts in transition
32) Drone, e.g.
33) Casting need
35) Large, footed vases
37) Control, symbolically
41) BE
44) Extra
45) Not much
46) Cosecant's opposite
47) "...be an honor"
49) Dance instructor's instruction
51) Ground cover
52) Thriller subjects,

sometimes
56) Many-stringed instrument
58) It begins 1 enero
59) Part of "a.m."
61) Cause to expand, as pupils
65) 32-Across
68) Young winged Greek god
69) The "O" in SRO
70) Breezing through a test
71) Thing for a secretary
72) Odor detector
73) "Slowly" in music
DOWN
1) Gymnast's feat
2) Minute amount
3) Classic TV redhead
4) Lyric poem
5) New version of a film
6) That thing's
7) Big cat's sound
8) Butcher's byproduct
9) Crackpot
10) Always used by a poet?
11) Window cover
12) Toward the center
13) Like some goodbyes
18) Beautiful sight to behold

19) Casual diner
24) Record groove, e.g.
26) Abounds
27) Eyes, poetically
28) Chicks sound like this
29) Evening on Mount Etna
31) Ignores in a snooty way
34) Words of a song
36) Common surname
38) Graceful wading bird
39) Off-limits word
40) It coasts through winter
42) Deadly
43) Reliable
48) Castle keep
50) Type of scream
52) Trimmed a McIntosh
53) Nighttime annoyance
54) Shows wild instability
55) Court reporter, for one
57) Finish second
60) Building additions, sometimes
62) Blood-related
63) Something to pitch
64) By that reasoning
66) Inquire
67) Burning substance

NOTE PAD



YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19
Just when you thought it was safe to come out, duty calls. That doesn't mean you'll have to abandon all thoughts of romance, however. If you play your cards right, and if anyone can, it's you, you'll be more than able to find enough time and energy to devote to your professional and your personal needs. Of course, at some point, a priority may emerge. If that's the case, you'll have no choice but to put everything else on the back burner.



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22
Here's something you were never expecting: the sneaking feeling that you may have been struck by love at first sight. No, it doesn't come along that often, and even less often in your case, since you're so realistic and objective, but you really can't rule it out entirely. After all, this is one of those stories we pray we'll live long enough to tell our great-grandchildren.



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21
You've never been afraid to say what's on your mind, and you're quite good at saying it in a most entertaining fashion. What's in your heart is another matter. That's tougher for you to talk about, even if you're in trusted company. For the next day or so, however, you'll be more than happy to express your feelings to anyone who asks. Better warn them first, though. You know how you get when you're on a roll.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

01. At which UK General Election was Helen Grant elected, the Conservative Party's first black female MP?
A. 1951
B. 1983
C. 2010
D. 1979

02. In the 2002 film "The Ring", what common household electrical appliance is the most malevolent?
A. Toaster
B. Television set
C. Refrigerator
D. Hot water cylinder

03. What is typically used to grind a telescope mirror to the surface wanted?
A. Sand and pumice in water
B. Shark skin
C. Purbeck clay
D. Loess

Answers: 1. C 2. B 3. A



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20
Getting close to someone isn't easy for anyone. It definitely becomes more difficult when you're wise enough to know not just what closeness entails, but exactly what you're risking when you open up. You, of course, are quite familiar with all the highs and lows of intimate relationships, so when you decide to take one on, it's a tremendous compliment. You may have found someone who also understands all of this. Let them know how much they're appreciated.



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22
If you can hang in there a little longer, you'll be able to take what you've recently learned from each other and put it to good use in your relationship. First, though, your sweetheart or best friend (whichever the case may be) will need to stop being jealous or resentful of the time and energy you've been devoting to your family. You, of course, can help them to lighten up and have fun, and it certainly is their turn for some attention, don't you think?



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19
You've always been proud of your friends. You handpick them with great care, and it takes time. Anyone who makes it to your inner circle gets there because they're intelligent, witty, and entertaining, the cream of the crop. That doesn't mean you're a snob, however, only that you appreciate and insist on nothing but the best in all departments. So when a friend surprises you, it's an especially delightful moment. Pack some tissues in your lunchbox.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21
When you love someone, your feelings tend to border on obsessive, and when they ask you to do something because "if you loved them, you would," it's not in your nature to hesitate. Just this once, though, think before you respond. Are you being manipulated? It's probably in your best interests not to be so available right now. Don't answer the phone for a day or two.



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22
You have every right to smile that smile for as long as your facial muscles can stand it, especially if you happen to be in the vicinity of someone who's wearing a matching expression. Don't feel obligated to share your secret with anyone else, and don't even try to tear your eyes away from the object of your affection. The rest of the world may be a bit jealous, but they're also happy for you.



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18
You're putting out some pretty high-octane vibes at the moment, attracting the attention of just about everyone who happens to amble by. Do them and yourself a favor. If you're already attached or just not interested, don't even think about flirting. And if anyone has a hungry, vaguely disoriented look about them and a silly, sappy grin? Run, don't walk, in the other direction. This is the behavior of a prospective groupie, not a potential partner.



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22
When you love someone, your feelings tend to border on obsessive, and when they ask you to do something because "if you loved them, you would," it's not in your nature to hesitate. Just this once, though, think before you respond. Are you being manipulated? It's probably in your best interests not to be so available right now. Don't answer the phone for a day or two.

