

09

RAMADHAN
1446 AH
SUNDAY
MAR 9, 2025

1 2 3 4

5 6 7 8

9 10 11 12

13 14 15 16

17 18 19 20

21 22 23 24

25 26 27 28

29

PRAYER TIMINGS

FAJR
05:07 AM

DHUHR
12:22 PM

ASR
03:46 PM

MAGRIB
06:18 PM

ISHA
07:28 PM

omanobserver.com

INBRIEF

DRONE TRANSFORMS ROAD MAINTENANCE

MUSCAT: A groundbreaking Omani innovation - a drone equipped with AI to detect and repair potholes - has emerged as a game-changer. This innovation, which secured third place at Al Sharqiyah South Hackathon's 'Idea Makers' initiative, showcases how advanced technology can revolutionise public services and drive the development of smarter cities. Road deterioration due to climate change and heavy traffic leads to potholes and cracks, posing safety risks and increasing maintenance costs. Traditional detection and repair methods are often slow and expensive, highlighting the need for more efficient, AI-driven solutions. SEE P5

FOREIGN RESERVES CROSS RO 7-BN MARK

MUSCAT: The Central Bank of Oman's (CBO) foreign assets surpassed RO 7 billion by the end of December 2024, reflecting a 4.9% increase from RO 6.734 billion recorded a year earlier. The growth in reserves highlights global confidence in Oman's economy, which expanded by 2.7%, with GDP at current prices reaching RO 30.6 billion by Q3 2024. CBO's foreign assets include RO 2.865 billion in foreign currency deposits, RO 3.510 billion in securities, and RO 458.7 million in the reserve account with the International Monetary Fund. Gold holdings also saw a remarkable surge, increasing over 200% from RO 77.3 million to RO 234 million. Meanwhile, foreign assets in commercial banks grew by 9.2% to RO 4.578 billion, up from RO 3.995 billion in December 2023, signaling the sector's resilience and ability to navigate global fluctuations. SEE P13

Oman warns against bid to displace Palestinians

Full support for the OIC to stop Israeli aggression

THE SULTANATE OF OMAN participated in the Extraordinary Meeting of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), which was held in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia to discuss the developments of the ongoing Israeli aggression on the occupied Palestinian territories.

Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, who headed the Sultanate of Oman's delegation, stressed its firm and supportive position for implementing the terms of the ceasefire agreement in Gaza, the full Israeli withdrawal, return of displaced Palestinians and ensuring delivery of humanitarian aid to Gaza. He cautioned against any attempts to displace Palestinians or violate their rights.

The foreign minister underscored the Sultanate of Oman's support for the efforts undertaken by the member states of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation to confront the Israeli aggression, stressing the need to establish an effective international mechanism to end violations, protect civilians, lift the siege on the Gaza Strip and hold Israeli officials accountable for the crimes committed. The Extraordinary Meeting of the Organisation of Islamic



Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, at OIC meeting in Jeddah

Cooperation (OIC) was chaired by Lejeune Mbella Mbella, Minister of External Relations of Cameroon and Chairman of the current session of the OCI Ministerial Council, in the presence of ministers of foreign affairs.

The meeting was attended by Shaikh Ahmed Hashil al Maskari, Head of the GCC and Regional Neighbourhood Department; Salim bin Mohammed al Busaidy, Consul-

General of the Sultanate of Oman in Jeddah, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) and Deputy Permanent Representative to the OIC in Jeddah as well as a number of officials from the Foreign Ministry.

Sayyid Badr met with Dr Seyed Abbas Araghchi, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Iran, on the sidelines of the meeting. They discussed bilateral relations and ways to foster cooperation between the two friendly countries and exchanged views on the regional and international developments stressing the importance of promoting dialogue and diplomatic efforts to find peaceful and just solutions to conflicts and enhancing opportunities for achieving security, stability and peace.

The foreign minister also met with Bakhtiyor Saidov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Uzbekistan. They exchanged views on regional and international developments.

They also discussed aspects of diplomatic cooperation between the two countries, stressing the continuity to bolster economic and investment partnership relations as well as the cultural and scientific cooperation programmes. The meetings were attended by a number of officials from both sides.

