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# Times OF OMAN

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STREAMLINED PROCESS

## Opaz boosts investor services

**MUSCAT:** The Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (Opaz) has enhanced its investor services by unifying the service pathway, enabling investors to conduct economic activities across all areas under its supervision.

This streamlined process allows investors to access all incentives, privileges, and facilitations offered by the Authority through a single registration when starting their projects. >B1

# NEW INVESTMENT AND TRADE COURT TO ENHANCE OMAN'S BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

The Investment and Trade Court will help in resolving various commercial disputes

*Times News Service*

**MUSCAT:** The Supreme Judicial Council (SJC) has reaffirmed that the establishment of the Investment and Trade Court will provide a stable environment for wooing foreign investment and also cope with the contemporary legal challenges.

While helping in maintaining sustainable economic growth of Oman, the SJC reaffirmed that the court has been created within the keenness of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik for initiation of laws to attract investment and for the development of the commerce sector in the Sultanate of Oman.

The court is expected to meet the aspirations and targets of Oman Vision 2040 and will receive continued care of the judiciary service in cementing the pillars of justice and the sovereignty of the law in Oman, the SJC added.

The judicial council stated that the court is concerned with the review of all cases to which one party is a merchant or related to the merchant's business.

It is also concerned with disputes arising from the investment contracts including the disputes arising between the partners or the shareholders or between them and the company as the case may be in trading companies including the public joint stock companies, the shares of which are offered for trading. The court is also concerned with the disputes related to the commercial assets ; the cases related to foreign capital investment, the economic activity, the cases related to banks, securities of finance, investment and insurance companies with the exception to the damages resulting from car accidents and case related to bankruptcy or the requests for arbitration, the cases related to patents, trade secrets, industrial models and other intellectual property rights, the cases of protection of competitiveness and monopoly practices and combating of practices harmful to national products, the cases related to online commercial transactions and the cases related to partnership contracts between the government sector and the private sector.

## *HM issues Royal Decree*

**MUSCAT:** His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on Sunday issued Royal Decree, No. (35/2025), establishing the Investment and Trade Court and promulgating its law.

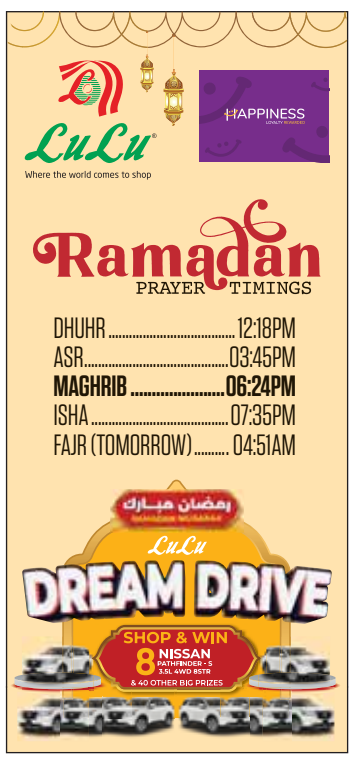
The decree reads as follows: Article (1) states that a court to be named the "Investment and Trade Court" shall be established and affiliated to the Supreme Judiciary Council. It stipulates that the new court's headquarters shall be in the Governorate of Muscat and the provisions of the law attached to this decree shall be applied to the same court.

Article (2) states that courts shall continue to adjudicate lawsuits, orders and requests that, pursuant to the attached law, have become subject to the jurisdiction of the Investment and Trade Court, provided that the lawsuits, orders and requests had been filed prior to the date of enforcing provisions of the attached law.

Article (3) states that the Deputy Chairman of the Supreme Judiciary Council shall issue a decision regulating the functions of the Investment and Trade Court and its administrative divisions.

Article (4) annuls all that contradicts the attached law or contravenes its provisions.

Article (5) says that this decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and shall be enforced from 1 October 2025. — ONA



*Fisheries sector in Oman records 7.5% growth* **B1**

ROYAL ORDERS

# Moon sighting committee to decide on the Eid Al Fitr date on Saturday

*Times News Service*

**MUSCAT:** People living in the Sultanate of Oman will have to wait till Saturday evening for moon sighting to know the exact duration of Eid holidays.

As per Royal orders, it has been decided that the Eid Al Fitr holiday 1446 AH for employees of the State's Administrative Apparatus, other legal entities and establishments of the private sector will start on Saturday, 29 March 2025 and end as per the two following probabilities:

(A) If first day of Eid is on Sunday, 30 March 2025, the holiday ends on Tuesday 1 April 2025. Official work will resume on Wednesday, 2 April 2025.

(B) If first day of Eid is on Monday, 31 March 2025, the holiday ends on Thursday 3 April 2025. Official work will resume on Sunday, 6 April 2025.

The Ministry of Labour pointed out that employers may agree on terms to engage employees on the said holiday— if deemed necessary — provided they compensate them for the holiday. The situation has left many struggling to finalise travel plans, family gatherings, and other celebrations. This uncertainty has left many wondering how best to plan ahead for travel or family gatherings.

## *Now, pay more on visa for visiting UK from April 9*

*Times News Service*

**MUSCAT:** Citizens and residents living in Oman and travelling to the United Kingdom will have to shell out more money for visa from next month. From April 9, 2025, travellers from Oman applying for up to 6-month visit visa will have to pay £127 compared to the current fee of £115, an increase of £12, according to the UK Government.

A long-term visa for up to two-year will cost £475 from the past £432. And the five-year visa cost will be hiked by £77 to £848 and a 10-year visa fee will be increased by £96 to £1,059.

Citizens visiting the UK can apply for an Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA), which currently costs £10. But plans are there that it will also be raised to £16 from April 9.

Ever year, thousands of citizens and expat residents travel to the UK for tourism, particularly during the summer holidays. While several destinations in Eastern Europe are gaining popularity, the UK continues to be a top choice for Oman based travelers. National carrier, Oman Air also operates direct flight to London. The UK is also a favoured travel destination for the people living in the Gulf countries.

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN

### Pact signed for water purification plant

1 Nama Water Services on Sunday signed an agreement in partnership with the private sector to construct a water purification plant at Wadi Dayqah Dam in the Wilayat of Quriyat. The project, coordinated with relevant government bodies, is valued at over OMR55 million. >A5

OMAN

### Oman to host green hydrogen summit

2 The Green Hydrogen Oman Summit (GHSO) 2025 will be held at Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre from 18-20 December 2025. >A6

WORLD

### World landmarks go dark for Earth Hour

3 Iconic landmarks around the world were plunged into darkness on Saturday night as millions marked Earth Hour. The campaign is held to address the climate crisis. >A7

# OMAN

PRAYER TIMINGS

Dhuhr....12:18pm
Asr....3:45pm
Maghrib....6:24pm
Isha....7:35pm
Fajr (Tomorrow).... 4:51am

# Oman's early warning centre gives weather and quake alerts

The National Multi-Hazard Early Warning Centre was established in 2004 and officially launched in 2015

*Times News Service*

**MUSCAT:** The Sultanate of Oman marked the World Meteorological Day which falls on 23 March every year.

This year's World Metrological Day is themed "Closing the early warning gap together". It aims to contribute to minimising the effects resulting from cyclones, storms and floods.

This year's celebration is being held under the theme "Together to Close the Early Warning Gap," to mitigate the impacts of tropical cyclones, severe storms, and floods.

The World Meteorological Organization recently confirmed that 2024 was the hottest year since records began, as changes in the environment led to more extreme weather events.

In her remarks on the occasion, Professor Celeste Saulo, Secretary-General of the World Meteorological Organization, said that over the past 75 years, we have contributed billions of dollars to the global economy, saved billions more by avoiding economic losses caused by weather, climate, and water-related risks, and saved hundreds of thousands of lives.

She noted that the World Meteorological Organization is the backbone and central nervous system of global weather forecasting.

For his part, UN Secretary-General António Guterres said that the UN Early Warnings for All initiative aims to protect communities everywhere through a warning system by 2027, and the world must unite and urgently intensify its efforts and investments to achieve this goal.

In the next phase, the initiative will focus on expanding the scope of early warning systems for all by building on lessons learned, expanding support to include additional countries in addition to the thirty countries on which the initiative initially focused, strengthening partnerships with bilateral and multilateral donors, development banks, and climate funds to increase resources and strengthen cooperation, enhancing regional capacities through collaboration with specialised centres and regional partners to ensure lasting impact, and fostering a sense of national ownership through country leadership in implementation and ensuring long-term sustainability.

The initiative seeks to bridge the gap by funding early warning and ensuring that every country has the resources needed to build resilience and protect communities from the increasing impacts of extreme weather and climate change.

Since joining the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) in 1975, the Sultanate of Oman has been among the active countries striving for continuous and fruitful cooperation with the organisation and its regional centres for exchanging information and initiating the development of its own forecasting and monitoring equipment to enhance its meteorological capabilities and benefit from international cooperation in this field.

The National Multi-Hazard Early Warning Centre was established in 2004 and officially launched in 2015.

It is the first national centre to provide alerts and warnings for several natural hazards in the region, such as tsunami waves resulting from marine earthquakes, hurricanes and tropical conditions, and flash floods resulting from weather conditions. Alerts are issued and disseminated through media channels and various social media platforms to reach all segments of society.

The centre aims to provide early warning services and alerts regarding weather and climate hazards to the community and stakeholders from the government, military, and private sectors.

It also provides alerts and weather bulletins to the aviation sector and all civil, military, and oil airports in the Sultanate of Oman, ensuring and achieving the highest levels of air navigation safety and security in the Sultanate of Oman.

It also provides alerts and warnings regarding tsunami and marine earthquake hazards.

### 24-hour monitoring

The centre performs a variety of tasks, including 24-hour monitoring of weather conditions and natural hazards, issuing necessary warnings and alerts to residents and relevant authorities, and coordinating with government agencies to take preventive measures.

The centre relies on numerous technologies used to monitor natural hazards, including the latest systems and technical equipment.

These include 80 integrated meteorological stations distributed across the Sultanate of Oman, weather radar systems, marine radars, satellites, numerical models, and advanced meteorological stations to monitor and analyse weather phenomena.

The centre sends emergency warnings to citizens and residents via the Oman Meteorological Department's website, text messages, audio and visual media, smartphone applications, and social media platforms.

It also cooperates with government agencies and international organisations to address natural hazards. These include, at the local level, the National Emergency Management Committee, and at the international level, the World Meteorological Organization and the International Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO, to ensure effective responses to hazards.

The National Multi-Hazard Early Warning Centre relies on established operational procedures when issuing all alerts. These procedures are used to manage weather conditions and activate the national emergency management system.

Accurate warnings are issued, and this is done in coordination with the relevant authorities to take preventive measures, such as evacuating areas at risk, if necessary.

The centre has succeeded in mitigating damage from natural hazards by minimising human and material losses during tropical cyclones such as Cyclone Shaheen, by issuing early warnings and providing continuous data to citizens, residents, and decision-makers. **-With ONA inputs**

ELECTRICAL EQUIPMENT

## Anti-dumping duty imposed on products

**MUSCAT:** The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion announced that the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries have imposed anti-dumping duties on imports of electrical equipment and switches with an electrical voltage not exceeding 1,000 volts from the People's Republic of China, effective from June 8, 2025, for a period of five years.

### Complaint

Khalid bin Khamis Al Masroori, Director of the Prohibited Practices Department at the Competition Protection and Prevention Centre, confirmed that this decision is based on the complaint submitted by the Gulf industry to the Technical Secretariat Office for Combating Harmful Practices in the Gulf Cooperation Council countries, within the framework of the Unified Law (System) for Anti-Dumping, Countervailing and Preventive Measures for the Gulf Cooperation Council countries and its executive regulations, issued by Royal Decree No. (20/2015).

He pointed out that the decision aims to protect Gulf products from harmful practices in international trade and ensure a fair competitive environment for national industries. **-ONA**

# OCCI plans to hold tourism workshops

The initiatives align with the OCCI's strategic approaches to improve the business environment

**MUSCAT:** The Tourism Committee of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) on Sunday held its first meeting of 2025. The meeting was chaired by Dr. Siham Ahmed Al Harthi, Chairperson of the Committee.

The meeting looked into proposed initiatives and activities that constitute part of the committee's action plan for the year 2025.

The initiatives and activities align with the OCCI's strategic approaches, which include improving the business environment, expanding the base of economic diversification and contributing to the economic development of governorates amid updates seen by the tourism sector in the Sultanate of Oman.

The committee's participation in the second Oman Desert Tourism Forum was also discussed, highlighting the possibility of including the Oman Air Tour initiative within the forum's activities as a unique experience that would enhance the forum's appeal, in addition to the importance of promoting it locally and internationally.

The committee discussed organising a mobile tourism workshop in Russia, reviewing the success of previous tourism workshops in Berlin and Taiwan. The selection of Russia and Belarus was also discussed, given their growing interest in Omani tourism.

The committee highlighted the success of the first edition of the Tourism Investment Forum, emphasising the importance organising the forum regularly to boost investment in the tourism sector.

It was also proposed expanding the scope of the forum to include global investors, in addition to offering incentives to attract major companies.