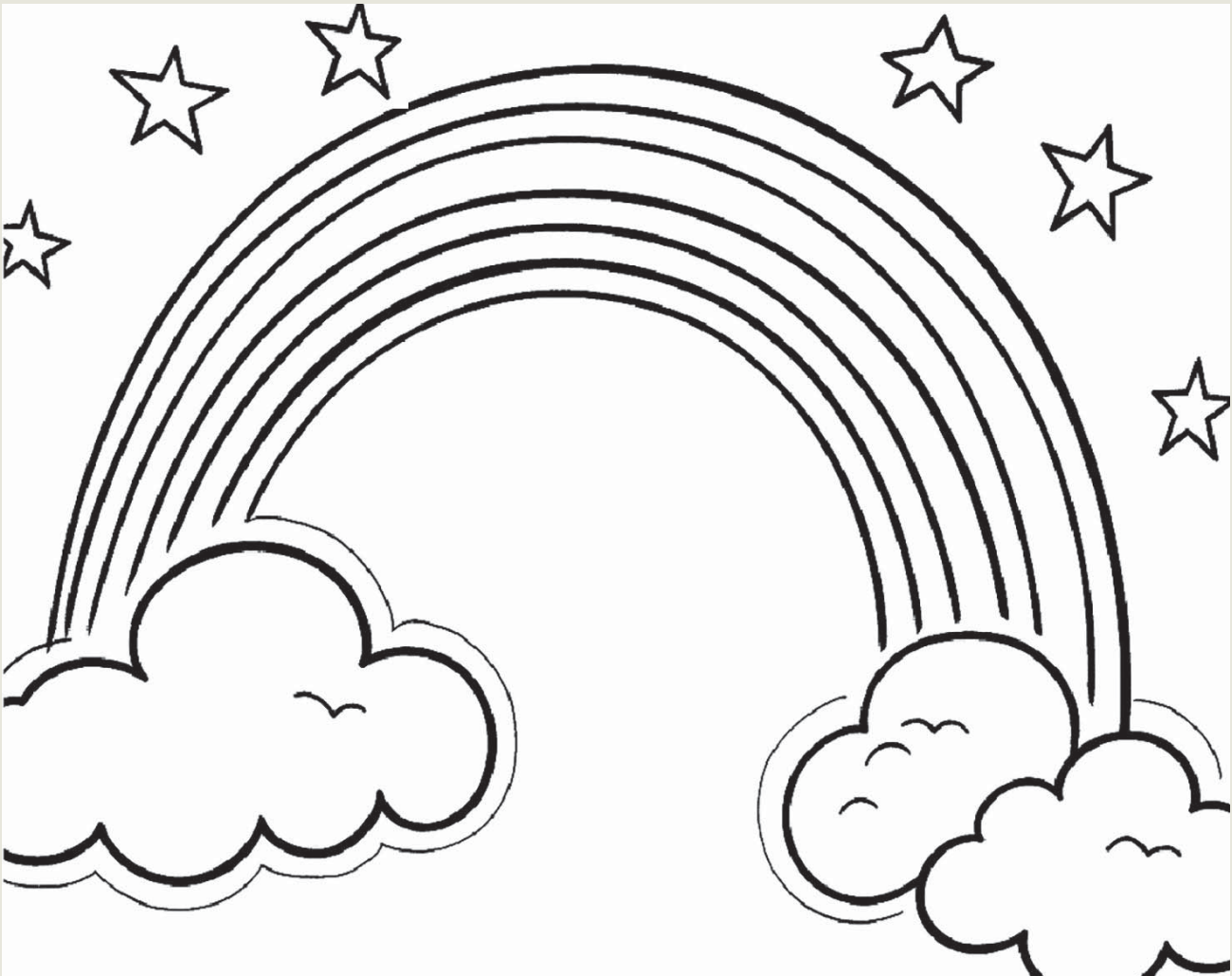


SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21
There's no need to keep worrying about a conversation you have to have. All you need to do is look the other person in the eye and everything will be fine. Your image matters, and you need to be mindful of how you come across to the other person. Look calm, confident, and correct. What you say isn't nearly as important as how you say it, so spend more time preparing your demeanor, and make sure you're dressed appropriately.



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20
Speaking of dreams, you're about to receive a very direct hint from the Universe telling you that you're headed down the right path. You're aimed directly at making one of your most cherished dreams a reality, and in record time too. A series of coincidences will bring your attention to where you are and where you want to be. Pay attention to these signs. They're really signposts. And when you see a new one in the distance, keep your eye on it.

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

B	U	H	F
F	A	A	G
E	R	A	E
T	S	E	R

Each game will present you with a matrix filled with letters. The objective is to form words by linking adjacent letters - to the left, right, on top, bottom, or diagonal to each other. The Boggles Classic game uses a 4 x 4 matrix. Words are valued at one point for each letter in excess of two letters. A three letter word is worth one point, a four letter word is worth two points, and so on. Valid words must be at least three letters long.

SOLUTION
20-25 words: Excellent,
15-20 words: Very good,
10-15 words: Good,
5-10 words: Average

DO YOU SUDOKU?

LEVEL EASY: Fill in the grid so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9 and only one instance of each number

6	4	2				9	
5	3			9			7
			4			5	1
			1	4	8		
7	9					2	4
		6		7	2		
3	8			6			
9				8		4	3
	6				9	8	5

WORD BUILDER



You have three minutes to find all the words contained in this word.