— ONA, SEE ALSO P7



Photo by Abdul Wahid al Hamdani

RAMADHAN DECORATIONS ADD CHARM TO HOLY EVENT

SUHAIL AL NAHDI
MUSCAT, MARCH 8

To mark Ramadhan, many landmarks and buildings across Oman are decked up with lights and decorations reflecting the cheer and spirit of one of the holiest events in the Islamic calendar. Carnivals of bright colours alongside the catchphrase of Ramadhan Mubarak are ubiquitous in all cities and villages across the country. Ramadhan Mubarak (a special felicitation on the advent of Ramadhan exchanged amongst Muslims and even non-Muslims) adorns all corners with eye-catching shapes and colours. TURN TO P2

Sultan Haitham City's first model villa ready soon; handover in 2026

MUSCAT: The first model villa in Al Wafa District, part of Sultan Haitham City, is nearing completion and is expected to be ready within two weeks. The broader development is progressing rapidly, with initial residential handovers planned for mid-2026.

Salem bin Ali al Siyabi, Chairman of Al Abrar Real Estate — the project's main developer — confirmed that the first phase includes 470 residential units comprising independent villas, townhouses and apartments. Construction began in September 2024 and demand remains strong, with 96 per cent of the first phase already sold.

Following the strong market response, sales for the second

phase were launched in November. To attract buyers, Al Abrar Real Estate introduced flexible financing options, extending repayment terms from three to five years and offering discounts of up to 15 per cent based on the payment plan. Special Ramadan promotions also include furnishing packages for select units.

Jamal bin Nasser al Hadi, spokesperson for the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning, highlighted that Al Wafa District exemplifies successful public-private collaboration in urban development. He noted that infrastructure, including roads, utilities and digital connectivity, is progressing in parallel with housing construction to ensure a seamless urban experience.



The broader development is progressing rapidly, with initial residential handovers planned for mid-2026.

Among the key government projects within Al Wafa District is a state-of-the-art school complex developed in partnership with the Ministry of Education. The facility is expected to enhance educational services and contribute to the city's long-term urban vision.

Sultan Haitham City spans 14.8 million square metres and will eventually accommodate 100,000 residents across 19 integrated neighbourhoods. The development is structured in four phases, with completion targeted by 2045. As a model for sustainable urban planning, the city aims to position Oman as an attractive destination for both residents and investors.

— ONA

OMAN



Experience Better

Their future starts today!

Change to AWASR, Fastest Internet In Oman

Get Ashel Educational Platform for free!

Unlimited data for all plans





SUBSCRIBE NOW!
WhatsApp
80001000
Website: [awasr.om](#)

SHORT TAKES

NCSI LAUNCHES WEBPAGE ON OMANI WOMEN



SUSAN BINT DAWOOD AL LAWATIYAH

MUSCAT: The National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) has launched a dedicated webpage for tracking and showcasing indicators related to Omani women, in celebration of International Women’s Day, observed on March 8. This new online resource aims to provide

detailed insights into the status of women in Oman across six key areas: demography, health, education, employment, social protection and political participation. The webpage currently displays three basic indicators for each category, allowing users to explore trends over time and select data for specific years.

According to Susan bint Dawood al Lawatiyah, Director General of Information at NCSI, the platform offers easy access to valuable data and empowers users to download the available information, reinforcing the concept of open data. This initiative is designed to support research, decision-making and sustainable development efforts, as well as contribute to the social and economic empowerment of Omani women. — ONA



The Gulf Day for Talent and Creativity activities focused on teaching staff and talented students.

GULF DAY FOR TALENT AND CREATIVITY HELD

SALALAH: The Gulf Day for Talent and Creativity activities was held in Dhofar Governorate’s schools, focusing on both teaching staff and talented students. The event showcases student talents in various fields, including innovations in artificial intelligence and fosters collaboration with universities and educational institutions for scientific experiments.

Dr Sharifa bint Abdullah Al Yafeiyah, Director of Special Education and Continuing Education at the Directorate General of Education in Dhofar, emphasised the event’s goal to spotlight gifted students and raise awareness about the role of educational institutions in nurturing creativity. The initiative aligns with Gulf Cooperation Council leaders’ efforts to support talent and creativity in education. — ONA

CDAA URGES CAUTION WHILE USING COOKING GAS

MUSCAT: The Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority (CDAA) has urged users to take precautions while using cooking gas cylinders as they are a source of danger to prevent risks. CDAA has several guidelines for the safe use of gas cylinders, which include closing the gas cylinder valve immediately after finishing cooking, using connections approved by the authority, place the gas cylinder outside the kitchen in a shaded, well-ventilated place, avoiding flammable materials near the gas cylinder, make sure to perform periodic maintenance on gas connections from approved companies.