During the meeting, the committee highlighted the need to support Omanisation in the tourism sector, discussing the idea of organising a discussion panel bringing together relevant stakeholders, employers, and job seekers to review the challenges and employment opportunities in the sector. -ONA

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WORDS OF WISDOM

## DIVINE COMMUNICATION: SIGNS FOR THOSE WHO BELIEVE [QURAN 2:118]

The ignorant people say, "Why does not Allah Himself talk to us or why does not a Sign come to us?" The people before them also talked like this, for all (who swerve from the Right Path) have the same mentality. We have already shown clear Signs to those who believe;

IFTAR RECIPE OnezaTabish

## HOMEMADE DOUGH VEGETABLE SOUP

**INGREDIENTS**

For the dough
- 1/2 cup all-purpose flour
- 1tsp freshly ground blackpepper
- Salt, to taste
- 1 tsp oil
- 5 Tbsp water

For the soup
- 1/4 cup oil
- 1 green chilli, finely chopped
- 1 tsp ginger-garlic paste
- 1 medium-size onion,finely chopped
- 1medium-size carrot, julienned
- 1 greenbellpepper,julienned
- 1/4 cupshreddedcabbage
- 2 cupsvegetablebroth
- 1 Tbspsoysauce
- Pinchof chilli flakes
- Salt, to taste

**METHODS**
- To make the dough: In a medium-size bowl, combine the flour, pepper, salt to taste, oil, and water. Knead to make a medium-soft dough. Let rest for 10 minutes.
- Roll the dough into a thin disk and cut into long noodle-like strips with a sharp knife. Set aside
- To make the soup: In a pot over medium heat,heat the oil.
- Add the green chilli, ginger garlic paste, and onion. Sauté the mixture for 2-3 minutes.
- Add the carrot, green bellpepper, cabbage, and vegetable broth. Let the soup boil for 2-3 minutes.
- Stir in the soy sauce and dough strips. Season to taste with salt and chilliflakes. Cook for 10 minutes.
- Servehot

GOOD DEEDS

# CAN WE STOP FOOD WASTE IN THE MONTH OF BLESSING?

As I drive with my business in this month of Ramadan, I see a lot of cats around the street bins more than usual.

These cats literally stand on the heaps of food on top of the waste bins. There are also more food around the bins as the animals celebrate the vast leftovers of the Ramadan's Iftaar meals. It looks like for some, Ramadan is a festival period and not the month of restraint.

We forget that this month is the month of reflection to look at our bad habits and put them right. It is also an opportunity to make important changes on our wasteful behaviours. The world is going through environmental changes and one of them is food scarcity.

Poverty is on top of all calamities we currently see in many parts of the world. And that brings the subject of food shortage. We don't need to say that there are many millions of people around the world who go through any day of the month without eating a proper meal.

SALEH AL-SHAIBANY

Instead of reflecting of these problems, some of the households in Oman cook more food than their families can consume in a Ramadan evening. We all know that the importance of preserving our resources at any time of the year is on top of the list. We do not need to be reminded.

But then why half of the population of Oman waste so much food during the month of Ramadan? Is it prestige or keeping up with the social status of wealthy families? We only need to look at the news to be reminded of poor families who go through the whole day without food. And the wealthy people in this country pay no attention to them.

Let us look at the problem this way. The money we pay for the food that are thrown in the bins can get into the pockets of the poor and solve many of their financial problems. This brings up another question. How do we enjoy our Iftaar meals knowing that half of it will be wasted?

We pay no attention that Ramadan is a month of restraint, self-control and common sense in all aspect of our routine. I think it is time we launch a national campaign every Ramadan to create awareness to all in the preservation of food. This campaign should not be restricted in the mosques or televisions but on posters in every street and corner of the country. Even better, perhaps our school curriculums should be included about food shortages and self-restrain to prepare our children to be more responsible about the wasting of resources when they grow up.

We should also know that it is about sustainability of the food productions. We are also aware that Islamic teaching of eating wisely is well supported by nutritionists and all medical experts. Eating moderately is about our health, too. So the Islamic tradition is again very compatible to medical science.

There is another aspect of it. Obesity is on the rise in Oman. It costs the Ministry of Health millions of rials a year to treat overweight people. Obviously, we see many people gain weight in Ramadan instead of trimming down like it is supposed to be.

WILAYAT OF QURIYAT

# Nama Water Services signs agreement for OMR55 million water purification plant in Wadi Dayqah Dam

**MUSCAT:** Nama Water Services on Sunday signed an agreement in partnership with the private sector to construct a water purification plant at Wadi Dayqah Dam in the Wilayat of Quriyat. The project, coordinated with relevant government bodies, is valued at over OMR55 million.

The agreement was mutually signed by Qais Saud Al Zakwani, CEO of Nama Water Services, and Sultan Abdullah Al Jafari, Chairman of Al Tayer Engineering Services Company – the project's implementing company.

The signing ceremony was attended by Dr. Saud Hamoud Al Habsi, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources.

This project aligns with the government's strategic focus on bolstering water security and ensuring a consistent supply of potable water for subscribers.

This initiative is designed to guarantee reliable water provision, particularly during periods of unexpected weather conditions and unforeseen emergencies. Moreover, the plant's development is intrinsically connected to supporting agricultural endeavors.

By channeling produced water to farms within the Wilayat of Quriyat, in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Water Resources, the project aims to enhance food security. This will be achieved through the expansion of water-reliant agricultural activities, ultimately supplying local markets.

The new water purification plant will be developed under a 20-year public-private partnership (PPP) contract, utilizing a Build, Own, Operate (BOO) model. Construction of the plant and associated infrastructure is slated for completion within 22 months.

The facility will boast a total production capacity of 65,000 cubic meters per day, with 35,000 cubic meters per day channeled into Nama Water Services' main distribution network, supplying potable water. The remaining 30,000 cubic meters per day will be dedicated to agricultural irrigation, distributed through a network serving farms in the Wilayat of Quriyat, in coordination with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources.

To reinforce water security and enhance the reliability of the main transmission network, the treatment plant will be linked to an exchange line with other facilities. This interconnection will facilitate resource sharing during emergencies and crises, ensuring the sustainability of water service and preventing disruptions.

Speaking on the agreement, Qais Saud Al Zakwani, CEO of Nama Water Services, said: "Nama Water Services is committed to achieving water security goals, addressing the escalating demand for this critical resource driven by subscriber growth and urban development. To meet these demands, the company is actively pursuing a portfolio of projects. This includes the construction of the water purification plant at Wadi Dayqah Dam in the Wilayat of Quriyat.

"The Wadi Dayqah Dam water purification plant project reflects Nama Water Services' strategic push to leverage diverse water resources. This initiative aims to optimize the dam's water output to address the regions' demand effectively. The project adheres to a meticulously planned approach, balancing current necessities with projected future requirements, ultimately contributing to the water security goals outlined in Oman Vision 2040," he added.

Al Zakwani highlighted the project's significant contribution to local added value, the creation of over 100 indirect jobs throughout the construction and operational phases, and a community contribution within the Wilayat of Quriyat. He further underscored the project's commitment to nationalisation, mandating a minimum of 50% Omanisation for all direct jobs during the operational period.

He added that the Wadi Dayqah Dam Water Purification Plant stands out as an exceptional undertaking, harnessing surface water and purifying it to the highest international technical standards. Compliant with Omani drinking water regulations, the project represents a significant addition to the Sultanate of Oman's water infrastructure. It is anticipated to bolster water security by providing a pure and sustainable source of drinking water.

Eng. Abdullah Mohammed Al Nuaimi, Chief Executive Officer of Operations and Maintenance at Nama Water Services, stated that the Wadi Dayqah Dam treatment plant represents a strategic move to diversify the sources of water production. This diversification aims to ensure consistent supply to the Muscat Governorate, mitigating potential disruptions caused by desalination plant outages. Additionally, it will compensate for supply shortages arising from marine phenomena like cyclones and algal blooms. The Wadi Dayqah Dam treatment plant will also serve as a viable alternative for supplying the Wilayats of Quriyat and Al Amerat, as well as the main water distribution network.

The Chief Executive Officer of Operations and Maintenance explained that the purification plant at Wadi Dayqah Dam will treat the dam's water through purification using state-of-the-art technologies and systems in this field.

He noted that the salt content in the dam's water is significantly lower than that of seawater, which will contribute to reducing the energy used and thus lowering operational costs compared to seawater desalination.

Eng. Al Nuaimi said that the Wadi Dayqah Dam Water Treatment Plant project, among the first of its kind in the region, which encompasses the construction of the treatment plant itself alongside a seven-kilometer water transmission line connecting the dam to the facility and a corresponding pumping station.

A 20,000-cubic-metre collection tank is also being built to receive water from the completed pumping station, which is integrated into the main water transmission line. This line extends from the Wilayat of Quriyat to other Wilayats within the Muscat Governorate and the broader water transmission network.

The project is designed to optimise dam water usage for agriculture, bolstering food security and seasonal cultivation. It will also diversify water production sources to address emergency demands, enhance the reliability of the main water transmission network, and provide an alternative water supply for the Wilayat of Quriyat. Furthermore, the initiative seeks to reduce desalination water production costs by leveraging dam water.

This aligns with Oman Vision 2040's goals of increasing drinking water network reliability and expanding agricultural land.

Finally, the project contributes to reducing carbon emissions, supporting Nama Water Services' strategy to achieve net-zero by 2050 through decreased energy consumption via replacing desalination output with purified dam water. -ONA

سلطنة عُمان
وزارة النقل والاتصالات وتقنية المعلومات
Sultanate of Oman
Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology

إعلان مناقصة
Tender Notice

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

| Tender Number | Tender Name | Date of Publishing | Last date to Purchase Tender Document | Submission Date | Companies who should participate in this Tender | Document Price |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| MTCIT/ 58/2025 | DESIGN AND BUILD MTCIT STAND FOR OMAN SUSTAINABILITY WEEK 2025 | 20-3-2025 | 26-3-2025 | 09-4-2025 | Experienced companies and registered with The Secretariate General of Tender Board (All Class) | (25/00) Twenty-five Omani Rial (Local, Regional) (10/-) Ten Omani Rial (for SME) Non-refundable |
| MTCIT/ 59/2025 | LOGISTICS DAY 2025 | 20-3-2025 | 26-3-2025 | 09-4-2025 | Experienced companies and registered with The Secretariate General of Tender Board (All Class) | (25/00) Twenty-five Omani Rial (Local, Regional) (10/-) Ten Omani Rial (for SME) Non-refundable |

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

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# OMAN/WORLD

# Powering green hydrogen future with innovation

As a key platform driving the Sultanate's clean energy ambitions, GHSO has played a pivotal role in showcasing Oman's commitment to sustainable energy solutions

*Times News Service*

**MUSCAT:** The Green Hydrogen Oman Summit (GHSO) 2025 will be held at Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre from 18-20 December 2025, supported by the Ministry of Energy and Minerals and Hydrom, and organised by Birba, reaffirming Oman's position as a global leader in the green hydrogen revolution.

As a key platform driving the Sultanate of Oman clean energy ambitions, GHSO has played a pivotal role in showcasing Oman's commitment to sustainable energy solutions.

> Hydrom's land block auctions have already secured commitments from international developers to produce 1.38 million tonnes per annum (tpa) of green hydrogen by 2030, representing a staggering $48 billion investment

### Future of energy

The summit will bring together industry pioneers, policymakers, and global investors to explore the immense potential of green hydrogen in shaping the future of energy.

With a strategic conference, an expansive exhibition, GHSO 2025 will highlight the groundbreaking projects, investments, and policy momentum propelling Oman's hydrogen economy forward.

GHSO 2025 will serve as the catalyst for collaboration and investment, bringing together key government and industry stakeholders.

With a focus on local content development, green financing, industrialisation, job creation, SME growth, and R&D, the summit will provide opportunities for businesses, investors, and innovators to be part of Oman's clean energy journey.

Dr. Firas Al Abduwani, Director General of Renewables & Hydrogen at the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, emphasised "GHSO 2025 will provide a powerful platform to congregate international stakeholders to reflect on opportunities and challenges facing the clean hydrogen industry and through collaboration articulate pathways where tangible roles for clean hydrogen in global and local decarbonisation, economic diversity and energy security."

Eng. Abdulaziz Al Shidhani, Managing Director of Hydrom, added "This landmark event will unlock immense opportunities in green hydrogen production, infrastructure development, industrial utilisation, and financing. GHSO 2025 will inject fresh momentum into Oman's clean energy transformation."

The previous edition of the event in 2023 saw over 5,000 attendees from 100 companies across 60 countries and witnessed the signing of seven key agreements—a testament to Oman's rapidly growing influence in the global hydrogen sector.

### Green Hydrogen momentum continues

Hydrom's land block auctions have already secured commitments from international developers to produce 1.38 million tonnes per annum (tpa) of green hydrogen by 2030, representing a staggering $48 billion investment across the upstream, midstream, and downstream segments.

And there's more to come—a third auction round in Q2 2025 will open doors for additional global players, further cementing Oman's role as a powerhouse in green hydrogen production.

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**EDITORIAL:** Telephone: 24726666, Fax: 24813153, E-mail: editor@timesofoman.com
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ROME'S GEMELLI HOSPITAL

# Pope Francis out of hospital after life-threatening illness

**VATICAN CITY:** Pope Francis on Sunday gave a blessing to a crowd gathered under a balcony at Rome's Gemelli hospital in his first public outing in over five weeks.

He has been in the hospital since February 14 after breathing problems developed into a severe respiratory infection.

The 88-year-old head of the Catholic Church waved from the balcony and gave a thumbs up.

"Thank you, everyone," Francis said into a microphone, sounding frail as he sat in a wheelchair.

Chants of "Viva il papa!" and "Papa Francesco" erupted from the crowd.

He was released from the hospital after greeting the crowd.

He was seen waving from the closed window of a car, wearing a device that delivers oxygen through the nostrils.

Before returning home to the Vatican, security guards told the Associated Press that Francis would head St. Mary Major basilica to pray. The Rome basilica is home to his favorite icon of the Madonna.

On Saturday, the pope's doctors it would still take "a lot of time" for him to recover. Doctors have recommended a two-month period of rest and convalescence at the Vatican. — DW

POWER OUTAGE

# UK orders probe after Heathrow airport shutdown

**LONDON:** Authorities in the United Kingdom have ordered an inquiry into a power outage that shut down operations at London's Heathrow Airport.