Rules: Words should be at least four letters long, proper nouns and duplicates don't count

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

5	8	6	4	2	3	7	9	1
3	9	1	8	7	5	2	6	
2	1	7	9	6	5	4	8	3
6	5	3	2	7	8	9	1	4
4	2	1	5	3	9	8	6	7
9	7	8	6	4	1	3	5	2
1	5	2	9	4	6	7	8	
7	9	4	8	6	2	1	3	5
8	6	3	7	1	5	2	4	9

MERINO RESCUES ARSENAL

Stand-in striker’s goal helps
Gunners keep alive slim title
hopes; Fulham blank Tottenham

London, England - Arsenal defeated London rivals Chelsea 1-0 for their first win in four Premier League games on Sunday as a headed goal by stand-in striker Mikel Merino boosted their faint hopes of catching up with run-away leaders Liverpool.

Merino scored in the 20th minute when he stooped to flick his looping header over Robert Sanchez in the Chelsea goal after a Martin Odegaard corner.

The Spanish midfielder, who has led Arsenal's attack in the absence of injured colleagues in recent weeks, came close to a second goal in the 60th minute but his side-footed volley was kept out by a fine save by Sanchez.

Chelsea were also missing firepower up front with top scorer Cole Palmer absent through in-

jury while centre forward Nicolas Jackson remains sidelined, also due to injury.

Without them, Chelsea struggled to threaten Arsenal's backline. The closest they came to an equaliser was in the 37th minute when defender Marc Cucurella hammered an angled volley at David Raya only for the ball to squeeze through the Arsenal goalkeeper's hands and go just wide. The win left second-placed Arsenal 12 points behind Liverpool who face Newcastle United in the League Cup final later on Sunday.

Both the top two teams have played 29 games with a further nine rounds of fixtures to go.

Chelsea are fourth, one point ahead of Manchester City and five behind third-placed Nottingham Forest.



Arsenal's Mikel Merino celebrates his goal against Chelsea

Muniz, Sessegnon on target for Fulham

Substitutes Rodrigo Muniz and Ryan Sessegnon struck late to give Fulham a 2-0 win over Tottenham Hotspur in the Premier League on Sunday, as the Cottagers cut the gap on their rivals for European football next season.

Fulham were far superior in the first half but failed to capitalise and Spurs were much improved after the break, with Dominic Solanke twice heading wide before he sliced over from close range. But Muniz produced a superb first-time finish 12 minutes from time and Fulham academy product Sessegnon, who moved to Spurs in 2019 before returning last July, scored the second goal of his second spell at Fulham to secure the victory in the 88th minute.

Fulham's win puts them eighth, with 45 points from 29 games - three points behind Manchester City in fifth, which could be good enough to qualify for next season's Champions League. Spurs remain 13th, with 34 points from 29 games.

Brentford rally to beat Bournemouth for fifth straight away win



Brentford's Christian Norgaard scores against Bournemouth on Saturday

Bournemouth, England - Brentford captain Christian Norgaard scored a second-half winner to move his side closer to the top half of the Premier League table as they came from behind to win 2-1 at Bournemouth on Saturday.

Two set-pieces proved the undoing of Bournemouth, who had taken an 18th-minute lead from Vitaly Janelt's own goal but saw the visitors fight back through Yoane Wissa and Norgaard to ensure a fifth successive away victory for Brentford.

Wissa headed home from a corner in the 30th minute to equalise before Norgaard snapped up a long throw-in in the 71st that was allowed to bounce invitingly in the home penalty box. Brentford moved up one place to 11th in the 20-team table while the defeat was a blow to Bournemouth's hopes of qualifying for European competition for the first time.

Bournemouth have now won only one of their last six Premier League fixtures and remain ninth after a third successive home

league defeat.

"Results-wise, we are in the worst moment in the last four games and we are not being clinical enough inside the box," said Bournemouth manager Andoni Iraola.

The opening goal came after a ball switched to the left flank saw Antoine Semenyo feed flying full

Results-wise, we are in the worst moment in the last four games and we are not being clinical enough inside the box

ANDONI IRAOLA

back Milos Kerkez and his square cross struck Brentford's midfielder Janelt for an unfortunate own goal.

The hosts conceded an equaliser in the 30th minute when an in-swinging corner from Bryan Mbeumo was headed in by

Wissa, who leapt above the home defence with goalkeeper Kepa Arrizabalaga mistiming his attempt to punch the ball to safety.

Mbeumo might have had a second but shot narrowly wide after a quick counter attack, while Kevin Schade's pace set up another chance for the visitors but his pass inside to Wissa did not find his teammate.

Bournemouth were denied by the crossbar two minutes into the second half when Justin Kluivert's pinpoint cross saw Semenyo rise unimpeded to power his header against the woodwork.

The hosts were caught out again, this time by Schade's long throw that was allowed to bounce all the way through to Norgaard who rammed it home from six yards out to seal the victory. "All of our set-piece goals are straight from the training pitch, it's something we work on during the week but we still have to execute it," Norgaard said.

Juric wants 'more fight' as Southampton stare at relegation

Southampton, England - Southampton manager Ivan Juric knows the writing is on the wall with his team set to be relegated from the Premier League after a ninth straight home defeat on Saturday in a 2-1 loss to Wolverhampton Wanderers, but he wants to go down fighting.

Jorgen Strand Larsen netted twice in a game where Southampton looked the better team for long periods but the home side lacked the finishing touch and missed opportunities.