SAYYID BADR AT JEDDAH OIG MEETING

Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, met with Dr Seyed Abbas Aragchi, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran, on the sidelines of the meeting. The foreign minister also met with Bakhtiyar Saidov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan. They exchanged views on regional and international developments.

Digital platform for public service launched

VINOD NAIR
MUSCAT, MARCH 8

AS part of Oman’s digital transformation, the government has launched the National Platform for Suggestions, Complaints and Reports (tajawob.om). This centralised system, integrated with over 55 government entities, enables both citizens and residents to easily submit complaints, suggestions, inquiries and reports regarding public services.

Available in Arabic and English, Tajawob allows users to register securely using their Civil ID and OTP verification. The platform promotes transparency by providing real-time notifications for each request, from submission to resolution.

Some of its key features are complaints and suggestions in which the users can submit complaints about services or suggest new services and improvements.

Reports and inquiries in which the platform enables users to report defects or violations and inquire about services or procedures.

Non-Anonymous Submissions include



Tajawob allows users to register securely using their Civil ID and OTP verification

all submissions require personal details to ensure proper follow-up and resolution.

This platform simplifies public service interaction, enhances transparency and supports Oman’s ongoing digital initiatives.

Since its launch, Tajawob has already facilitated over 5,782 complaints, proving

to be an essential tool for improving communication between the government and the public. The platform currently connects 42 government institutions and offers over 2,000 services.

Plans for Tajawob’s future include expanding language options, adding more government institutions and continuously enhancing the user experience to provide even greater access to public services.

The National Platform for Suggestions, Complaints and Reports (Tajawob.om) represents a significant step forward in Oman’s efforts to improve government transparency, efficiency and service delivery.

The Ministry of Labour is one of the key entities integrated into Tajawob, processing complaints related to labour and employment services. The Ministry encourages users to ensure that their mobile numbers are up-to-date in the Royal Oman Police Civil Status System for seamless access to the platform. Users can easily update their phone numbers through the system to maintain access to the platform’s services.

Ramadhan decorations add charm to holy event

FROM PAGE 1

One can see the phrase everywhere scripted in all variants of Arabic calligraphy, on bridges, gateways, green spaces and along the roads drawn by lights or a mixture of geometric shapes beside the stars and the Ramadhan crescent and drawings inspired by Arab and Islamic heritage.

It’s a unique pleasure to enjoy watching Ramadhan decorations when travelling at night or upon returning from office after a tiring working day. Pedestrians can feel an atmosphere of comfort when walking down the streets; and the colours and decorations add more pleasure as many people have the habit of walking streets and walkways after performing Taraweeh at mosques, an experience associated with Ramadhan and constitutes one of the many joys of this beloved month.

Azzan al Habsi said: “The Ramadhan atmosphere is different



and many people go out at night to walk, shop and visit. This year, decorative lights, beautiful phrases and geometric shapes inspired by Islamic heritage adorn many bridges, roundabouts and heritage landmarks in Muscat bring joy and happiness to passersby.”

Omar al Ameri said the atmosphere is different this year with the presence of decorative lights and lanterns. “Decorations and lights reflect the spirituality of the holy month, the atmosphere becomes more joyful than before.”

Mohsen Mahmoud Hassan said the Ramadhan nights are cooler and conducive to group Iftars outside and the decorations, lights and lantern add to the vibes. “It has been almost a week since Ramadhan and the atmosphere is getting more beautiful. With every night trip with the family to the markets or visits, we enjoy the beautiful lights that we pass by on most of the roads in Muscat.”

SHORT TAKES



Flyadeal has announced its summer 2025 expansion programme from June 19

FLYADEAL
ANNOUNCES FLIGHTS
TO SALALAH

MUSCAT: Flyadeal has announced its summer 2025 expansion programme with the return of five popular seasonal destinations and the introduction of Salalah in the Dhofar Governorate for the first time, effective June 19.