The outage, which was caused by an accidental fire at an electrical substation on Friday, shut down the world's fifth-busiest airport for almost a day.

### Fully operational

Although officials said on Saturday that the airport was once again "fully operational," thousands of travellers were still stuck due to the severe disruption caused by the outage. The delays are expected to last for several days.

British Airways, which is based in Heathrow, said it hoped for a "near-full schedule" on Sunday, although the airline's chief executive Sean Doyle warned on Friday that the outage's "huge impact" could continue into next week. The British government has said it has ordered the National Energy System Operator (NESO), which is in charge of the country's electricity and gas grid, to investigate the incident.

"I have today commissioned the NESO to carry out an investigation into this specific incident and to understand any wider lessons to be learned on energy resilience for critical national infrastructure, both now and in the future," Energy Secretary Ed Miliband said in a statement on X.

The investigation is expected to report initial findings within six weeks.

"We are determined to properly understand what happened and what lessons need to be learned," Miliband said.

Heathrow Airport has also opened its own inquiry into the accident, which will be led by Ruth Kelly, a former UK transport secretary and member of the airport's board.

According to aviation experts, the last time European airports faced such major disruption was when an Icelandic volcano erupted in 2010, sending a plume of volcanic ash into the sky that forced some 100,000 flights to be grounded. — DW

MIGRANTS

# Venezuela agrees with the US to resume repatriation flights for deported nationals

**CARACAS:** Venezuela has agreed with the US to resume repatriation flights for deported Venezuelan nationals, its officials announced on Saturday.

Jorge Rodriguez, Venezuela's National Assembly President, confirmed the first flight would depart on Sunday. He said the goal was to "ensure the return of our countrymen with the protection of their human rights."

Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro had suspended the flights on March 8 after US President Donald Trump accused Venezuela of failing to meet its commitments.

### Situation escalated

In response, Caracas refused to accept further flights. The situation escalated when the US government moved against US energy giant Chevron, suspending its license to export Venezuelan oil.

Caracas and Washington have clashed over the US deporting over 200 Venezuelans to a high-security prison in El Salvador, with Venezuela slamming the move as "kidnapping."

Washington claims the deportees belong to the Tren de Aragua gang — designated a foreign terrorist organisation by the US State Department. Venezuela denies this claim.

In a televised speech, Maduro also addressed Nayib Bukele, the president of El Salvador, telling him "you're responsible."

"You have to guarantee their health and sooner rather than later, you have to free them and hand them over," Maduro told Bukele.

Maduro maintained that the migrants hadn't committed crimes in the US or El Salvador.

### Relatives say deportees 'deceived'

Families of the deportees protested in Venezuela, accusing the US of tricking the migrants into believing they were returning home after days or weeks in detention.

"They were deceived," Gladys Coromoto Rojas, grandmother of deportee Kenlyn Rodriguez, told news agency AFP at a street protest in the Venezuelan city of Barquisimeto. Similarly, the family of Maikel Rojas Olivera said he had informed them that he was coming home to Venezuela on Saturday, only to be shipped to El Salvador.

More than 7 million Venezuelans have left their country following an economic collapse in the past decade, including opponents of the Maduro government.

— DW

ASHRAM-LIKE COMMUNITY

# India receives Mahatma Gandhi artefacts from South Africa

**NEW DELHI:** External Affairs Minister, S Jaishankar on Sunday received artefacts and documents related to Mahatma Gandhi from the Phoenix Settlement Trust-Gandhi Development Trust (PST-GDT) in South Africa.

Notably, Mahatma Gandhi established the Phoenix Settlement, his first ashram-like community, in 1904 in Inanda, near Durban, South Africa.

In a post on X, Jaishankar expressed his gratitude, stating, "Privileged to witness the handing over of artefacts and documents related to Mahatma Gandhi by @PST_GDT (Phoenix Settlement Trust-Gandhi Development Trust), South Africa to National Gandhi Museum, New Delhi."

### Philosophy of Satyagraha

Mahatma Gandhi's experiences in South Africa between 1893 and 1914 were crucial in shaping his political ideology, particularly his philosophy of Satyagraha. Faced with racial discrimination and injustice, Gandhi realised that non-violent resistance could be an effective tool for challenging oppressive systems.

"Bapu's life and message continue to inspire generations to come," the post added.

Mahatma Gandhi's life journey was a remarkable tale of transformation, perseverance, and selfless service. Born on October 2, 1869, in Porbandar, India, Gandhi was a key leader in the Indian independence movement against British rule. Gandhi led a 240-mile march from his ashram in Sabarmati to the coastal village of Dandi to protest the British government's monopoly on salt production and the heavy taxation on it.

### Quit India Movement

He also led the Quit India Movement, a civil disobedience movement demanding immediate independence for India. He advocated for non-cooperation with the British authorities, urging Indians to withdraw from British institutions, return honours conferred by the British empire, and boycott British-made goods.

Tragically, On January 30, 1948, Mahatma Gandhi was assassinated by Nathuram Godse at Gandhi Smriti in Birla's house.

Gandhi's death sent shockwaves throughout India and the world, but his legacy continues to inspire movements for justice and freedom across the globe.

India observes Martyrs' Day every year on January 30 to mark the death anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi and to honour his contribution towards the freedom of the country. — ANI

# Death toll in Gaza Strip surges to 50,021 amid Israeli genocide

Emergency services are still unable to reach many casualties and dead bodies trapped under the rubble or scattered on roads across the war-torn enclave

**GAZA:** Israeli occupation forces committed numerous massacres against families in the Gaza Strip over the past 24 hours, resulting in the killing of at least 41 Palestinians and the injury of 61 others, according to medical reports.

Local health authorities confirmed that the Palestinian death toll from the Israeli onslaught since October 7, 2023 has risen to 50,021 documented fatalities, with an additional 113,274 individuals sustaining injuries. The majority of the victims are women and children.

According to the same sources, emergency services are still unable to reach many casualties and dead bodies trapped under the rubble or scattered on roads across the war-torn enclave, as Israeli occupation forces continue to target ambulance and civil defense crews.

Israel's genocidal onslaught continues unabated despite calls from the United Nations Security Council for an immediate ceasefire and directives from the International Court of Justice urging measures to prevent genocide and alleviate the dire humanitarian situation in Gaza.

### Israeli army orders forcible evacuation of Tal Al-Sultan neighbourhood in Rafah

The Israeli occupation army has ordered a full evacuation of the Tal Al-Sultan neighbourhood in Rafah, southern Gaza, demanding the area's population to immediately leave their homes and head north to the al-Mawasi region.

In a post on social media today, the occupation army instructed those present in the Tal Al-Sultan neighborhood to evacuate and move on foot to the so-called "humanitarian area" in the al-Mawasi region, the area that has witnessed numerous massacres of innocent civilians by the Israeli army since the beginning of the genocidal war in October 2023.

The al-Mawasi area also lacks essential infrastructure, including water and basic services, as it is an uninhabited area. It faces severe health and environmental crises, with diseases and epidemics spreading.

The displaced families are facing immense difficulties in relocating elderly individuals, patients, and their essential needs, especially since the occupation is preventing movement by vehicles.

PLO official condemns Israeli decision to transform 13 colonial neighborhoods into settlements

### PLO official condemns Israeli decision to transform 13 colonial neighbourhoods into settlements

The head of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO)'s Wall and Settlement Resistance Commission, Minister Muayyad Shaban, has condemned Israel's recent decision to convert 13 colonial neighbourhoods into full-fledged settlements, complete with all privileges and services. He described the move as a step that seeks to further fragment and manipulate Palestinian geography.

In a statement issued on Sunday, Shaban explained that the Israeli government had decided to separate a number of colonial neighborhoods from the settlements to which they previously belonged, designating them as independent settlements. This move is seen as a deliberate attempt to strengthen Israeli colonial expansion on Palestinian land.

Shaban detailed that four of these newly designated settlements are located in the Ramallah Governorate, specifically next to the Talmon settlement, while four more are in the Bethlehem Governorate. Additionally, two are situated in the Salfit Governorate, one in Nablus, one in Jericho, and another in Tubas.

The minister added that most of these neighborhoods were initially established as illegal outposts over two decades ago. Over time, the Israeli government took steps to formalize them as neighborhoods, bypassing international law and ignoring the global stance against colonial construction in occupied Palestinian territories.

Shaban emphasised that, while Israel had previously avoided openly declaring the construction of new settlements, pretending these neighbourhoods were simply solutions for the "natural growth" of settlers, the recent move reveals Israel's true intentions. The aim is to build settlements that will facilitate the expansion of Israeli control and further isolate Palestinian communities, thereby undermining any potential for geographic continuity between Palestinian villages and towns.

The 13 neighbourhoods that have now been officially transformed into settlements are, as of Sunday, included in the official records of the Palestinian Commission as full-fledged settlements. This marks a significant shift in the Israeli strategy to solidify its presence and territorial claims at the expense of Palestinian land.

Shaban also criticized Israel's right-wing government, which has openly prioritized colonisation since its formation. He reiterated that the government continues to implement its plans to seize Palestinian land and push forward annexation efforts, with blatant disregard for international law.

He called on the international community to take clear, concrete, and effective action against Israel's ongoing violations, particularly in light of the most recent advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice regarding the occupation and colonial expansion, as well as UN Security Council Resolution 2334, which deems Israeli settlement activity illegal and invalid. — WAFA

WILDFIRES

## Four dead in South Korea

**SEOUL:** Four people were confirmed dead as wildfires raged in South Korea, with the government declaring a state of national disaster, the official news agency Yonhap reported.

The measure took effect in Ulsan city, North Gyeongsang Province and South Gyeongsang Province in the south-east of the country, Yonhap cited the Ministry of the Interior and Safety as saying.

Wildfires were burning through counties including Sancheong, South Gyeongsang Province, where local officers said two fire officials were found dead. In total, the toll as of Saturday evening was four dead and six injured. — ONA

COASTAL CITY OF TYRE

## Israel-Lebanon tensions rise after rockets fired

**TEL AVIV:** Israel's Defence Ministry said the country's military was carrying out a second wave of strikes on Hezbollah targets in Lebanon.

The ministry said the bombardment was ordered by the Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on "dozens of Hezbollah targets."

Lebanon's Health Ministry said one of the strikes on the coastal city of Tyre killed one person and wounded seven others.

Earlier Saturday, Israel said it had struck Hezbollah rocket launchers and a command center in southern Lebanon.

The Israeli moves come in retaliation for rockets fired from across the Israeli-Lebanon border earlier in the day.

An Israeli official said six rockets were fired, three of which crossed into Israel and were intercepted.

Hezbollah denied responsibility for Saturday's rocket fire, saying it remained committed to the ceasefire, reached in November.

### Yemen's Houthis accuse US of attacking Hodeida airport

Media affiliated with Houthi rebels in Yemen have accused the US of attacking the airport in Hodeida.

A local official told Yemen's official news agency Saba that the "US aggression" targeted the international airport with three airstrikes.

The rebels have been making similar accusations since Wednesday, when the US confirmed "continuous operations" against the Yemeni group.

US President Donald Trump has said the rebels, who control most of Yemen including the capital Sanaa, will be "annihilated."

The US on March 15 announced a wave of airstrikes which officials say killed senior Houthi leaders. The rebels' health ministry said 53 people had been killed in the strikes.

### Trump orders strikes on Houthi rebels in Yemen

Those attacks — the first since Trump returned to the White House in January — were in response to the Houthis threatening to restart their attacks on Israel and Israeli cargo ships. — DW

ANNUAL CAMPAIGN

## Landmarks around the world go dark for Earth Hour

**BERLIN:** Iconic landmarks in cities around the world were plunged into darkness on Saturday night as millions marked Earth Hour.

The annual campaign by environmental NGO WWF is held to demand urgent action to address the climate crisis and to raise awareness of global environmental issues.

### Cities go dark in symbolic show of support

In cities across Asia and Europe, a host of buildings switched off their lights in a symbolic demonstration of solidarity for the planet.

The Sky Tower and Harbour Bridge in Auckland, New Zealand were the first to go dark at 8:30pm local time (7:30am GMT).

Famous landmarks further east in Asia and Europe then joined in as the clock struck 8:30pm, including the Sydney Opera House, the Gardens by the Bay park in Singapore, Wat Arun temple in the Thai capital Bangkok, Berlin's Brandenburg Gate, the Colosseum in Rome and the London Eye in the UK.

"Every light turned off is a step towards a sustainable future," Bangkok Governor Chadchart Sittipunt said.

People who had gathered at the Brandenburg Gate in the German capital to mark the event sang songs such as "What a Wonderful World" by Louis Armsrong or John Lennon's "Imagine."

### What is Earth Hour?

Earth Hour was launched in Australia in 2007, and has since grown into a worldwide annual event that sees entire city skylines and streets go dark to raise awareness of the climate crisis.

### 60 minutes

The campaign invites people to "give an hour for Earth, spending 60 minutes doing something — anything — positive for our planet," including planting trees and reducing energy consumption.

In a statement ahead of the 19th edition of the event, WWF International Director General Kirsten Schuijt said the campaign is a "powerful reminder of the urgency to act while we still can." — DW

# SPORTS

# Kishan's century seals SRH's 44-run win in IPL run-fest

His explosive knock of 106 came off just 47 balls to power his side to a mammoth 286/6 against Rajasthan Royals

**HYDERABAD:** Ishan Kishan marked his Sunrisers Hyderabad (SRH) debut in spectacular fashion, smashing an unbeaten 106 off just 47 balls to power his side to a colossal 286/6 in their IPL 2025 opener on Sunday.