With nine points from 29 matches, Southampton could finish bottom as the worst side in Premier League history if they do not overhaul Derby County's return of 11 points in the 2007-08 season.

"Today was another game that suggests we are not ready to take points... There's always something missing," Juric, who took charge in December, told BBC. "The will to play well and to attack is there. The lads want to win the game and do their best. There are moments when we're not good enough and that's it.

"We will go down, but (we want to go down) with more fight, more dignity and more everything."

Southampton fans have seen only one league victory at St Mary's Stadium this season, a 1-0 win over Everton when the Merseyside club was struggling under Sean Dyche.



Ivan Juric



Brighton and Hove Albion's fullback Jack Hinshelwood's attempted shot deflects off Manchester City's Abdulkodir Khusanov into his own net

Brighton hold Man City to 2-2 draw; Forest beat Ipswich

Manchester, England - Champions Manchester City could only muster a 2-2 Premier League draw with Brighton & Hove Albion on Saturday, dropping points in a blow to their hopes of playing European football next season.

Erling Haaland and Omar Marmoush struck for Pep Guardiola's men, but Brighton equalised with a second-half own goal by City defender Abdulkodir Khusanov after Pervis Estupinan had scored the visitors' first.

Meanwhile, Nottingham Forest maintained their Champions League push with a comfortable 4-2 win at Ipswich Town while Everton stretched their unbeaten league run to nine games with a 1-1 draw against West Ham United.

Wolverhampton Wanderers beat bottom side Southampton

2-1 to take a giant step towards Premier League survival.

Anthony Elanga struck twice for Forest, who consolidated third place in the table on 54 points.

Forest, who were involved in relegation battles in the last two seasons, struck three times in a frantic seven-minute spell in the

Palmer.

"We got this moment right," Forest manager Nuno Espirito Santo said. "We got Ipswich unbalanced and we took advantage of it."

Jens Cajuste pulled one back in the 82nd minute to briefly give home fans hope, but Jota Silva

Ipswich were always going to react, important that we got the fourth goal, that really put the game to bed in that moment

NUNO ESPIRITO SANTO

first half, kicked off by a fierce strike from defender Nikola Milenkovic.

Elanga netted a curling effort two minutes later, and immediately doubled his tally when he latched onto a long ball from Milenkovic and squeezed his shot under goalkeeper Alex

quickly crushed it with another Forest goal before George Hirst claimed a consolation for Ipswich in added time.

"Ipswich were always going to react, important that we got the fourth goal, that really put the game to bed in that moment," Espirito Santo said.

I find positiveness in everything, says Guardiola as Man City fight for Champions League berth

Manchester, England - While Pep Guardiola and Manchester City are in the unlikelyst of positions having to battle desperately for a Champions League berth next season, the manager did not mince his words in describing the enormity of the challenge.

City dropped points in a 2-2 Premier League home draw with Brighton & Hove Albion on Saturday to leave the champions provisionally in fifth place with nine games to go.

"Until the end, I think so," Guardiola told reporters. "Nine games, nine finals.

"I'm always confident," he



Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola argues with referee Simon Hooper after their match against Brighton & Hove Albion

added. "I am a master. I find the positiveness in everything. I know it will be difficult."

"It is a fact we won the first

point here but more a disappointing feeling we didn't go home with three points," said Brighton coach Fabian Hurzeler.

Milan rally to beat Como as Alli sees red on debut

Milan, Italy - Second-half goals by Christian Pulisic and Tijjani Reijnders gave AC Milan a thrilling 2-1 comeback home win over Como in Serie A on Saturday, with Dele Alli sent off for the visitors minutes into his first match in two years.

Milan are in seventh place with 47 points, five points behind Juventus in fourth, the final Champions League spot, with Juve playing at Fiorentina on Sunday. Como are 13th with 29 points.



AC Milan's Tijjani Reijnders celebrates his goal against Como on Saturday

The match saw former England international Alli make his first competitive appearance since February 2023, but it lasted mere minutes as he was sent off in stoppage time for stamping on Milan's Ruben Loftus-Cheek.

Napoli miss chance to go top

Napoli wasted a chance to provisionally reclaim top spot in the Serie A standings for the first time since February when they were held to a 0-0 draw at second-from-bottom Venezia on Sunday. Napoli remained in second place with 61 points from 29 matches - level with leaders Inter Milan and three points ahead of third-placed Atalanta, who face each other later on Sunday.

Asked how important the result of Atalanta and Inter's meeting would be for Napoli's title hopes, manager Antonio Conte told DAZN: "To us it changes nothing, we have to look at ourselves and give everything as we did today. Then in the end we'll see the products of our efforts. I've always been critical when there was something to be critical about, not today."



Virat Kohli

French forward's double helps Madrid side beat Villarreal

Villarreal, Spain - Kylian Mbappe scored twice to help Real Madrid fight back to beat Villarreal 2-1 on Saturday and move provisionally top of the LaLiga standings.

The hosts opened the scoring in the seventh minute when Alex Baena's corner was deflected by Aurelien Tchouameni, allowing Juan Foyth to score from close range.

Real Madrid levelled 10 minutes later when Mbappe pounced on Brahim Diaz's blocked shot and the ball landed at his feet for a close-range finish.

Six minutes later, the French international scored his 20th league goal of the season, latching on to Lucas Vazquez's through ball and slotting home.