The Turkish hot spot of Trabzon will again be joined by Baku and Tbilisi, the capital cities of Azerbaijan and Georgia, respectively; the Egyptian resort town of Sharm El Sheikh; Sarajevo in Bosnia and Herzegovina; and Salalah in southern Oman.

“Salalah, in particular, is one of the region’s most popular summer retreats. Bordering the Indian Ocean, it is a unique place in the Arabian Peninsula. A mountain range with greenery and springs on the northern side and pristine white sand beaches in the southern part, Salalah is known for its annual Khareef monsoon season that typically runs from June to August, transforming the desert terrain into a lush, green landscape with seasonal waterfalls. Salalah is also famous for its frankincense and traditional Omani handicrafts, the airline said.

Tickets are now on sale via Flyadeal’s Mobile App or website and through travel agents.

Steven Greenway, flyadeal Chief Executive Officer, said: “This time of the year is always anticipated as consumers and the travel trade are eager to see which destinations we will operate for the busy summer season. We’re therefore delighted to bring back some of our popular and customer favourite destinations in Türkiye, Egypt, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Bosnia & Herzegovina to our network.

“With Oman also joining our expanded summer programme, which is likely to grow even further with additional routes to be announced over the next few weeks, the seasonal network promises to be exciting and adventurous for holidaymakers planning a short or long break with friends and family, especially during the school holidays.”

DHOFAR’S
DEVELOPMENT
PLANS FOR
2025 UNVEILED

SALALAH: Government agencies in Dhofar Governorate convened at the Sultan Qaboos Youth Complex for Culture and Entertainment in Salalah to present their annual achievements and upcoming projects for 2025. The event showcased key initiatives to enhance infrastructure, commerce, tourism and social development in the governorate.

Dhofar Municipality’s presentation highlighted ongoing projects, including 13 road paving and lighting initiatives and the development of ‘Boulevard Al Dharath’ in Salalah’s Itin area. The governorate’s preparations for the 2025 Khareef season were also discussed, emphasising improved



public amenities, tourism facilities and environmental conservation efforts.

The General Directorate of Trade, Industry and Investment Promotion outlined strategies to boost exports, having issued 11,000 certificates of origin in 2024 – a 30 per cent increase. The ‘Made in Oman’ campaign, aimed at promoting Omani products locally and new investment opportunities in food

security and tourism were also presented.

The General Directorate also revealed ambitious projects, including the Greater Salalah City master plan and the Al Shorouk neighbourhood initiative. The Directorate of Roads and Land Transport announced infrastructure advancements such as the Al Maghsail Bridge project and the dualisation of the Raysut-Al Maghsail road, valued at over RO 44 million. Social development efforts were also a focal point, reporting over 4,000 beneficiaries receiving social assistance and ongoing initiatives for persons with disabilities, elderly care and women’s empowerment. — ONA

Thousands gather at
Taaruf to explore Islam

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

AS many as one thousand people of different faiths gathered for the eighth edition of Ta’aruf, an annual event aimed at fostering understanding about Islam among non-Muslims and new converts.

Organised by the Department of Introduction to Islam and Cultural Exchange at the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs, the event took place on Friday, Ramadhan 7, 1446 AH, March 7, at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre (OCEC).

Under the theme ‘Quran for Every Soul’, the event was attended by Azzan bin Qasim al Busaidy, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism for Tourism and featured a keynote speech by Islamic preacher Abdur Raheem McCarthy.

Taaruf, meaning ‘Know Islam,’ is an initiative held annually during Ramadhan to provide a platform for new Muslims and those from other faiths to explore the religion’s teachings, relevance in the modern world and its perspective on global issues. The gathering serves to address misconceptions and counter Islamophobia by promoting understanding and dialogue.

A special session featured personal



Taaruf 2024 aimed at fostering understanding about Islam among non-Muslims and new converts

testimonies from new Muslims, where they shared their experiences of embracing Islam, the impact of fasting during Ramadhan and the transformations they have felt in their lives. The event also welcomed attendees curious about Islam’s core values of love, justice and mercy, demonstrating its applicability in contemporary society.

Attendance was limited to new converts and non-Muslims eager to learn about Islam.

To ensure accessibility, free transportation was arranged in collaboration with Mwasalat, facilitating travel to and from the venue from various points in the city and other governorates.

The evening concluded with a communal iftar, symbolising unity and inclusion, offering attendees an opportunity to experience the traditions and warmth of Islamic hospitality.