The explosive knock, which included 11 boundaries and six sixes, was the centrepiece of a batting masterclass from SRH. Despite a brave attempt from Rajasthan Royals (RR), who fought valiantly through Sanju Samson (66) and Dhruv Jurel (70), the Royals fell short by 44 runs, finishing at 242/6 in a high-scoring thriller that saw 528 runs in total.

SRH's firepower was evident from the start, with openers Travis Head (67) and Abhishek Sharma (24) setting the tone in the first six overs.

Their aggressive stroke play helped SRH to an impressive 94/1, marking the fifth-highest powerplay total in IPL history. Head, in particular, was in red-hot form, bludgeoning RR's attack with a flurry of boundaries.

However, it was Kishan's innings that stole the show.

Coming in at No. 3, he wasted no time in stamping his authority on the game. With six of his first 13 balls either racing to the boundary or clearing it, Kishan announced himself as the perfect fit for

SRH's power-packed lineup.

The chase of the massive total began with RR losing their top order early. Simarjeet Singh made the early breakthroughs, dismissing Yashasvi Jaiswal and captain Riyan Parag in the first two overs, leaving RR reeling at 24/2.

Mohammed Shami's dismissal of Nitish Rana for 11 further dampened RR's hopes, leaving them at 50/3 in the fifth over.

However, Samson and Jurel rallied the chase with a blistering 111-run partnership off 59 balls. Samson, returning from a finger injury, showed no signs of discomfort as he launched four sixes, including a stunning hook shot off Shami.

Jurel was equally destructive, muscling the ball over the top and putting SRH's bowlers under pressure. But SRH's bowlers dug deep to stem the flow of runs.

Harshal Patel, in particular, made key breakthroughs, removing Samson with a clever slower bouncer in the 14th over, leaving RR at 161/4. Jurel kept up the fight, but his 70 off 35 balls was cut short when Adam Zampa, SRH's Impact Player, had him caught at long-on.

With RR needing 126 off the final six overs, Shimron Hetmyer's late fireworks (42 off 23 balls) added some excitement, but the target was too steep. RR finished on 242/6, leaving SRH to celebrate a 44-run victory. The match was a thrilling display of batting firepower, with 528 runs scored in total, the second-highest in IPL history.

### Archer's unwanted record

England fast bowler Jofra Archer registered the most expensive bowling figures in the history of the Indian Premier League with 0-76 from four overs.

It was previously held by India seamer Mohit Sharma, who conceded 73 from four overs for Gujarat Titans against Delhi Capitals in 2024.

The most expensive figures in T20 international history were registered by Gambia's Musa Jobarteh, who conceded 93 against Zimbabwe last year, while Sri Lanka's Kasun Rajitha has the worst figures between two Test-playing nations with 0-75 against Australia in 2019.

**Brief scores:** Sunrisers Hyderabad 286 for 6 (Kishan 106*, Head 67, Deshpande 3-44) beat Rajasthan Royals 242 for 6 (Jurel 70, Samson 66, Simarjeet 2-46).

T20I SERIES

## Allen, Duffy lead NZ rout of Pakistan to seal series win

**MOUNT MAUNGANUI:** New Zealand's pace attack dismantled Pakistan in swinging conditions, sealing a resounding 115-run victory in the fourth T20I to clinch the series 3-1 with a game to spare.

The hosts, powered by Finn Allen's explosive half-century and a collective bowling masterclass, left Pakistan struggling as they were bowled out for 105 in just 16.2 overs.

After successfully chasing down 205 in Auckland to keep the series alive, Pakistan's hopes of another big chase evaporated early.

Jacob Duffy led the charge with a brilliant bowling display, taking 4 for 20, including three wickets in the powerplay.

His early breakthroughs severely dented Pakistan's top order, and New Zealand's four-pronged seam attack accounted for nine of the ten wickets to ensure a comprehensive win.

Batting first, New Zealand signaled their intent immediately, racing to 79 for 1 in the powerplay. Tim Seifert set the tone, smashing a quick 44 off 22 balls, taking apart Abrar Ahmed in a 19-run over. Finn Allen followed suit, reaching a blistering 20-ball fifty - the fastest of the series.

He clobbered Shadab Khan for two fours and two sixes in a 23-run over, but his aggressive knock ended on 52 after miscuing one to mid-off.

From a strong 134 for 2, New Zealand endured a brief slump, slipping to 149 for 5 as Pakistan's bowlers tightened up. However, Michael Bracewell's late onslaught (46 off 26) revived the innings, with Daryl Mitchell (29 off 23) offering support.

New Zealand finished strongly, plundering 63 runs in the last five overs to post an imposing 220 for 6. Haris Rauf was Pakistan's standout bowler, returning 3 for 27 in an otherwise expensive attack.

Pakistan's chase never got going as New Zealand's pacers exploited the swinging conditions. Will O'Rourke, playing his first match of the series, struck early, castling Mohammad Haris with a delivery that jagged back in.

Duffy followed up with a devastating double-strike in the second over, dismissing Hasan Nawaz and skipper Salman Agha in quick succession.

Zakary Foulkes, another new inclusion, made an immediate impact, cleaning up Shadab Khan with his first ball. With wickets tumbling at regular intervals, Pakistan found themselves reeling at 26 for 5, their chase in tatters. Abdul Samad waged a lone battle, top-scoring with a 30-ball 44, but it was never enough to mount a recovery.

Duffy returned to finish the job, wrapping up Pakistan's innings with his fourth wicket, ending with figures of 4 for 20, cementing his place as the series' highest wicket-taker with 11 scalps in four matches. Foulkes impressed with 3 for 18, while O'Rourke and Ben Sears chipped in to wrap up Pakistan's innings inside 17 overs.

With one game left to play, Pakistan will look to salvage some pride, while New Zealand aim to finish on a high.

**Brief scores:** New Zealand 220 for 6 (Allen 50, Bracewell 46*, Seifert 44; Rauf 3-27) beat Pakistan 105 all out in 16.2 overs (Samad 44, Duffy 4-20, Foulkes 3-25). - Agencies

RCB BEAT KKR IN IPL OPENER

## If you get hit, it should only be on a good ball, says Krunal

**KOLKATA:** Krunal Pandya marked his new role as the lead spinner for Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) with a brilliant match-winning performance, taking 3 wickets for 29 runs in the opening game of IPL 2025 against Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) on Saturday.

His key breakthroughs, including the dismissals of Ajinkya Rahane, Venkatesh Iyer, and Rinku Singh, helped restrict KKR to a modest total of 174/8 after they had reached a promising 107/2 at the halfway mark.

Reflecting on his performance, Krunal said, "When you play in front of such a big crowd, you have to narrow down your focus. That's what I did when I came back in the second over [after conceding 15 runs in my first over]. I focused on where I wanted to bowl. If you get hit, you should only get hit on a good ball." His ability to adapt and execute his plans was evident, especially after a tough start, as he made a strong comeback to disrupt KKR's batting lineup.

Despite concerns about matchups with KKR's left-hand-heavy middle order, Krunal proved his worth by dismissing two left-handers, including Venkatesh Iyer. The dismissal came after Iyer was surprised by a fizzy bouncer from Krunal that forced him to don a helmet. "You have to go with the flow. As cricket evolves, batters' skillsets evolve too. They can hit good shots consistently, so you've got to up your game," Krunal explained, emphasising his quick adjustments and his focus on keeping the batsmen guessing.

RCB's other spin option, leg-spinner Suyash Sharma, also made a significant impact. After a rough start, where he conceded 41 runs in 3 wicketless overs, he was brought back into the attack by new RCB captain Rajat Patidar in the 16th over.

Suyash responded well by dismissing Andre Russell with a well-disguised googly, a crucial moment in the match. "It was clear we needed to get Russell out," said Patidar, praising his bowlers' courage and resilience. "After 13 overs, KKR were around 130, and from there, the bowlers showed courage. That was amazing."

For KKR, captain Ajinkya Rahane lamented the loss of wickets in clusters after the 10-over mark. Following a solid 103-run partnership between Narine and Rahane, KKR lost momentum and finished with a total that was below expectations.

"We were aiming for 210-220, but losing wickets in quick succession changed the game. 170-180 felt under par; we were hoping for 200-plus," Rahane said, acknowledging the early breakthroughs from RCB.

In response, RCB comfortably chased down the target of 175 in just 16.2 overs, with Virat Kohli leading the charge. Kohli remained unbeaten on 59, while Phil Salt contributed a quickfire 56 from 31 balls. New captain Rajat Patidar played a crucial knock of 34 off just 16 balls, and Liam Livingstone sealed the win with two fours and a six in his brief 15-run cameo. - Agencies

MARKET
BUSINESS & FINANCE

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### CHINA'S POLICY PACKAGE

China unveiled a comprehensive policy package recently to boost consumer spending, reinforcing its commitment to making consumption a key driver of economic growth. The 30-point plan aims to strengthen consumer confidence by a new measures to cut financial burden. > B2

### MSX INDEX ENDS LOWER

The MSX index closed at 4,393.15 points, down by 0.4% from previous close. The Shariah Index ended down by 0.36% at 391.20 points. Al Anwar Ceramics, up 9.62%, was the top gainer while, A'Saffa Foods, down 5.01%, was the top loser. > B2

# Oman reports growth in fisheries sector

The sector registered a growth rate of 7.5 percent between January and September 2024, compared to the corresponding period in 2023

**MUSCAT:** The fisheries sector in the Sultanate of Oman achieved good growth rates in 2024, further boosting its contribution to economic diversification during the 10th Five-Year Plan (2021-2025).

The 10th five-year plan targets raising the sector's growth to 10 percent annually. It also targets the augmentation of the sector's contribution to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by about 2 percent. This will consolidate the subsidiary sources of economic growth, support food security and enhance the Sultanate of Oman's regional and global position, in terms of sustainability of fisheries industry and marine activities.

Dr. Salim Al Sheikh, official spokesman of the Ministry of Economy, said that the fisheries sector's growth rate rose to 10 percent during the third quarter of 2024, compared to the corresponding quarter in 2023.

The sector registered a growth rate of 7.5 percent between January and September 2024, compared to the corresponding period in 2023. Its total contribution to the GDP at constant prices stood at RO 274.4 million, which represents about 1 percent of the Sultanate of Oman's GDP of RO 28.1 billion during the period from January to September 2024.

At current prices, the fisheries sector registered 9.5 percent growth during the third quarter of 2024, compared to the corresponding period in 2023. The growth rate of the sector between January and September 2024 amounted to about 7.4 percent, compared to the corresponding period in 2023. The sector's contribution reached RO 294 million out of the GDP (RO 30.64 billion). Meanwhile, the fisheries sector posted a total contribution of about RO 428 million to the GDP during 2023, at current prices.

Oman is achieving self-sufficiency in fish production, according to the official spokesperson for the Ministry of Economy.

The 10th five-year plan includes 224 projects to develop marine resources in the sectors of fisheries, ports, water resources, dams, environment and pollution control. The projects have an investment cost of approximately RO 1.6 billion. The plan also includes 8 programmes and initiatives to enhance environmental sustainability and benefit from natural resources. -ONA

FINANCING

# Sohar Aluminium and UTAS Sohar sign pact for equipping Emerging Technologies Lab

*Times News Service*

**MUSCAT:** Sohar Aluminium Company (SA) and the University of Technology and Applied Sciences (UTAS) Sohar, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to fund equipping the Emerging Technologies Lab at UTAS Sohar, under the auspices of Dr. Said bin Hamed Al Rubaii, Vice Chancellor of the University of Technology and Applied Sciences (UTAS).

The agreement was signed by Jameel bin Mohammed Shakeel, Corporate Communications and Social Responsibility Manager at Sohar Aluminium, and on behalf of UTAS-Sohar, it was signed by Dr. Hanifa bint Ahmed Al Qasmi, Assistant Vice Chancellor for UTAS-Sohar.

The agreement stipulates financing the equipping of the Emerging Technologies Lab with a smart interactive board and state-of the-art All-in-One computers, in addition to the other components of the lab.

The Emerging Technologies Lab focuses on innovation and research in the fields of Hybrid Cloud, Virtual Reality (VR), Blockchain, and Data Science. The lab aims to empower students, researchers, and industry professionals to explore and harness the potential of these emerging technologies through cutting-edge facilities and dedicated initiatives offered by the lab.

The lab will offerthe University's students and faculty a variety of services including workshops and training sessions for students and researchers, mentorship programmes, research projects, hackathons and competitions, technology expos and symposia, a start-up incubator, industry-specific workshops and seminars on applications of emerging technologies, advanced training programmes, as well as consultation services for industries seeking guidance on integrating these emerging technologies.

The General Manager of HR and Corporate Affairs at Sohar Aluminium confirmed that funding the equipment of the Emerging Technologies Lab stems from Sohar Aluminium's recognition of the pivotal role that education and technological advancement play in shaping a sustainable future.

"Driven by its Corporate Social Responsibility Strategy, Sohar Aluminium is keen to equip young talents with the necessary tools to drive innovation and progress through empowering these future generations and researchers with cutting-edge skills," Ahmed Al Kharusi stated.

"This project falls within the education, learning, scientific research and national capabilities sector, which is one of the priorities for Oman Vision 2040 that Sohar Aluminium's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Strategy targets funding its projects and initiatives," Al Kharusi stated.

On the other hand, Dr. Hanifa Al Qasmi said, "This agreement embodies the University's commitment to fostering an environment for research and innovation by providing the most advanced equipment and technologies that keep pace with scientific and industrial developments. Sohar Aluminium's support for this project is an example of fruitful cooperation between academic institutions and the private sector. We look forward to this laboratory contributing to honing the skills of students and academics in line with the requirements of the modern labour market and being a qualitative addition to Oman Vision 2040 by enhancing the University's outputs."