Mbappe had a chance to complete his hat-trick in the second half when he latched onto Vinicius Jr's through ball, but the off-side flag was raised.

Real top the table on 60 points, three clear of second-placed Barcelona, who have a game in hand after their match with Osasuna was postponed last week, and face third-placed Atletico on Sunday.

'Team is exhausted'

Real coach Carlo Ancelotti said his team will no longer play matches after less than 72 hours' rest because of the physical strain it puts on players.

Following Real's win at Villarreal,



Real Madrid's Kylian Mbappe celebrates with Lucas Vazquez after scoring against Villarreal on Saturday

real, the coach was concerned about his side's physical condition following Wednesday's shootout win over Atletico Madrid in the Champions League.

"I think today is the last time we will play a game before 72 hours. We will never play a game with less than that," Ancelotti told a press conference.

"The team is exhausted, but that was to be expected. It's a victory that says a lot about our squad and the resources we have."

Ancelotti noted that his club had contacted LaLiga about the scheduling conflicts but had yet to receive an answer.

I think today is the last time we will play a game before 72 hours. We will never play a game with less than that

CARLO ANCELOTTI

Real top the standings on 60 points, three clear of second-placed Barcelona, who have a game in hand after last week's postponement of their clash with Osasuna and face third-placed Atletico in a late match on Sunday.

"The important thing for us was to win today, tomorrow I will watch the game but as a football fan. The result doesn't matter," Ancelotti said.

Earlier Mallorca beat Espanyol 2-1 with a late Vedat Muriqi penalty, with the target man making amends after scoring an own goal and missing another spot-kick.

Hollerbach goal helps Union Berlin hold Bayern

Berlin, Germany - A moment of uncertainty from goalkeeper Jonas Urbig allowed Benedict Hollerbach to score a late goal as Union Berlin secured a 1-1 home draw on Saturday with Bayern Munich, who still extended their lead atop the Bundesliga standings to nine points.

Bayern, chasing a record-extending 34th league title, climbed to 62 points. Champions Bayer Leverkusen, who are in second place, have a game in hand and travel to face VfB Stuttgart on Sunday.

Vincent Kompany's Bayern began on the front foot and set up camp in Union's half but the hosts were compact in defence and largely

limited their opponents to long-range efforts.

Serge Gnabry had Bayern's best chance of the goal-less first half in stoppage time when Michael Olise played

him through on goal, but his shot from a tight angle was kept out by goalkeeper Frederik Rønnow.

Bayern kept probing after the interval, with Jamal Musiala and Harry Kane fluffing their lines from promising positions, before substitute Leroy Sane finally broke the deadlock in the 75th minute when he fired in Olise's cut-back.

For all their early dominance, Bayern's lead lasted

just eight minutes.

Union, who had been content to sit back and absorb pressure for much of the match, made a double change as they sought an equaliser and were able to catch Bayern off guard.

Josip Juranovic floated a cross into the penalty area and Urbig, who is deputizing for the injured Manuel Neuer and Daniel Peretz, could manage only a weak punch out which was headed in by former Bayern academy player Hollerbach.

It was a second straight league match without a win for Bayern after their shock 3-2 home loss to VfL Bochum last week.

For Union, who are now winless in their 12 Bundesliga meetings with Bayern, the draw moved them up one place to 13th.



Union Berlin's Benedict Hollerbach celebrates his goal against Bayern Munich on Saturday



RB Leipzig's Xavi Simons celebrates his goal against Borussia Dortmund in their Bundesliga match on Saturday

Simons, Openda on target as Leipzig beat Dortmund

Leipzig, Germany - Xavi Simons and Lois Openda were on target as RB Leipzig snapped their four-match winless streak in the Bundesliga with a 2-0 home victory over Borussia Dortmund on Saturday, boosting their hopes of finishing in the top four.

The win moved Leipzig up to fifth in the table on 42 points after 26 games, level with fourth-placed Eintracht Frankfurt, who travel to VfL Bochum on Sunday. The top four teams in Germany qualify for the Champions League.

Leipzig shot out of the blocks and had a number of chances early on, with Openda rattling the crossbar from close range, while Dortmund goalkeeper Gregor Kobel did well to keep out shots from Simons and David Raum.

Dortmund did not heed the many warnings they were given, and Simons opened the hosts' account in the 18th minute, lashing home a rebound after Kobel had once again denied left back Raum.

Karim Adeyemi nearly

equalised for Dortmund on the stroke of halftime when he latched onto a long ball over the top and sent a low shot towards the bottom corner, but Leipzig goalkeeper Peter Gulacsi made an excellent sprawling save.

Leipzig doubled their lead after the interval through Openda, who was left unmarked at the far post from a corner and showed excellent technique to volley Simons' delivery into the net in the 48th minute.

Dortmund responded well to the second goal and did their best to fight their way back into the contest, but were thwarted time and again by Gulacsi, who made several fine saves.

The best of those came in the 63rd minute after Adeyemi had played Serhou Guirassy through on goal, with Gulacsi racing off his line to deny the Guinea international a 15th league goal of the season.

Dortmund, who have had a dreadful league campaign so far, dropped into 11th place after their 11th league defeat of the season.

Virat Kohli plays for 'pure joy and enjoyment and love for the game'

Mumbai, India - Indian batsman Virat Kohli said he may not have another tour of Australia left in him after his team's humbling 3-1 test series defeat Down Under but the 36-year-old has ruled out retiring anytime soon as he still enjoys playing the game too much.