Shinas University students innovate
solar panel defect detection technology

SHINAS: A team of students from the University of Technology and Applied Sciences in Shinas has successfully developed an innovative drone-based technology to detect defects in energy-generating solar panels.

This cutting-edge invention utilises advanced analytical techniques to identify and address defects swiftly, enhancing the efficiency and reliability of solar energy systems. The project has received multiple awards both local and Gulf levels and has been showcased at scientific conferences and events.

Fatima bint Mohammed al Maamariyah, a member of the student team, explained that the project aims to detect defects in solar modules caused by environmental, electrical and mechanical stress. The technology employs a drone equipped with a thermal imaging camera to capture data, which is then analysed using advanced techniques such as the ‘Deep Learning Mod’ technology.

She further elaborated on the development process, highlighting the various stages of the project. Initially,



Students from UTAS, Shinas have developed an innovative drone-based tech to detect defects in energy-generating solar panels

“The technology employs a drone equipped with a thermal imaging camera to capture data, which is then analysed using advanced techniques such as the ‘Deep Learning Mod’ technology”

FATIMA BINT MOHAMMED AL MAAMARI,
Member of the student team

the team conducted extensive research, reviewing previous studies and refining their objectives.

Key goals included enhancing defect detection accuracy and reducing processing time. The next stage involved data

collection, where images of solar units were gathered from diverse sources and categorised as either healthy or defective. These images were then processed through contrast and filtering technologies to improve clarity and accuracy. During the evaluation phase, model parameters were fine-tuned to optimise performance.

Student Mahra bint Saeed al Kaabiyah, another team member, detailed the practical testing of the project. The initial prototype was implemented on solar panels within the university, undergoing rigorous testing and refinements based on real-world applications.

— ONA

Ramadan Gift Hamper

SHARING THE BLESSINGS OF THE HOLY MONTH

Celebrate the spirit of Ramadan, the month of giving, with a beautifully curated Ramadan Hamper, perfect for gifting to loved ones, colleagues or business partners.

Ready-Made Hamper
Pre-filled with 10 Ramadan essentials | OMR 60 net per box

Personalise Your Hamper
Handpick 4 to 10 items from our selections
From OMR 12 net per box
Save 20% on a minimum purchase of 20 Hampers

Spread the joy of giving this Ramadan with a heartfelt and memorable gift.

Order Now | ☎ 2477 6565



AVOID SPEEDING, FATIGUE

BALQEES AL ORAIMI

DURING Ramadhan, changes in daily routines impact drivers’ behaviour, leading to an increase in road risks. The Royal Oman Police (ROP) has emphasised the importance of adhering to traffic safety measures, as common driving mistakes during this period significantly contribute to accidents and injuries.

One of the most concerning issues observed is excessive speeding before Iftar. Many drivers rush to reach their destinations just before the Maghrib call to prayer, often exceeding speed limits and committing serious violations. The ROP warns that fatigue and reduced concentration while fasting heighten accident risks, making it crucial to drive patiently and adhere to speed regulations.

Speeding remains a leading cause of road accidents, resulting in significant human and material losses. To reduce risks, motorists are urged to adjust their speed based on road conditions, maintain safe distances and avoid aggressive driving behaviours.

DROWSY DRIVING
Another major concern during Ramadhan is driver fatigue and drowsiness, particularly during daytime and peak hours. Disruptions in sleep schedules lead to lower concentration levels, increasing the risk of accidents. Studies show that sleep-deprived drivers exhibit slower reaction times, making them more prone to collisions.

THE ROP ADVISES:

- If feeling drowsy, stop immediately in a safe location and take a short break.
- Engage in light movement to boost circulation and alertness.
- Avoid long-distance travel without proper rest to prevent fatigue-related crashes.

Driving under fatigue weakens a driver’s ability to respond quickly to sudden obstacles, making collisions more likely. Those working long hours or travelling long distances should ensure adequate rest before getting behind the wheel.

RECKLESS OVERTAKING AND HEAVY VEHICLES
Another major violation during Ramadhan is unsafe overtaking, particularly on single-lane roads. Some drivers attempt to overtake without ensuring the road is clear, leading to head-on collisions and severe injuries. The ROP stresses the importance of following traffic rules, using indicators and making sure no vehicle is approaching before overtaking.