ENABLING INVESTMENTS

# Opaz boosts investor services through new package of simplified procedures

*Times News Service*

**MUSCAT:** The Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (Opaz) has enhanced its investor services by unifying the service pathway, enabling investors to conduct economic activities across all areas under its supervision. This streamlined process allows investors to access all incentives, privileges, and facilitations offered by the Authority through a single registration when starting their projects.

Dr. Said bin Khalifa Al Quraini, Director General of the Investment Development Sector at OPAZ, stated that the package of simplified procedures was launched in conjunction with the unification of service procedures and fees across all special economic zones and free zones under the Authority's supervision.

This initiative contributes to encouraging investment in economic and free zones as well as industrial cities, leading to an increase in the number of investors. He explained that these measures aim to enhance the investment environment, facilitate economic activities across different zones, and enable investors to diversify and expand their investments in various locations.

Dr. Al Quraini further explained that the unified service pathway is part of an integrated service system offered by the Authority through the One-Stop Shop. This platform allows investors from within and outside the Sultanate of Oman to submit investment applications, open commercial registrations, and obtain the necessary licenses electronically.

He pointed out that the unified pathway offers significant flexibility for investors, enabling them to expand their economic activities in any of the areas under the Authority's supervision without the need to obtain a separate commercial registration for each zone. This system has reduced administrative and financial burdens on companies, enhancing their ability to grow and expand.

Dr. Al Quraini also added that the adoption of the unified service pathway has helped the Authority streamline commercial registration procedures and collect accurate data on economic activities in different zones. This supports future development plans by maintaining a unified database that includes all commercial records and economic activity licenses issued in cooperation with relevant entities.

He affirmed that the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones continues its efforts to develop the business sector in the areas under its supervision, aiming to attract more investments and ensure transparency and good governance in business management.

By implementing the One-Stop Shop, all permits and licenses are now issued through a single window, allowing land selection and business licensing to be completed electronically within just one day. This contributes to supporting the national economy and promoting sustainable development across various governorates.

**Objectives and benefits of the unified service pathway**

- Single commercial registration for all zones
- Facilitating economic activities across different zones
- Enabling investors to diversify and expand their investments in various locations
- Access to all incentives, privileges, and facilitations offered by the Authority through a single registration when starting a project
- Reducing administrative and financial burdens on companies, enhancing their ability to grow and expand
- Establishing a unified database that includes all commercial records and economic activity licenses
- Allowing investors to expand their economic activities in any area under the Authority's supervision without the need for separate commercial registrations for each zone

FINANCIAL SERVICES AUTHORITY

# FSA warns Muscat Insurance and Arabian Falcon for non-compliance with net health insurance retention ratio

*Times News Service*

**MUSCAT:** The Financial Services Authority (FSA) has issued administrative decisions warning Muscat Insurance Company and Arabian Falcon Insurance Company for failing to comply with the 40% retention ratio of the net health insurance premiums pursuant to Article 9 of the Health Insurance Rules.

The move comes to emphasize the FSA's keenness to enhance the financial sustainability of the insurance sector to stabilize the market and safeguard the rights of consumers. The compliance is a requirement that aim to support the local economy and enhance investments inside the Sultanate of Oman through providing liquidity to develop the health insurance sector and continuation of its growth as well as retaining part of the premiums inside the Sultanate to reduce reliance on external markets and enhancing financial stability to ensure rendering high quality insurance services.

FSA said it will continue monitoring the performance of companies and taking the required measures in case of any breaches of the regulations governing the insurance market to achieve financial fairness and protect the interests of all stakeholders.

# MARKET

# MSX index ends lower

Al Anwar Ceramics, up 9.62%, was the top gainer while, A'Saffa Foods, down 5.01%, was the top loser

**MUSCAT:** The MSX index closed at 4,393.15 points, down by 0.4% from previous close. The Shariah Index ended down by 0.36% at 391.20 points. Al Anwar Ceramics, up 9.62%, was the top gainer while, A'Saffa Foods, down 5.01%, was the top loser. Shares of Bank Muscat were the most active in terms of number of shares traded as well as in terms of turnover.

A total number of 888 trades were executed during the day's trading session, generating turnover of RO 3.12 million, with more than 15.4 million shares changing hands. Out of 56 traded securities, 17 advanced, 15 declined, and 24 remained unchanged. At the session close, foreign investors were net sellers for RO 116K while domestic investors were net buyers for RO 75K, followed by GCC & Arab investors for RO 41K worth of shares.

Financial Index closed at 7,689.69 points, down 0.4%. Prices of Oman United Insurance, Al Omaniya Financial Services, National Finance, Bank Nizwa, OMINVEST were up by 4.35%, 3.57%, 1.52%, 1.01%, 0.91% respectively. Prices of Bank Dhofar, Al Sharqia Investment, Takaful Oman, Muscat Finance, Sohar International Bank were down by 3.97%, 2.67%, 2.33%, 2.08%, 1.55% respectively.

Industrial Index closed at 5,622.87 points, down 0.8%. Prices of Al Anwar Ceramics, Gulf International Chemicals, Jazeera Steel Products, Oman Cables Industry were up by 9.62%, 1.39%, 0.75%, 0.04% respectively. Prices of Oman Cement, A'Saffa Foods, Gulf Mushroom Products, Galfar Engineering, Oman Flour Mills were down by 9.90%, 5.01%, 3.48%, 1.37%, 0.77% respectively.

Services Index was up by 0.38% before closing at 1,612.73 points. Prices of Muscat Gases, Renaissance Services, Oman Telecom, Phoenix Power, Oman National Engineering were up by 9.33%, 3.03%, 2.42%, 1.67%, 0.88% respectively. Prices of Al Suwadi Power, OQ Gas Networks, SMN Power Holding, Ooredoo, Abraj Energy were down by 1.52%, 0.76%, 0.61%, 0.57%, 0.42% respectively.— **United Securities**

OMAN STOCKS

## MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE

**INDICES**

| Index | High | Low | Value | Prev. Value | Diff | Diff % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| MSX 30 INDEX | 4,415.54 | 4,390.36 | 4,393.15 | 4,410.73 | -17.58 | -0.40 |
| FINANCIAL INDEX | 7,731.31 | 7,685.86 | 7,689.69 | 7,720.30 | -30.61 | -0.40 |
| Industry Index | 5,673.15 | 5,589.91 | 5,622.87 | 5,668.18 | -45.30 | -0.80 |
| Services Index | 1,615.64 | 1,605.70 | 1,612.73 | 1,606.67 | 6.06 | 0.38 |
| MSX Shariah Index | 392.62 | 391.03 | 391.20 | 392.62 | -1.42 | -0.36 |
| MSX TR INDEX | 6,262.99 | 6,227.27 | 6,231.23 | 6,232.22 | -0.99 | -0.02 |
| FINANCIAL TR IDX | 8,811.59 | 8,759.79 | 8,764.15 | 8,799.04 | -34.88 | -0.40 |
| INDUSTRIAL TR IDX | 6,719.76 | 6,621.17 | 6,660.21 | 6,565.24 | 94.97 | 1.45 |
| SERVICES TR IDX | 1,970.48 | 1,958.36 | 1,966.93 | 1,959.54 | 7.39 | 0.38 |
| FIXED INCOME INDEX | 1,166.89 | 1,166.89 | 1,166.89 | 1,166.89 | 0.00 | 0.00 |

**Trading Summary**

| Volume | Turnover | Trades | Market Cap | Up | Down | Equal | Sec. Traded |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 15,405,840 | 3,119,714 | 888 | 27,648,856,087 | 17 | 15 | 24 | 56 |

## SHARE PRICE BULLETIN FOR SUNDAY, MARCH 23

### REGULAR MARKET

| ISIN | SECURITY NAME | VOLUME | TURNOVER | TRADES | OPEN PRICE | HIGH | LOW | CLOSE PR. | PREV. CLOSE | DIFF (RO) | DIFF % | LAST PR | LAST BID | LAST OFFER | PAR VALUE | MARKET CAP |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| OM0000002168 | AL ANWAR CERAMIC | 305,203 | 33,995 | 37 | 0.105 | 0.114 | 0.105 | 0.114 | 0.104 | 0.010 | 9.615 | 0.114 | 0.110 | 0.114 | 0.100 | 25,080,000 |
| OM0000001087 | OMAN UNITED INSURANCE | 17,700 | 4,248 | 5 | 0.240 | 0.240 | 0.240 | 0.240 | 0.230 | 0.010 | 4.348 | 0.240 | 0.240 | 0.240 | 0.100 | 24,000,000 |
| OM0000003224 | RENAISSANCE SERVICES | 154,340 | 51,980 | 37 | 0.329 | 0.342 | 0.329 | 0.340 | 0.330 | 0.010 | 3.030 | 0.340 | 0.340 | 0.342 | 0.100 | 80,379,400 |
| OM0000003026 | OMAN TELECOM | 250,041 | 209,616 | 29 | 0.827 | 0.846 | 0.827 | 0.846 | 0.826 | 0.020 | 2.421 | 0.846 | 0.830 | 0.846 | 0.100 | 634,500,000 |
| OM0000001533 | OMINVEST | 171,080 | 57,089 | 49 | 0.332 | 0.336 | 0.332 | 0.334 | 0.331 | 0.003 | 0.906 | 0.334 | 0.333 | 0.334 | 0.100 | 223,148,274 |
| OM0000001152 | OMAN NATIONAL ENGINEERING & INVESTMENT | 270,000 | 32,050 | 4 | 0.119 | 0.119 | 0.115 | 0.115 | 0.114 | 0.001 | 0.877 | 0.115 | 0.113 | 0.120 | 0.100 | 17,250,000 |
| OM0000002176 | JAZEERA STEEL PRODUCTS | 234,918 | 94,247 | 24 | 0.400 | 0.404 | 0.400 | 0.403 | 0.400 | 0.003 | 0.750 | 0.403 | 0.403 | 0.408 | 0.100 | 50,333,878 |
| OM0000002796 | BANK MUSCAT | 3,193,309 | 833,548 | 20 | 0.260 | 0.262 | 0.260 | 0.262 | 0.261 | 0.001 | 0.383 | 0.261 | 0.261 | 0.262 | 0.100 | 1,966,676,030 |
| OM0000001483 | NATIONAL BANK OMAN | 5,200 | 1,456 | 1 | 0.280 | 0.280 | 0.280 | 0.290 | 0.290 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.280 | 0.280 | 0.290 | 0.100 | 471,524,443 |
| OM0000002374 | UNITED FINANCE | 12,817 | 833 | 1 | 0.065 | 0.065 | 0.065 | 0.065 | 0.065 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.065 | 0.061 | 0.067 | 0.100 | 23,148,274 |
| OM0000003125 | GLOBAL FINANCIAL INVESTMENT HO. | 131,363 | 11,489 | 18 | 0.088 | 0.088 | 0.087 | 0.088 | 0.088 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.088 | 0.088 | 0.088 | 0.100 | 17,600,000 |
| OM0000004735 | SEMBCORP SALALAH | 256,439 | 23,873 | 14 | 0.093 | 0.094 | 0.092 | 0.093 | 0.093 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.092 | 0.092 | 0.093 | 0.100 | 88,775,191 |
| OM0000004768 | MADINA TAKAFUL | 104,910 | 8,812 | 14 | 0.084 | 0.084 | 0.084 | 0.084 | 0.084 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.084 | 0.083 | 0.092 | 0.100 | 14,700,000 |
| OM0000004925 | ALBATINAH POWER | 385,430 | 25,797 | 24 | 0.067 | 0.067 | 0.066 | 0.067 | 0.067 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.067 | 0.065 | 0.067 | 0.100 | 45,217,458 |
| OM0000008934 | ABRAJ ENERGY SERVICES | 63,027 | 15,128 | 10 | 0.240 | 0.241 | 0.240 | 0.240 | 0.241 | -0.001 | -0.415 | 0.240 | 0.240 | 0.245 | 0.100 | 184,848,000 |
| OM0000003968 | OOREDOO | 28,995 | 5,085 | 13 | 0.176 | 0.176 | 0.175 | 0.176 | 0.177 | -0.001 | -0.565 | 0.176 | 0.172 | 0.176 | 0.100 | 114,566,184 |
| OM0000009072 | OQ GAS NETWORKS | 1,323,276 | 172,883 | 111 | 0.130 | 0.131 | 0.130 | 0.130 | 0.131 | -0.001 | -0.763 | 0.130 | 0.130 | 0.130 | 0.100 | 562,981,110 |
| OM0000004933 | AL SUWADI POWER | 321,976 | 20,932 | 19 | 0.066 | 0.066 | 0.065 | 0.065 | 0.066 | -0.001 | -1.515 | 0.065 | 0.064 | 0.065 | 0.100 | 46,436,412 |
| OM0000003398 | SOHAR INTERNATIONAL BANK | 2,174,643 | 279,756 | 67 | 0.129 | 0.130 | 0.127 | 0.127 | 0.129 | -0.002 | -1.550 | 0.127 | 0.127 | 0.128 | 0.100 | 840,390,276 |
| OM0000002440 | AL SHARQIYA INVESTMENT HO. | 30,000 | 2,220 | 5 | 0.075 | 0.075 | 0.073 | 0.073 | 0.075 | -0.002 | -2.667 | 0.073 | 0.073 | 0.075 | 0.100 | 6,570,000 |
| OM0000002804 | ASAFFA FOODS | 6,300 | 2,273 | 3 | 0.370 | 0.370 | 0.360 | 0.360 | 0.379 | -0.019 | -5.013 | 0.360 | 0.355 | 0.400 | 0.100 | 43,200,000 |
| OM0000001749 | OMAN CEMENT | 2,100 | 974 | 4 | 0.464 | 0.464 | 0.464 | 0.464 | 0.515 | -0.051 | -9.903 | 0.464 | 0.000 | 0.520 | 0.100 | 153,524,937 |
| Total | 22 | 9,443,067 | 1,888,284 | 509 | | | | | | | | | | | | |