Speaking at the RCB Innovation Lab Indian Sports Summit on Saturday, Kohli said the slump was reminiscent of his dismal run in England in 2014 where he made 134 runs.

"If you ask me the intensity of how disappointed I've been, the recent Australia tour would be the one that's most fresh. So it might feel the most intense," Kohli said.

"For a long time, the tour of England in 2014 bothered me the most. But I can't look at it that way. I might not have an Australia tour again in four

As long as that love is intact, I'll continue to play. I have to be honest about that with myself

VIRAT KOHLI

years. I don't know. You have to make peace with whatever's happened in your life."

Kohli quit Twenty20 internationals after India's World Cup win last year but continues to play in the IPL for Royal Challengers Bengaluru.

He remains a key member of

India's test team, and played a big role in their 50-overs Champions Trophy triumph last week.

"Me playing the game is not for achievements," Kohli added.

"It pretty much comes down to the pure joy and enjoyment and love for the game. As long as that love is intact, I'll continue to play the game. I have to be honest about that with myself."

"Don't get nervous, I'm not making any announcements, as of now everything's fine."



"It was a very difficult victory because Alex was pushing a lot... I kept pushing and the gap wasn't increasing at all until the end," Marc said as he remains perfect

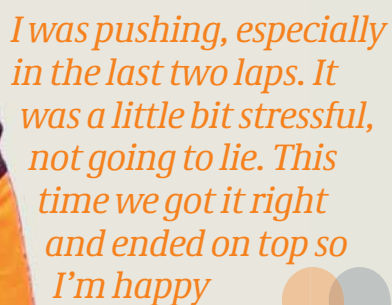
Whatever Alex did, he could not find an opening to move past his elder brother but the Gresini rider was all smiles despite finishing second.

Draper beat the world number three at Queen's Club last year and had the winning formula again this time around, as the lefty relied on his lethal forehand to reach his first Masters 1000-level final, where he will face Denmark's Holger

He will face an in-form Rune, who beat the Russian Daniil Medvedev 7-5 6-4 after losing his last seven semi-final matches.

McLaren's Norris holds off Verstappen to win dramatic Australian GP

With his rear wing bent out of shape and his race over before it began, the unharmed Frenchman was in tears as his car was hauled away by a crane.



LANDO NORRIS

Norris and Piastri pitted to change to hard tyres but another rain shower wreaked havoc 10 laps later, as Piastri skidded into gravel then ended up in the grass.

McLaren's Lando Norris celebrates after winning the Australian Grand Prix on Sunday

عيادة فصول السنة للطب الهندي التقليدي **ALL SEASON AYURVEDA CLINIC**

The most efficient and authentic
Ayurvedic Treatment & Medicine,
Yoga, Kalari, Panchakarma, Massage,
Dhara etc... Rehabilitation, Beauty
therapy & post Delivery Care

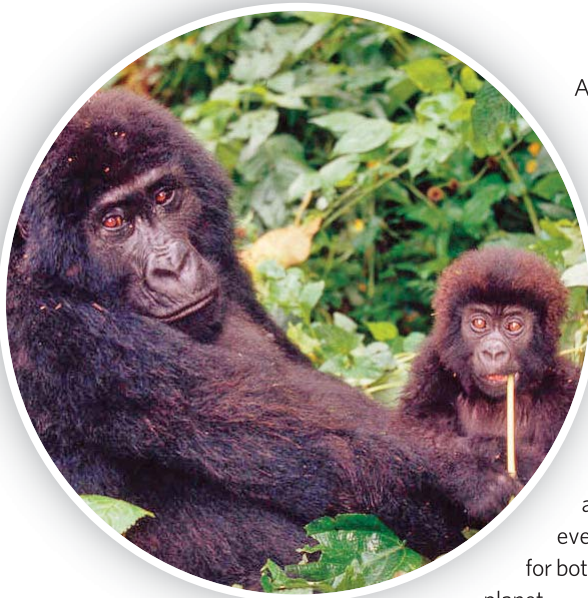
Zaher Building ,1st Floor, Flat 8A,
Al Khuwair Service Road, near Al Zawaid
Mosque & Burger-king Tel:24475280,
GSM: 95371664 , 92504980 ,
Website:www.siddhayur.com



FOLKLORE

CONGO'S 'DINOS'

For centuries, locals have told stories of mokele-mbembe, a legendary creature said to lurk in the Congo Basin. But as forests vanish, sightings are on the rise - offering a glimpse into how folklore is changing with the landscape



African forests for the World Wildlife Fund (WWF). "But I am skeptical, and until someone shows me proof of a dinosaur-like animal, I don't believe it. There's usually a real animal it's being mistaken for."

The cost of lost forests

The Congo Basin isn't just a source of folklore, however. It's a crucial ecosystem for both local communities and the planet.

Spanning an area second only to the Amazon, it is often called the 'lungs of Africa'. It absorbs 1.5 billion tonnes of CO2 annually, ranking it the world's largest carbon sink.

But it's under siege. Agriculture, logging, mining, and a swelling population carve more into the jungle each year, while government corruption greenlights unchecked encroachment. The relentless appetite for bushmeat, the march of industry, and the looming shadow of climate change all have a hand in destroying the Congo.

Weakening the rainforest, of course, will have global implications. One of those is the growing proximity between humans and wildlife, which facilitates the transmission of zoonotic diseases - illnesses that jump from animals to humans, such as COVID-19, Ebola, and monkeypox.