Caution is also necessary when driving near heavy vehicles such as trucks and buses, which have larger blind spots.

THE DRIVERS SHOULD:

- Maintain a safe distance.
- Avoid sudden lane changes.
- Ensure they are visible to the heavy vehicle driver before passing.

Essential Ramadhan traffic safety tips

TO ENSURE ROAD SAFETY DURING RAMADHAN, THE ROP RECOMMENDS:

- Plan to avoid last-minute rushing before Iftar.
- Get enough sleep before driving, especially for those working long hours.
- Follow traffic rules and avoid reckless overtaking.
- Stay patient and tolerant during peak traffic times.
- Avoid distractions, such as mobile phone use, while driving.
- Pedestrians and cyclists should use designated lanes and crossings for safety.

The ROP reminds all road users that safe driving is a shared responsibility. Adhering to traffic laws, exercising patience and respecting fellow drivers can help prevent accidents, ensuring a safer Ramadhan for everyone.

ROP’S TIPS FOR ROAD SAFETY

- Plan to avoid last-minute rushing before Iftar
- Get enough sleep before driving
- Follow traffic rules and avoid reckless overtaking
- Stay patient, tolerant during peak traffic times
- Avoid distractions, such as mobile phone use, while driving

SHORT TAKES



The Ata'a Exhibition was organised by Dar Al Atta'a Association

ATA'A EXHIBITION SHOWCASES OMANI ENTREPRENEURSHIP

MUSCAT: The 27th edition of the Ata'a Exhibition, organised by Dar Al Atta'a Association, was held at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre in Madinat Al Irfan. The event was held under the auspices of HH Sayyidah Huriya bint Asaad al Said and serves as a platform for Omani entrepreneurs.

Featuring 515 male and female entrepreneurs registered within small and medium enterprises (SMEs) across Oman, the exhibition aims to enhance the association's programmes while providing Eid clothing for families supported by Dar Al Atta'a. Dr Shamsa al Harthy, Director-General of Dar Al Atta'a, emphasised the exhibition's role in bolstering economic opportunities and social solidarity.

Visitors explored an array of products, including Eid supplies, unique handcrafted items, and a variety of culinary offerings from distinguished Omani and Arab restaurants and cafes. The exhibition significantly contributes to the local economy, empowering productive families and fostering sustainable entrepreneurship. The exhibition, which concluded on Saturday, offered an opportunity for the community to support local businesses and uphold the spirit of economic and social cooperation. — ONA

INVESTMENT BOOST IN AL BURAIMI VIA 'TATWEER' PLATFORM

AL BURAIMI: The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Water Resources, in collaboration with the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning, has launched 21 investment opportunities in Al Buraimi Governorate via the 'Tatweer' platform. Covering a total of 659.4 acres, these opportunities span agricultural ventures, animal production, and water bottling plants to enhance food security and economic growth.

Key projects include palm tree and date production in Mahdha and Al Buraimi, large-scale potato cultivation in Safwan and Al Madam Plain, and onion farming in Al Qabil. Livestock projects focus on camel, goat, sheep, and cow farming, alongside forage cultivation. A broiler chicken farm covering 30 acres in Al Qabil aims to boost local poultry production.

Additionally, two water purification and bottling plants will be established in Al Saniya and Al Rawda in Mahdha. The 'Tatweer' platform offers investors a streamlined electronic application process, reflecting the government's commitment to sustainable agricultural expansion and private sector involvement in national economic development. — ONA

EA's campaign stresses wildlife protection

AL DHAHIRAH: The Environment Authority (EA) in Al Dhahirah Governorate spearheaded an educational campaign to underscore the significance of wildlife conservation. This initiative was part of Oman's nationwide participation in World Wildlife Day, observed annually on March 3.

World Wildlife Day is a global event that emphasises the crucial role of wild organisms in maintaining ecological balance while addressing threats such as habitat loss, poaching and climate change.

Specialists from the Yanqul Monitoring Unit led the campaign, engaging school students in the Wilayat of Yanqul. The session provided insights into the Environment Authority's role in wildlife preservation through the establishment of nature reserves,



EA's educational campaign was part of Oman's nationwide participation in World Wildlife Day

legal regulations and strict enforcement measures against environmental violations.