### Parallel Market

| ISIN | SECURITY NAME | VOLUME | TURNOVER | TRADES | OPEN PRICE | HIGH | LOW | CLOSE PR. | PREV. CLOSE | DIFF (RO) | DIFF % | LAST PR | LAST BID | LAST OFFER | PAR VALUE | MARKET CAP |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| OM0000001178 | MUSCAT GASES | 188,924 | 15,136 | 8 | 0.080 | 0.082 | 0.080 | 0.082 | 0.075 | 0.007 | 9.333 | 0.082 | 0.075 | 0.082 | 0.100 | 2,460,000 |
| OM0000002077 | AL OMANIYA FINANCIAL SERVICES | 300 | 44 | 1 | 0.145 | 0.145 | 0.145 | 0.145 | 0.140 | 0.005 | 3.571 | 0.145 | 0.145 | 0.154 | 0.100 | 45,735,465 |
| OM0000005963 | PHOENIX POWER | 37,202 | 2,269 | 7 | 0.061 | 0.061 | 0.061 | 0.061 | 0.060 | 0.001 | 1.667 | 0.061 | 0.054 | 0.066 | 0.100 | 89,218,689 |
| OM0000002648 | NATIONAL FINANCE | 81,281 | 10,853 | 13 | 0.133 | 0.134 | 0.133 | 0.134 | 0.132 | 0.002 | 1.515 | 0.134 | 0.133 | 0.135 | 0.100 | 76,876,374 |
| OM0000002028 | GULF INTERNATIONAL CHEMICALS | 59,324 | 4,331 | 5 | 0.073 | 0.073 | 0.073 | 0.073 | 0.072 | 0.001 | 1.389 | 0.073 | 0.072 | 0.073 | 0.100 | 1,533,000 |
| OM0000008447 | OMAN REIT FUND | 24,500 | 1,813 | 4 | 0.074 | 0.074 | 0.074 | 0.074 | 0.073 | 0.001 | 1.370 | 0.074 | 0.074 | 0.074 | 0.100 | 37,638,716 |
| OM0000004420 | BANK NIZWA | 444,956 | 44,496 | 21 | 0.100 | 0.100 | 0.100 | 0.100 | 0.099 | 0.001 | 1.010 | 0.100 | 0.098 | 0.100 | 0.100 | 223,695,303 |
| OM0000009759 | OQ EXPLORATION AND PRODUCTION | 1,415,855 | 439,854 | 107 | 0.310 | 0.313 | 0.309 | 0.311 | 0.309 | 0.002 | 0.647 | 0.311 | 0.311 | 0.311 | 0.010 | 2,488,000,000 |
| OM0000001707 | OMAN CABLES INDUSTRY | 430 | 997 | 2 | 2.319 | 2.320 | 2.319 | 2.320 | 2.319 | 0.001 | 0.043 | 2.320 | 2.250 | 2.550 | 0.100 | 208,104,000 |
| OM0000001020 | OMAN CHROMITE | 100 | 300 | 1 | 3.000 | 3.000 | 3.000 | 3.000 | 3.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 3.000 | 2.700 | 0.000 | 1.000 | 9,900,000 |
| OM0000001160 | NATIONAL GAS | 51,000 | 3,863 | 10 | 0.078 | 0.078 | 0.075 | 0.076 | 0.076 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.076 | 0.075 | 0.076 | 0.100 | 6,460,000 |
| OM0000001301 | DHOFAR FOODS AND INVESTMENT | 7,019 | 491 | 1 | 0.070 | 0.070 | 0.070 | 0.070 | 0.070 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.070 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.100 | 13,837,385 |
| OM0000001772 | ALANWAR INVESTMENT | 35,000 | 2,415 | 1 | 0.069 | 0.069 | 0.069 | 0.069 | 0.069 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.069 | 0.069 | 0.075 | 0.100 | 19,807,839 |
| OM0000002226 | ALJAZEERA SERVICES | 14,666 | 2,640 | 2 | 0.180 | 0.180 | 0.180 | 0.180 | 0.180 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.180 | 0.174 | 0.180 | 0.100 | 7,711,738 |
| OM0000003000 | AI MAHA PETROLEUM PRODUCTS MARKETING | 4,000 | 4,210 | 2 | 1.050 | 1.060 | 1.050 | 1.060 | 1.060 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 1.060 | 1.050 | 1.060 | 0.100 | 73,140,000 |
| OM0000003661 | VOLTAMP ENERGY | 452,092 | 298,381 | 14 | 0.660 | 0.660 | 0.660 | 0.660 | 0.660 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.660 | 0.660 | 0.660 | 0.100 | 53,725,815 |
| OM0000005005 | ALMAHA CERAMICS | 64,523 | 7,936 | 6 | 0.123 | 0.123 | 0.123 | 0.123 | 0.123 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.123 | 0.123 | 0.124 | 0.100 | 6,765,000 |
| OM0000009908 | OQ BASE INDUSTRIES (SFZ) | 2,236,090 | 228,081 | 62 | 0.102 | 0.102 | 0.102 | 0.102 | 0.102 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.102 | 0.092 | 0.102 | 0.040 | 352,868,067 |
| OM0000010120 | ASYAD SHIPPING | 162,960 | 20,129 | 20 | 0.123 | 0.124 | 0.123 | 0.123 | 0.123 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.123 | 0.123 | 0.123 | 0.000 | 640,675,546 |
| OM0000004248 | SMN POWER HOLDING | 284,506 | 92,793 | 38 | 0.335 | 0.335 | 0.325 | 0.326 | 0.328 | -0.002 | -0.610 | 0.326 | 0.326 | 0.326 | 0.100 | 65,081,206 |
| OM0000001400 | OMAN FLOUR MILLS | 4,000 | 1,538 | 3 | 0.383 | 0.387 | 0.383 | 0.387 | 0.390 | -0.003 | -0.769 | 0.387 | 0.385 | 0.387 | 0.100 | 60,952,500 |
| OM0000003521 | GALFAR ENGINEERING & CONTRACTING | 80,107 | 5,791 | 8 | 0.073 | 0.073 | 0.072 | 0.072 | 0.073 | -0.001 | -1.370 | 0.072 | 0.071 | 0.075 | 0.100 | 14,615,024 |
| OM0000001590 | MUSCAT FINANCE | 75,550 | 3,571 | 7 | 0.048 | 0.048 | 0.047 | 0.047 | 0.048 | -0.001 | -2.083 | 0.047 | 0.046 | 0.047 | 0.100 | 14,435,877 |
| OM0000004776 | TAKAFUL OMAN | 6,149 | 258 | 1 | 0.042 | 0.042 | 0.042 | 0.042 | 0.043 | -0.001 | -2.326 | 0.042 | 0.041 | 0.046 | 0.100 | 10,500,000 |
| OM0000002267 | GULF MUSHROOM PRODUCTS | 1,235 | 278 | 2 | 0.226 | 0.226 | 0.222 | 0.222 | 0.230 | -0.008 | -3.478 | 0.222 | 0.216 | 0.222 | 0.100 | 10,160,007 |
| OM0000002549 | BANK DHOFAR | 159,896 | 23,558 | 11 | 0.148 | 0.148 | 0.145 | 0.145 | 0.151 | -0.006 | -3.974 | 0.145 | 0.145 | 0.145 | 0.100 | 434,470,958 |
| Total | 26 | 5,891,665 | 1,216,026 | 357 | | | | | | | | | | | | |

RISING DEMAND FOR LUXURY LIVING SPACES

# India's premium residential market soars

**NEW DELHI:** India's premium residential landscape is witnessing significant growth, fuelled by innovative designs and increasing demand for luxury living spaces in both urban centres and emerging metros. According to ANAROCK Research, luxury housing (units priced above Rs 1.5 crore) account for almost 17 per cent of all new residential launches in India as of 2024.

Notably, tier-2 and tier-3 cities account for 12 per cent of these projects, signalling a shift in buyer preferences and market focus. Cities like Chandigarh, Ludhiana, Kochi, Indore, and Ahmedabad have emerged as strong players in the luxury real estate segment due to rapid urbanization and enhanced infrastructure. Affluent buyers in these developing cities are seeking residences that offer exclusivity and high-end amenities.

This shift is also driven by rising disposable incomes and increased investments from NRIs. For instance, Punjab once primarily known for its manufacturing and trade, the city is now emerging as a hub for luxury residential enclaves, premium retail spaces, and world-class commercial developments.

As demand for upscale living and modern infrastructure rises, leading developers are stepping up with innovative projects that cater to the evolving aspirations of residents and investors alike. -**ANI**

30-POINT PLAN

# How China's policy package fuels consumers' wallets?

**BEIJING:** China unveiled a comprehensive policy package recently to boost consumer spending, reinforcing its commitment to making consumption a key driver of economic growth.

The 30-point plan aims to strengthen consumer confidence by a whole set of measures including promoting income growth and reducing financial burden.

Analysts described the pro-consumption push as an innovative move that underscores the government's commitment to a people-oriented approach and its focus on investing in human capital.

The holistic initiative, which combines fiscal, financial and regulatory tools, aligns with priorities outlined in this year's government work report, which positioned "expanding domestic demand" as a top priority.

A key aspect of the plan is its focus on tackling prominent constraints on consumption through three main measures: boosting spending power by increasing incomes and easing financial burdens, delivering high-quality supply, and fostering a consumption environment.

As the world's second-largest economy navigates domestic and external headwinds, policymakers are counting on the spending power of its 1.4 billion consumers to drive economic growth.

Central to the plan is an unprecedented emphasis on demand-side support to bolster household consumption capacity through measures that foster reasonable wage increases, expand property income channels, and boost farmers' earnings.

For the first time in a policy document on boosting consumption, the plan explicitly highlights the importance of stabilising both the stock and property markets, outlining targeted measures in a bid to "enhance spending power, stabilize expectations, and strengthen consumer confidence."

"There's considerable focus on increasing both the capacity and willingness of households to consume," Lynn Song, ING Chief Economist for Greater China, said in a note.

The plan integrates consumption growth with improving livelihoods, introducing measures to ease household burdens in areas such as childcare, education, healthcare and old-age insurance, Li Chunlin, deputy director of the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), said at a press conference following the release of the initiative.

Accordingly, China plans to explore a childcare subsidy system, increase fiscal subsidies for basic old-age benefits and basic medical insurance for rural and non-working urban residents in 2025, and appropriately raise basic pension benefits for retirees.

The plan's increased focus on tackling livelihood problems aligns with this year's government work report, which pledges to "direct more funds and resources toward investing in people to meet their needs."

Increasing fiscal spending on human development and social safeguards not only helps create a sustainable consumption expansion mechanism but also reflects an approach where economic growth and the improvement of people's well-being mutually reinforce each other, according to Jin Li, vice president of Southern University of Science and Technology.

In a broader push to bolster domestic demand, China renewed its consumer goods trade-in programme, increasing funding from last year's 150 billion yuan to 300 billion yuan through ultra-long special treasury bonds.

This year's initiative also extends subsidies to more electric gadgets and home appliances including smartphones, tablets, and smartwatches.

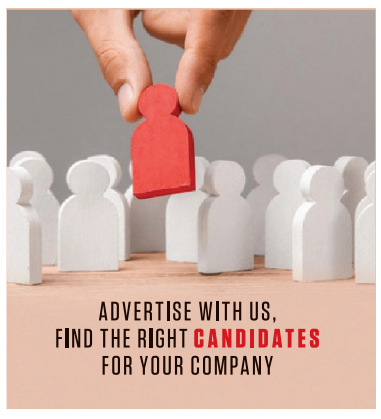
The push builds on the success of 2024, where 150 billion yuan in subsidies generated over 1.3 trillion yuan in sales across autos, home goods, and electronics, highlighting the program's role as a near-term economic stabiliser.

Amid strong policy support, e-commerce giant JD.com reported a 13.4 percent year-on-year revenue increase in Q4 2024, marking its highest quarterly growth in nearly two years, while its operating profit skyrocketed to 8.5 billion yuan, compared to 2 billion yuan recorded in the same period the previous year, the company's latest performance report showed.

This growth aligns with broader consumer optimism. Some 54 percent of Chinese consumers feel financially better off than a year ago, a 10-percentage point leap from the average in 2024, according to a report released by the German bank on Tuesday, Bloomberg reported.

The upbeat findings suggest China is increasingly reaping the benefits of the government's efforts to boost household confidence and consumption. — **Xinhua**

*Full story @ timesofoman.com/business*



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LIFESTYLE

# SCIENTISTS INVENT ENGINES TO ELIMINATE SPACE DEBRIS

# CRISIS

Professor Vladimir Nazarov from the Department of Aircraft Engines said solving the problem of space debris is of great importance for space navigation

Scientists from the Russian Siberian Aerospace University have invented engines for spacecraft that burn as soon as they leave their orbit and enter the atmosphere.

The scientists noted that the service life of small spacecraft is 3-5 years, and most of them are not equipped with special devices to remove them from orbit and get rid of them permanently, so they remain in space for several years, posing a real danger to operating spacecraft, including the International Space Station (ISS).

Professor Vladimir Nazarov from the Department of Aircraft Engines said solving the problem of space debris is of great importance for space navigation, adding that they started inventing small-sized braking systems of a special type that would reduce the speed of small spacecraft, and transfer them to low orbits, where they enter the dense layers of the atmosphere under the influence of gravity and burn.