"The more we're exposed to wild animals, the higher the chances these viruses will make the jump into the human population," says Blom. "It's a simple question of statistics."

But this dynamic is a double-edged sword. The "rapid increase in the Congo Basin, driven by commerce," exposes endangered gorillas and chimpanzees to disease - an impact his team sees clearly as both populations continue to decline year after year, says Gwili Gibbon, conservation manager at African Parks.

The ripple effects of these interactions aren't new to Selah Abong'o, who mistook a forest elephant for a mokele-mbembe nearly 20 years prior.

"My colleagues still tease me about that," she says with a smirk. "But when I think about it now, it saddens me. People are still confusing elephants and apes for mokele-mbembe, and that's largely because of deforestation. Zoonotic diseases, like Ebola, are still spreading as people encroach more on the forest. And the Congo," she paused, "is still disappearing."

Courtesy: nationalgeographic.com

Trees began to quake, monkeys shrieked, and birds fled skyward... Deep in the heart of Odzala-Kokoua National Park, Selah Abong'o froze, convinced she was about to encounter something out of legend - a mokele-mbembe, Congo's mythical dinosaur.

In 2003, the young Congolese conservationist ventured into the dense forest to investigate a devastating Ebola outbreak that had wiped out over 5,000 western lowland gorillas. But that day, the epidemic took a backseat to her racing imagination.

"It was just a really big forest elephant," she laughed. "We don't have dinosaurs here, although it's easy to mistake an elephant or hippopotamus for one, which I did. I was a rookie back then."

Two decades later, the legend of mokele-mbembe remains alive, whispered in villages and embellished with each new 'sighting', and Abong'o says deforestation is the reason why.

The Congo Basin - Earth's second-largest rainforest and one of its most vital ecosystems - has lost 23 million hectares of forest since Abong'o's so-called dinosaur encounter, an area comparable to the entire United Kingdom.

As human settlements creep further into habitats, encounters between locals and wildlife are becoming more frequent. Mokele-mbembe has shifted from a Western, pseudo-scientific obsession among cryptozoologists and creationist ministers back to its roots as a local African legend shared by those who have long known its story.

"In bigger settlements where habitats are being pushed into and people aren't used to seeing large animals, they're suddenly encountering them all the time," says Laura Vlachova, a Czech conservationist. "It's these people who tell me they've seen mokele-mbembe. I think what it really shows is how folklore is

starting to reflect the reality of a shrinking ecosystem."

When myths meet reality

Among the Ba'Aka - a forest-dwelling people indigenous to the Central African Republic, Republic of Congo, Gabon, and Cameroon - stories of the 'one who stops rivers' have endured for centuries, says Abong'o.

If the legendary creature does exist, it would likely reside in Lake Tele, a remote body of water cocooned by virgin jungle in the Likouala swamps. The lake lies within the Lac T  le Community Reserve, a pristine, 4,400sqkm expanse where

surveys in 2006 and 2007 uncovered an astonishing 125,000 gorillas - more than the species' total estimated global population at the time.

Yet, despite its remoteness, habitat loss is escalating in the region. Settlements in the region rely heavily on slash-and-burn agriculture, clearing patches of forest to grow cassava, peanuts, bananas, and maize. Trees and shrubs are felled, and the remaining vegetation is burned to enrich the soil with ash, offering short-lived fertility.

Usually, within two to five years, the soil becomes depleted again, which forces farmers to clear new land - perpet-

uating an ecological nightmare of a cycle.

In 2023, Congolese biologist Joseph Oyange observed this firsthand when visiting a family in northern Congo.

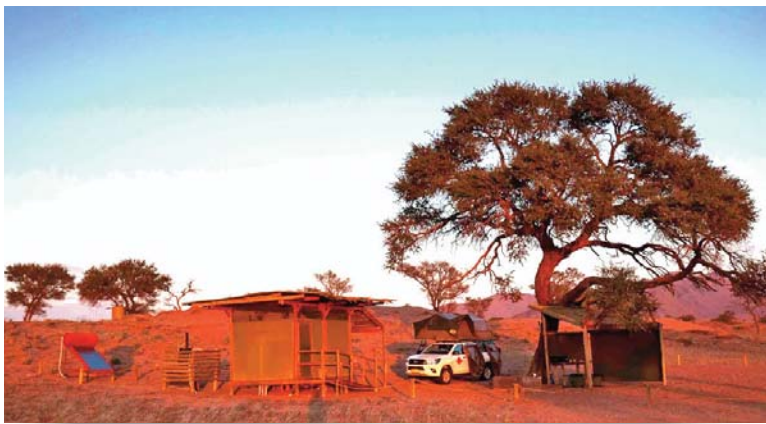
He watched the smoke rise from two hectares of the jungle they had cleared, unwittingly disrupting the gorilla habitat. The displaced primates foraged in the fields by night, leaving crops trampled by morning. One teenager, hearing gorilla cries, later told Oyange, "It was mokele-mbembe roaring."

"There's often a certain degree of truth to these myths, so I don't completely disregard them," says Allard Blom, vice president of global programmes of





The original Mississippian people built Ocmulgee Mounds after the last Ice Age



Sunrise over the Family Hideout camping site in NamibRand Nature Reserve



A river crossing in Pakistan's Nangma Valley

TRAVEL IN 2025

Grab your suitcase and your passport — *TIME* has just released its list of the world's 100 greatest places to visit in 2025.