Walid bin Suleiman al Farsi from the Yanqul Monitoring Unit delivered an informative lecture on advanced monitoring techniques

AI drone transforms road maintenance

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, MARCH 8

ARTIFICIAL Intelligence (AI) is transforming public services worldwide, enhancing efficiency, sustainability and quality of life. As cities face growing infrastructure challenges, smart solutions are becoming essential to address issues such as potholes on asphalt roads, which impact traffic safety and increase maintenance costs.

A groundbreaking Omani innovation - a drone equipped with AI to detect and repair potholes - has emerged as a game-changer. This innovation, which secured third place at Al Sharqiyah South Hackathon's 'Idea Makers' initiative, showcases how advanced technology can revolutionise public services and drive the development of smarter cities.

Road deterioration due to climate change and heavy traffic leads to potholes and cracks, posing safety risks and increasing maintenance costs. Traditional detection and repair methods are often slow and expensive, highlighting the need for more



Al Sharqiyah South Governorate lays emphasis on adopting smart solutions

efficient, AI-driven solutions. The Omani AI-powered drone provides a fast and automated approach to road maintenance:

They can scan roads using cameras and sensors to detect potholes, analyse damage using AI to assess severity and location and communicate with a central system for real-time coordination. They are able to execute repairs automatically, filling potholes with asphalt.

Some of its key benefits include faster

maintenance and repairs take hours instead of days, reducing road closures.

They have lower operational costs compared to traditional methods and have enhanced safety with immediate repairs to prevent accidents.

Al Sharqiyah South Governorate emphasises that adopting smart solutions aligns with Oman Vision 2040, which prioritises modern technologies for sustainable development. Supporting such innovations can significantly improve public services, enhance infrastructure and boost economic growth.

Residents, including Hamoud al Ghailani, have welcomed the project. He noted, "Sudden potholes cause accidents and damage vehicles. AI-powered drones offer an innovative, effective solution, and we hope to see them implemented across Oman soon."

Beyond road maintenance, AI can revolutionise traffic management by optimising vehicle flow. They can also bridge and facilitate monitoring to detect structural issues early and smart waste management through robotic street cleaning.

OCCI HOSTS FORUM TO BOOST INVESTMENT IN AL DHAHIRAH



OCCI Al Dhahirah branch Chairman stressed the significance of collaboration between public and private sectors

IBRI: The Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) branch in Al Dhahirah Governorate convened its annual open meeting at the Ibri Sports Complex, fostering dialogue between government entities and business owners.

Held under the auspices of Najeeb bin Ali al Rawas, Governor of Al Dhahirah, the gathering brought together over 40 government and private institutions to discuss investment opportunities, streamline procedures and address private sector concerns.

A visual presentation highlighted OCCI's achievements over the past year and outlined its strategic vision for the upcoming year, focusing on business growth and project support.

Saif bin Said al Badi, Chairman of OCCI's Al Dhahirah branch, emphasised the significance of collaboration between public and private sectors, advocating for reduced bureaucratic barriers and proactive solutions for entrepreneurs and SMEs.

Key officials from various institutions, including the General Directorate of Labour, the Department of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, the Environment Authority, and the Development Bank, participated in discussions aimed at enhancing Al Dhahirah's economic landscape. — ONA

Suhail Bahwan Group

مجموعة البهوان

4000 sq. ft. | 1000 sq. ft.

بهوان للسياحة ش.م.م
Bahwan Tourism LLC

Auction upon Used Vehicles

Bahwan Tourism LLC announces a sealed bid auction for selling 40 vehicles in one bulk in its current condition. Those who wish to obtain additional information should visit the company's office in Ghala Industrial, Al-Jami' Al-Akbar Street, Shell Station, during the working hours from 8th March till March 16th.

For inquiries, please call **979708888 - 95261742**. Or contacting through Email: **Abdul.qader@bahwantravels.com** **santhoshkumar@bahwantravels.com**

Oman Vision 2040

Implementation Follow-up Unit

رؤية عمان 2040
وحدة متابعة التنفيذ

Tender Announcement

Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit floats the following tender:

Tender No.	Tender Name	Companies Eligible for Participation in the Tender	Last Date for Collection of Tender Documents	Last Date for Tender Submission
19/2025	Design and Supervision Services for Constructing, Renewing and Rehabilitating the Building of Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit's building	Urban and city planning consulting Architectural engineering consulting	April 2 nd , 2025	April 8 th , 2025