According to the university's data, these systems use environmentally friendly fuel, oxygen and methane, and the displayed engine was made using 3D printing technology from a heat-resistant alloy. - ONA

SPORTS

# Piastri powers to victory as McLaren seals one-two

Mercedes' Russell finished third while Max Verstappen settled for fourth in Shanghai

**SHANGHAI:** Oscar Piastri delivered a flawless performance to lead McLaren to a commanding one-two finish at the Chinese Grand Prix on Sunday, fending off teammate Lando Norris and George Russell's Mercedes in a gripping race.

The Australian's composed and controlled drive from pole position marked his second career victory and ensured McLaren maintained its perfect start to the season following Norris' triumph in Melbourne. Piastri briefly lost the lead during the sole round of pit stops but was never truly threatened, managing the race from the front while keeping Norris at bay.

Norris, battling brake issues in the closing laps, did just enough to hold off Russell, whose late charge nearly upset McLaren's dominance.

The Briton's brakes faded significantly in the final ten laps, forcing his team to urge caution. With two laps remaining, Russell had slashed Norris' eight-second advantage to just one, but the McLaren driver held firm to secure second place.

Ferrari's Charles Leclerc put in a spirited drive despite carrying front wing damage from an early incident with teammate Lewis Hamilton. The Monegasque driver impressed with his pace, eventually receiving team orders to pass Hamilton as he pursued a podium finish. However, his valiant effort came undone in the closing laps when reigning world champion Max Verstappen surged past him to snatch fourth place.

Hamilton, who had claimed a sensational victory in the sprint race on Saturday, struggled for pace in the main event. The seven-time world champion initially resisted Ferrari's call to let Leclerc through but eventually complied. He later made a second pit stop, unlike the other front-runners who committed to a single-stop strategy, leaving him to settle for sixth.

Piastri's race was a masterclass in control. He defended aggressively against Russell at the start, forcing the Briton onto a compromised line, which allowed Norris to sweep past into second place through the long, sweeping Turns One to Three complex.

From there, McLaren dictated the pace, with their drivers running in tandem for most of the race. A crucial phase unfolded when Russell pitted on the same lap as Piastri, while Norris came in a lap later. As Norris exited the pits, he found himself boxed in by Lance Stroll's Aston Martin, which had stayed out. The delay allowed Russell to momentarily hold second place, but Norris responded swiftly, executing a clinical pass into Turn One to reclaim the position.

With McLaren in control, Russell remained within striking distance of Norris for around ten laps before fading slightly as Piastri was asked to increase his pace to create a buffer. By then, it was clear that the hard compound tyres would last until the finish, eliminating any threat of a second pit stop shuffling the order.

Leclerc's race-long determination to stay in the podium fight was finally undone by a resurgent Verstappen in the final laps. The Red Bull driver, who had initially lost positions at the start, found rhythm in the second stint. With four laps remaining, Verstappen executed a spectacular overtake at Turn One, sweeping around the outside before completing the move at Turn Three as Leclerc struggled to defend.

The Ferrari driver attempted to retaliate at Turn Six but was unable to reclaim the position, resigning himself to fifth place. Hamilton, meanwhile, used his fresher tyres to close the gap but fell short of challenging his teammate by the time the chequered flag fell.

Esteban Ocon delivered an impressive result for Haas, bouncing back from a difficult season opener to secure seventh place - the best of the midfield runners. He finished ahead of Mercedes' rising star Andrea Kimi Antonelli, who continued his promising start to life in Formula 1. Williams' Alex Albon secured ninth, adding crucial points for the team, while Oliver Bearman rounded out the top ten with a solid drive in the second Haas, capping a strong weekend for the American squad.

Norris' second-place finish saw him take the lead in the drivers' standings, holding a nine-point advantage over Russell. Piastri and Verstappen are tied a further point behind, setting up an intense battle as the season progresses. With McLaren proving to be the early-season powerhouse, all eyes now turn to the next round to see if the Woking-based outfit can sustain its dominance - or if Red Bull and Ferrari can mount a serious challenge to their supremacy. - Agencies

FIVE-MEMBER SQUAD

## Oman's paragliding team ready to soar at GCC Beach Games 2025

*Times News Service*

**MUSCAT:** With the countdown underway for the 3rd GCC Beach Games – Muscat 2025, Oman's paragliding team is deep in preparation, aiming to make a strong debut on home soil.

Under the guidance of the Oman Air Sports Committee, the team is currently engaged in an intensive two-week training camp at Sports City in Al Musannah, fine-tuning their skills ahead of the competition set for April 5-7 at Al Hail Beach.

Under the watchful eyes of experienced Italian coach Rafael Benetti, the five-member team is supported by a technical director, and administrative staff.

Dr. Ahmed bin Zaher Al Alawi, Chairman of the Oman Air Sports Committee, emphasised the committee's commitment to developing air sports in the Sultanate.

He said: "Since its inception, the committee has been dedicated to building a solid foundation for air sports in Oman, identifying and nurturing young talent capable of representing the nation internationally. Our focus includes paragliding, kites, drones, and wireless aircraft, and the formation of this paragliding team marks a significant step in that direction. We are pleased with the team's progress, and their upcoming participation in Muscat 2025 will be a proud moment for the country."

Hussein bin Issa Al Fayrouz, a member of the Oman Air Sports Committee, highlighted the rapid rise of air sports in the region. He said: "The formation of Oman's first national paragliding team is a milestone for the sport. The selection process was conducted meticulously, with candidates chosen from local teams under the supervision of an international referee from the International Paragliding and Microlight Federation. The team's upcoming participation will not only showcase their talent but also elevate the status of air sports in Oman."

Adel Al Hubaishi, the technical commissioner overseeing the national team's preparations, pointed out that Oman's diverse landscapes provide an ideal setting for air sports. Al Hubaishi said: "Oman's unique geography, climate, and natural conditions make it a perfect destination for paragliding and other air sports. This camp has been instrumental in refining the athletes' skills, and we are confident they will put on a strong performance at the GCC Beach Games."

The national paragliding team for Muscat 2025 includes Ahmed Al Kalbani, Al Khalil Al Tobi, Majid Al Saadi, Yaqzan Al Zadjali, and Abdulaziz Al Dahli.

Yaqoub Al Hosni has been named the national coach and Abdul Samad Al Saadi is the administrative director of the squad.

## *Ferrari's Hamilton disqualified from Chinese Grand Prix*

**SHANGHAI:** Lewis Hamilton has been disqualified from the Chinese Grand Prix for a technical infringement on his Ferrari on Sunday. One of the skid blocks on Hamilton's car was found to be less than the required thickness after the race.

His team-mate Charles Leclerc and Alpine's Pierre Gasly have also been disqualified, after their cars were both deemed underweight in post-race checks.

Hamilton loses his sixth-place finish in the main grand prix, following victory in the sprint race in Shanghai on Saturday, his first win for his new team. In a statement, the Italian team said there was "no intention to gain any advantage".

Explaining the disqualifications, Ferrari said Leclerc's high tyre wear due to his one-stop race strategy had caused the weight breach, while they had "misjudged the consumption by a small margin" in regard to Hamilton's skid wear. "We will learn from what happened today and make sure we don't make the same mistakes again," the statement added. Monegasque Leclerc was fifth, while Frenchman Gasly was 11th.

Formula 1 cars have skid blocks in the floor that are meant to ensure that the car maintains a certain ride height and does not run too low. The skids are situated in the underfloor wooden plank, which also has a minimum depth for the same reason.

If one is worn too much, it confers a potential performance advantage caused by the car being able to run lower than would otherwise have been possible.

Hamilton was disqualified from the 2023 United States GP for a similar issue. - Agencies

FIFA 2026 WORLD CUP AFRICA QUALIFIERS

## Sudan hold Senegal at a neutral venue to stay top of Group B

**BENINA:** Sudan's remarkable FIFA 2026 World Cup qualifying campaign continued as the war-torn nation battled to a resilient 0-0 draw against Senegal on neutral ground in Benina, Libya.

The result keeps Sudan at the top of Group B, a point ahead of DR Congo, while the 2022 World Cup participants, Senegal, remain third with work to do in their bid for qualification.

Sadio Mane came closest to breaking the deadlock for Senegal late in the game, but his attempted chip was well saved by Sudanese goalkeeper Mohamed Mostafa.

The rebound fell kindly to Mane again, but a last-ditch block on the line denied the Al Nassr star.

Mostafa then showcased his brilliance with a stunning low save to keep out a powerful header from Cherif Ndiaye, ensuring Sudan held firm.

The Falcons of Jediane nearly snatched all three points when Walieldin Khedr's strike flashed just past the post midway through the second half. Despite the disparity in FIFA rankings - Senegal sitting 18th and Sudan 114th - the underdogs put up a courageous fight against one of Africa's footballing powerhouses.

The result strengthens Sudan's unexpected push for a maiden World Cup appearance, a feat that seemed improbable given the ongoing civil war and the exile of the country's top domestic clubs to Mauritania. Under the guidance of Ghanaian coach James Kwesi Appiah, Sudanese fans dare to dream of history.

The result leaves the Lions of Teranga unbeaten in Group B after five matches but with only two wins to their name, putting their World Cup hopes in jeopardy.

With just the group winners earning automatic qualification to the expanded 48-team World Cup in 2026, and only four of the nine second-placed teams advancing to intercontinental playoffs, Senegal must step up in the remaining fixtures.

In the group's other match on Saturday, Togo and Mauritania played out an entertaining 2-2 draw in Lome. Thibault Klidje put the hosts ahead early, but Mauritania responded in the second half with quickfire goals from Aboubakary Koita and Abdallahi Mahmoud. Togo leveled in the 69th minute through Kevin Denkey, and both sides had chances to win it late on. - Agencies

# Meethaq savings plan offers exclusive services and benefits to customers

This savings plan is part of ongoing efforts to provide an unparalleled banking experience in compliance with the principles and provisions of Islamic law

**MUSCAT:** Meethaq Islamic Banking from Bank Muscat reaffirms its commitment to offering a full suite of innovative products and exclusive banking services to its valued customers.

In line with this customer-oriented philosophy, Meethaq offers its savings plan designed to encourage customers to open a savings account which introduces exceptional rewards and benefits, aiming to meet the needs and aspirations of customers from all segments of society. This savings plan is part of ongoing efforts to provide an unparalleled banking experience in compliance with the principles and provisions of Islamic law. It also reinforces Meethaq's leadership in offering top -tier Sharia compliant banking solutions that promote financial well-being and independence.

Meethaq Savings Plan is a financial tool that provides customer with flexibility to save an amount of money on specific interval in a systematic manner and get a corpus of funds at the end of desired plan in line with financial objectives. It is an ideal opportunity for both Omanis and non-Omanis to achieve long-term financial goals, such as preparing for unexpected life events, or planning for retirement. It also supports customers in seizing future opportunities, including funding their children's education, fulfill perfect gateway with family or even buying a dream house. The plan allows customers to save a minimum monthly contribution of 50 OMR and offers flexible deposit options that include monthly, quarterly, semi-annually, or annually contributions. During unforeseen circumstances, customers may partially withdraw 10% of their accumulated balances one time in a calendar year. Additionally, in order to provide a peace of mind to our customers, the product also offers a takaful coverage of up to 100,000OMR which will act as a safety net during the unfortunate event occurs to the accountholders.

In his remarks about the product, Sami Bait Rashid, Assistant General Manager, Meethaq Personal Banking, said: "Meethaq Savings Plan was designed as part of Meethaq's commitment to helping customers to secure better financial future and assisting them to build up cash for substantial future expenditures. The plan is also suitable for individuals keen to grow their wealth over the medium to long term, while also ensuring that they are prepared, in advance, for unfortunate events. This plan underscores Meethaq's ongoing pledge to promote financial literacy and cultivating saving habit amount our customers. It is also part of Meethaq's manifestation to its customer-driven vision by providing banking solutions compliant with the Islamic law."

Sami Bait Rashid further explained that Meethaq Islamic Banking Meethaq recognizes the rapid growth of digital banking solutions and keeps pace with ongoing digital developments. He stated: "Customers can open a Meethaq Savings Plan digitally through Internet Banking and the Mobile Banking App. This will improve the overall customer experience especially for those living in far-flung areas from Meethaq Branch locations. By making our product engaging and accessible, we are fostering a culture of financial well-being that benefits individuals and the Sultanate of Oman as a whole.Meethaq will continue to provide the best services and solutions aligned with Islamic law for its valued customers, thereby enriching their banking experience and meeting their growing aspirations."

EXPANSION

## Malabar Gold & Diamonds to open 12 new showrooms in March, expands global retail network to 391 showrooms across 13 countries

**MUSCAT:** Malabar Gold & Diamonds, the world's 6th largest jewellery retailer, is set to launch 12 new showrooms by March 2025 to further strengthen its presence across India. The latest expansion drive will take the total international showroom count to 391 showrooms across 13 countries, with presence in 19 states across India.

The new showrooms will be located at Panvel in Mumbai, Sinhagad Road in Pune, Brahmapur and Soubhagya Nagar in Odisha; Dhanbad in Jharkhand, Hospet, Nagarbhavi and Chitradurgain Karnataka; Nandyal, Amalapuram, Machilipatanam in Andhra Pradesh and Varanasi in UP.

Malabar Group has invested over USD 69 Millionfor this expansion phase and has hired 406 employees in various roles this financial year.

Additionally, the brand has plans to launch 60 new showrooms in the year 2025, further expanding its global presence. In April 2025, the Group is set to inaugurate 5 new showrooms across the GCC, the UK &Canada, marking its expansion plans in the international market.

Malabar Gold & Diamonds has launched a consumer awareness campaign with prolific actor and brand ambassador NTR Jr. The campaign highlights the brand as a responsible jeweller, emphasizing its commitment to sustainable practices, authentic hallmarked jewellery, and certified natural diamonds.