From El Salvador to Jaipur to Zimbabwe, the team of editors at the New York-based news magazine has selected remarkable destinations and thrilling new experiences travellers need to know about.

Now in its seventh year, the list highlights everything from resorts to cruises to museums, restaurants and national parks.

US destinations that made the cut include the newly refurbished Waldorf Astoria New York, which

is set to reopen later this spring. The 94-year-old Manhattan institution will have 357 redesigned guest suites for travellers to enjoy.

In Georgia, Macon's Ocmulgee Mounds is a prehistoric Native American site and has been a national historical park since 2019. Now, it's gearing up to become the state's first national park — get there before the crowds do.

In the Caribbean, the luxury brand Sandals opened its first resort in St Vincent and the Grenadines last March in Buccament, with a sea and mountain backdrop and a 300-foot pool as a centerpiece.

In South America, Colombia's majestic Magdalena River, which

runs for nearly 1,000 miles through the rest of the country, can soon be explored by river cruise, thanks to Ama Waterways. *TIME* highlights its upcoming seven-night itineraries between Cartagena and Barranquilla, now accepting bookings.

'Ghost' distilleries have been resurrected in Scotland, most notably Port Ellen on the isle of Islay, which reopened last year after being closed for more than four decades. Now it offers a high-end visitor experience, where elegant teas are served alongside the expected drinks.

Over in Paris, the newly restored Notre Dame cathedral gets a shout out. Says *TIME*, "When fire ravaged Notre Dame in 2019, proposals for

rebuilding the 12th-century cathedral included a rooftop pool and a glass spire. But when it finally reopened at the twilight of 2024, it stood as a marvel of dutiful, worshipful authenticity."

Denmark is represented by the newly opened Tiny Seaside resorts of Loddenhoj and Skarrev in South Jutland. "Its modernist houses are 226 square feet a piece but can each accommodate a family of four, and include private terraces and barbecues," says *TIME*.

Namibia's NamibRand Nature Reserve was named last year as Africa's first Wilderness Quiet Park. The vast 200,000-hectare desert expanse has been an International Dark Sky Reserve since 2012, so it's

an incredible destination for escaping the bustle of modern life.

In Musanze, Rwanda, the Culinary Innovation Village by Meza Malonga offers a tour of the African continent through food. Congolese-born Dieuveil Malonga visited 48 countries to create his particular blend of Afro-fusion cuisine and he told CNN in 2023 that he hopes it can spark a culinary revolution in his home continent.

Nintendo's first ever museum opened last October in the Japanese company's former factory complex in Uji, about an hour south of the city of Kyoto. Says *TIME*, "You don't need to know a Shino from a Mario from a Zelda to appreciate the Nintendo Museum,

but anyone who spent their childhood glued to their Nintendo Switch or vintage Game Boy may find themselves transported."

Once a popular stop-off on the Hippy Trail of the 1960s and '70s, Pakistan is re-emerging as a hiking destination. Nangma Valley has been dubbed the country's answer to Yosemite, but without the crowds of visitors.

There are also several train journeys highlighted on *TIME*'s list, but one of the most spectacular is the Ghan, a 75-hour luxury train ride through the Australian outback. The air-conditioned carriages are the ideal cheat for seeing this landscape where temperatures are extreme day and night.



Here are some of the world's greatest places to visit in 2025, according to *TIME* magazine

Tiny Seaside tiny house resort in South Jutland, Denmark

Kia EV9

Here to reshape the way we move



Movement that inspires



Electric Global Modular Platform (E-GMP)



Auto Parking



Multi-Seating (6&7 Seater Option)

- All Electric Range (AER) upto 500 KMs*
- Battery Warranty upto 8 years/160,000 KMs
- Complimentary Home EV charging unit with 5 years warranty
- Manufacturer's Warranty upto 5 years/ 100,000 KMs on Motors and Other Items®
- First Year Car Insurance Inclusive*

- 0% VAT
- Registration fee waiver
- Service 105,000 Kms / 5 years whichever is earlier
- iPhone 15 on purchase of EV Vehicles

This Ramadan... get everything you wish for. The all-new KIA EV9 is set to transform the future of mobility. Introducing sustainable and environment-friendly vehicles with zero carbon emissions, explore the world of EVs with their spectacular design and modern features. Experience the vehicles available for display in Muscat at the Wattayah and Mawaleh showrooms today.

Reliable International Automotive LLC. C.R. No. 1707183, Wattayah: 92858004, Al Mawaleh: 99473174

*The figures for all electric range reflect the expected results under Worldwide Harmonized Light Vehicles Test Procedure (WLTP). # Insurance applicable would be given to the extent of a private vehicle, additional premium if any would have to be paid by the buyer.

© Manufacturer's Warranty of 5 Years/ 100,000 Kms whichever is earlier. For paint and body perforations, standard Kia warranty terms are applied. The service interval is 15000 kms.

LYNK & CO

CELEBRATE RAMADAN IN STYLE EXCLUSIVE OFFERS!



FREE 4 Years/Unlimited Kms Service*



**6 Years/Unlimited
KMs Extended Warranty***



**6 Years AAA Roadside
Assistance***



**Trade-In Option
Available***

*Conditions Apply



Showroom - Ghala Heights, Muscat

☎ 71611137 🌐 lynkcooman.com 📱📺📷📞 [lynkcooman](https://www.lynkcooman.com)