Commenting on the expansion, MP Ahammad, Chairman, Malabar Group said, "Our expansion plan is aligned with our broader vision of extending our global footprint and offering quality-focused, transparent retail practices coupled with a world-class shopping experience to more people across the world. We are deeply committed to ethical business practices and responsible sourcing, which are at the core of our values. As we continue to grow and enter new markets, each showroom opening represents a step closer to realizing our vision of becoming the world's number one jewellery and luxury brand. This global market penetration not only broadens our reach but also strengthens our position as a trusted brand that offers excellence, integrity, and unparalleled luxury to our customers worldwide."

The new showrooms of the brand will offer a diverse range of traditional and contemporary jewellery collections, coupled with a personalized shopping experience, demonstrating Malabar Gold & Diamonds' dedication to customer service excellence.

Malabar Gold & Diamonds operates 10 state-of-the-art factories across India and 5 international units, ensuring world-class craftsmanship and quality in jewelry manufacturing. Its key facilities in Hyderabad, Jaipur, and Bangalore serve as innovation hubs, equipped with the latest technology to create exquisite designs while adhering to the highest standards of legal compliance, quality assurance, and sustainability. Beyond production, the company places a strong emphasis on employee well-being, occupational health, and safety, fostering a work environment that empowers artisans and upholds global best practices.

Malabar Gold & Diamonds is renowned globally for offering an unparalleled jewellery buying experience with convenience and customer-friendly policies along with the 'Malabar Promise' of incomparable quality and service assurance. Apart from this, the Malabar Promise also includes transparent pricing, assured lifetime maintenance from any of the showrooms across 13 countries, guaranteed buyback, tested and certified natural diamonds, 100% value on diamond and gold jewellery exchange, 916 hallmarked jewellery, responsible sourcing, fair price policy, and fair labour practices.

Beyond India, Malabar Group's global presence spans across the UAE, Qatar, Kuwait, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Singapore, Malaysia, USA, UK, Canada, and Australia. The company employs over 25,000 professionals from 26 countries. Malabar Gold & Diamonds also operates 14 wholesale units across eight countries, 15 jewellery manufacturing units in five countries, design studios, and boasts over 25 exclusive brand and collections, serving more than 15 million satisfied customers from 100 countries.

UNMATCHED CAPABILITY

## Forge new path and embrace adventure with INEOS Grenadier

**MUSCAT:** This Ramadan, embrace the spirit of adventure with the INEOS Grenadier, a vehicle designed to take you beyond limits. Built for those who dare to explore, the Grenadier offers unmatched capability, durability, and reliability—perfect for Oman's diverse landscapes.

Starting at just OMR 26,995, the INEOS Grenadier comes with an exclusive Ramadan offer:

- 3 years / 45,000 km Service Package
- 5 years Unlimited Mileage Warranty
- 5 years Roadside Assistance

- Complimentary Side Runners

Mohsin Hani Al Bahrani, CEO of MHD ACERE, commented:"Ramadan is a time of reflection, renewal, and new beginnings. The INEOS Grenadier embodies this spirit — offering adventurers and explorers a vehicle built for resilience, power, and ultimate performance. We are delighted to present this exclusive Ramadan offer, making it even easier for customers to own a true off-road legend designed for Oman's landscapes."

Combining rugged British spirit and design with German engineering rigour, the INEOS Grenadier is a tough, go-anywhere vehicle with best-in-class off-road capability combined with the modern comfort, refinement and quality standards expected by today's drivers. This Ramadan, embark on a journey of resilience, discovery, and unmatched performance.

STRENGTHENING MARKET LEADERSHIP

## Khimji Ramdas air conditioning & appliances division awarded top performer by Kelon

**MUSCAT:** Khimji Ramdas Air Conditioning & Appliances, a division of Khimji Ramdas Infrastructure, has been recognized as the Top Performer of the Year by Kelon, a globally renowned brand. This prestigious accolade highlights the company's exceptional sales performance, deep market expertise, and dedication to advancing Kelon's footprint in Oman's home appliances sector.

Commenting on this win, Hitesh Akarte, COO of the KR Infrastructure cluster, stated, "This recognition goes beyond an award—it is a reflection of our vision to build sustainable partnerships and deliver innovative solutions that resonate with market needs. At KR Infrastructure, we are deeply committed to meeting consumer demands. Our technology is well suited for modern-day life, and we firmly believe that this partnership with Kelon will enable us to better serve our consumer needs. We believe that true success is not only measured in numbers but in the strength of the relationships we forge, the expertise we cultivate, and the trust we establish with our customers and partners."

Sunil Vishnu, General Manager of the KR AC & Appliances Division, stated, "By aligning our strategies with Kelon's commitment to innovation and quality, we have created a strong foundation for sustained growth. Looking ahead, we aim to further elevate customer experiences, introduce smarter product solutions, and expand Kelon's presence across Oman. Kelon's success in Oman is underpinned by its commitment to 'fit-for-purpose' products—solutions that combine affordability, performance, and reliability. This customer-centric approach is further reinforced by our industry-leading after-sales service, ensuring seamless support and long-term product satisfaction."

Over the past four years, KR AC & Appliances and Kelon have built a strong strategic alliance, leading to the sale of over 120,000 units in Oman. This growth has been fueled by Kelon's diverse product portfolio, which spans three key categories—Air Conditioning, Laundry, and Cooling—each designed to meet varied consumer needs.

FOR STAFF AND FAMILIES

## Europcar Oman hosts annual Iftar celebration

**MUSCAT:** Europcar Oman, a leading mobility services company, held its annual Iftar celebration for staff and their families on March 12 at the Diplomatic Club in Muscat. This cherished tradition reflects Europcar's commitment to fostering a sense of community, inclusivity, and gratitude during the holy month of Ramadan.

The Iftar event was a vibrant and engaging affair, offering not only a lavish spread of traditional delicacies but also a live kitchen experience, where guests could enjoy freshly prepared dishes. To add to the festive spirit, a live Oud performance set the perfect ambiance, while children were delighted by three lively mascots – Mickey Mouse, Minnie Mouse, and SpongeBob, who entertained them throughout the evening.

Nitin Sapre, CEO of Europcar Oman & Bahrain, shared:"Iftar is a time of reflection, unity, and gratitude. The warmth and togetherness we experienced truly embody the spirit of Ramadan, reinforcing the importance of giving back and making a positive impact in our community."

ROUND-UP

# Muscat Grand Mall welcomes Homes R Us: A new destination for elegant home furnishings during Ramadan

Homes R Us will offer an exquisite selection of furniture and decor items designed to create inviting and stylish living spaces

**MUSCAT:** Muscat Grand Mall announced the opening of Homes R Us outlet, a premier furniture and home decor store, which will officially debut on (25/03/2025). This launch comes at a special time during the holy month of Ramadan for family gatherings and celebrations.

Homes R Us will offer an exquisite selection of furniture and decor items designed to create inviting and stylish living spaces. The collection includes a range of unique pieces that are functional and tell a story, adding character and charm to homes. With a focus on quality and affordability, homes r us is set to enhance the shopping experience at Muscat Grand Mall.

"We are delighted to welcome Homes R Us to our mall family," said Ali Al Hosni Acting CEO, at Muscat Grand Mall. "This addition reflects our commitment to providing our visitors with diverse shopping options, especially during the festive Ramadan season when families come together to celebrate and create memories."

The opening of Homes R Us will coincide with special Ramadan promotions and events, inviting the community to engage and explore the stunning collection. Customers will find everything from elegant living room furniture to sophisticated dining sets, making it easy to elevate their home decor for the festive season.

PROMOTION

# Own stylish Bestune T90 with exclusive Ramadan price of OMR7700

**MUSCAT:** Gulf Great Sands, the official distributor of Bestune in Oman, is celebrating the spirit of Ramadan with an exclusive promotion on the Bestune T90 SUV. For a limited time, customers can drive home this stylish and performance-driven vehicle for just OMR 7700, including VAT. This special offer, available till April 20, 2025, ensures that buyers get a premium crossover at an unbeatable price and enjoy a host of added benefits designed to enhance their ownership experience.

The Bestune T90 stands out as a versatile SUV suited for both city driving and long journeys with its striking design, advanced technology, and powerful performance. Available in 1.5L and 2.0L turbocharged engine variants, the T90 offers a dynamic and efficient ride, making it an excellent choice for families and individuals alike. The 1.5L turbo engine delivers 158 horsepower and 258 Nm of torque, paired with a 7-speed dual-clutch transmission that ensures a seamless drive. For those who seek even more power, the 2.0L turbocharged engine produces an impressive 240 horsepower and 380 Nm of torque, coupled with an 8-speed automatic transmission for enhanced performance and acceleration.

The design of the Bestune T90 reflects modern elegance with a bold front grille, LED headlamps, and a panoramic sunroof that adds to its sophisticated appeal. Its spacious and refined interior is crafted for comfort and convenience, featuring a 6-way power-adjustable driver's seat, dual-zone automatic air conditioning, and a leather-wrapped multifunctional steering wheel. Passengers can enjoy an advanced infotainment system with a digital instrument cluster, Bluetooth connectivity, and premium audio features, ensuring every journey is both connected and enjoyable.

In addition to its premium design and performance, the Bestune T90 prioritises safety with state-of-the-art driver assistance systems. Equipped with blind-spot monitoring, dynamic park assist, premium cruise control, lane departure warning, and automatic emergency braking, the vehicle provides peace of mind on every drive. Parking and manoeuvring are effortless with the rear parking sensors and a panoramic image display, further enhancing convenience for drivers.

To make this Ramadan offer even more rewarding, Bestune Oman is including free first-year registration and first-year insurance for private registrations in Oman and the UAE. Additionally, buyers will receive a complimentary periodic maintenance package for up to three years or 55,000 km, ensuring worry-free servicing at Bestune service centres. To enhance comfort and protection, free window tinting is also included. Adding further value to this incredible offer, Bestune is backing the T90 with a comprehensive manufacturer's warranty of six years or 250,000 km, demonstrating its commitment to quality and reliability.

A spokesperson for Bestune Oman expressed enthusiasm about the Ramadan promotion, stating, "The Bestune T90 Premium is a vehicle that embodies power, comfort, and style. With this exclusive Ramadan offer, we are providing customers with an extraordinary opportunity to own a well-equipped SUV at an exceptional value."

Customers can choose from an array of captivating colours, including Phantom Night Black, Pearl White, Moon Blue, Red, Putty Grey, and Bronze Grey, allowing them to personalise their vehicle to reflect their individual style.

HEARTFELT TRADITION

# St. Regis Al Mouj Muscat Resort shares Ramadan spirit with 'Iftar for Cabs' initiative

**MUSCAT:** Embracing the spirit of generosity and community during the holy month of Ramadan, The St. Regis Al Mouj Muscat Resort participated in the annual 'Iftar for Cabs' initiative. Originally established by Marriott International in 2010, this heartfelt tradition has since been embraced by prominent hotel brands regionally and globally.

In a gesture reflecting the St. Regis commitment to thoughtful hospitality and community engagement, hotel hosts from various departments gathered at the hotel's main entrance to distribute iftar meals to Otaxi and Marhaba Taxi drivers, offering them nourishing refreshments and a moment of respite as they broke their fast.

The 'Iftar for Cabs' initiative falls under Marriott International's Sustainability and Social Impact Platform, Serve 360: Doing Good in Every Direction, which guides how the company makes a positive and sustainable impact wherever it does business.

Serve 360 supports initiatives ranging from empowerment programs to sustainable hotel development, ensuring business growth while considering the well-being of employees, customers, owners, the environment, and local communities.

COLLABORATION

# BankDhofar's travel insurance policy offers global coverage

**MUSCAT:** Travel insurance is more than just an add-on — it's a safety net for passengers heading on family vacations, business trips, or work assignments.

In today's unpredictable world—where weather disruptions, missed connections, and medical emergencies can derail plans—comprehensive coverage ensures peace of mind.

Recognising this need, BankDhofar—Oman's leading financial institution — has partnered with Dhofar Insurance Company to offer a travel insurance policy that provides extensive protection against a wide array of travel-related risks and inconveniences. Designed for broad geographical coverage with unparalleled benefits and flexible options, the policy stands out as a reliable and customer-centric offering.

Fully underwritten by Dhofar Insurance, the policy delivers up to $1 million in emergency medical evacuation and repatriation, including hospitalization coverage of up to $1 million. This ensures travelers receive immediate medical care abroad, along with financial assistance for unforeseen emergencies. The coverage also extends to travel inconveniences, such as lost luggage and passports, with claims of up to $300 available for document replacement. Trip cancellations and non-refundable expenses are also protected, with reimbursements of up to $2,000 to help offset unexpected losses.

BankDhofar has partnered with Dhofar Insurance Company to offer a travel insurance policy

Going beyond standard travel insurance benefits, the policy includes compassionate visit coverage, allowing a loved one to join the insured person in case of hospitalization abroad. If minor children are left unattended due to an emergency, arrangements are made for their safe return home. Emergency dental coverage is also available, ensuring that travelers can access urgent dental care when needed.

This insurance policy is globally applicable and customizable based on travel destinations and individual preferences. Whether traveling within the region or across continents, customers can tailor their coverage to meet their unique requirements.

The travel insurance policy is part of a broader suite of bancassurance products offered by BankDhofar, covering Motor, Home, Accident, and Health & Critical Care. These products are underwritten by leading local and international insurers, reinforcing the bank's commitment to quality and customer satisfaction.

These bancassurance offerings complement BankDhofar's diverse portfolio of banking solutions designed for various customer segments. Structured savings and investment plans, such as fixed and recurring deposits, children's education funds, and retirement savings solutions, further enhance the bank's services.

Beyond traditional banking, BankDhofar's mobile app offers customers seamless access to account management, bill payments, fund transfers, and new account openings—anytime, anywhere.

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