Document Fee	
Local companies	SMEs
25	10

Requirements:

- Companies may collect the terms and specifications document through the Isnad service via the website (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>) until the date indicated above, and the fee of the document will be paid through the electronic payment gateway on the website of the General Secretariat of the Tender Board.
- The submitted offers must be valid for (90 days) from the date of submitting the offers on the Isnad service website.
- Bids must be submitted through the Isnad service before 12:00 pm on the day of submitting the offers, and the offers submitted after this time will not be accepted regardless of the reasons for the delay.
- Priority in awarding will be given to companies and institutions whose bid includes the highest percentage of Omanization and the possible percentage of purchase of local products.

Vice Chairman of Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit
info@oman2040.om
24962179

The New York Times

Russia pushes back Ukraine’s offensive



MARC SANTORA

The writer has been reporting from Ukraine since the beginning of the war with Russia

RUSSIAN and North Korean forces have made significant battlefield advances in recent days in the Kursk region of Russia, threatening Ukraine’s supply lines and its hold on a patch of land it hopes to use as a bargaining chip in future negotiations, according to Ukrainian soldiers, Russian military bloggers and military analysts. Working together, a new influx of North Korean soldiers and well-trained Russian drone units, advancing under the cover of ferocious artillery fire and aerial bombardment, have been able to overwhelm important Ukrainian positions, Ukrainian soldiers said.

“It’s true; we can’t stop them,” said Oleksii, commander of a Ukrainian communications unit fighting in the area, when reached by phone. “They just sweep us away, advancing in groups of 50 North Koreans while we have only six men on our positions.” “Decisions are being made here, but I don’t know how effective they will be,” he said.

If Ukrainian forces were cut off or forced to retreat, it would be a significant setback. Not only was the incursion into Kursk a signature operation that boosted morale and embarrassed President Vladimir Putin of Russia, but holding territory in Russia gave Ukraine a potential bargaining chip in any peace negotiations. Pulling out could weaken its bargaining position at a moment when President Donald Trump is trying to force through settlement talks.

On Friday morning Trump, who has favoured the Kremlin’s position in his public comments, turned the tables on Russia, saying he might impose new sanctions on

that country if it kept bombarding Ukraine and did not engage in serious peace talks. “Based on the fact that Russia is absolutely ‘pounding’ Ukraine on the battlefield right now,” Trump wrote on Truth Social, “I am strongly considering large scale Banking Sanctions, Sanctions, and Tariffs on Russia until a Cease Fire and FINAL SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT ON PEACE IS REACHED. To Russia and Ukraine, get to the table right now, before it is too late.”

Ukrainian forces first swept across the border last summer in an unexpected assault, overrunning unprepared Russian positions and securing a bridgehead of some 200 square miles around the Russian town of Sudzha, which sits about 6 miles from the border.

Russian and North Korean soldiers have retaken about two-thirds of the land lost in the summer — but at a horrendous cost, with at least 4,000 troops killed in combat, according to Ukrainian, South Korean and Western intelligence estimates. Ukrainian officials have said the offensive served multiple goals: thwarting a looming Russian offensive into the Sumy region of Ukraine; demonstrating that Western fears of escalation were overwrought; forcing Russia to divert resources away from the front line in Ukraine; and possibly serving as leverage in future peace negotiations.

The recent setbacks in Kursk have come as Ukrainian forces in eastern Ukraine have managed to stall Russian offensive efforts for months and largely stabilise their lines. As the battles dragged on, the Russians brought in an estimated 12,000 North Koreans to join the fight. North Korea was already supplying Russia with millions of artillery



An Ukrainian military vehicle drives northern Sumy region close to the border with Russias Kursk region.

Working together, a new influx of North Korean soldiers and well-trained Russian drone units, advancing under the cover of ferocious artillery fire and aerial bombardment, have been able to overwhelm important Ukrainian positions

shells Moscow desperately needed, as well as artillery and ballistic missiles. For months, Russian and North Korean forces have been attacking in some of the most ferocious clashes of the war, the intensity rising and falling but never really subsiding, soldiers said. The North Koreans were forced to withdraw from the battlefield in January and regroup, but they soon returned.

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy of Ukraine said on Feb. 8 that “Russia has once again deployed North Korean soldiers alongside its troops.” Four Ukrainian soldiers all said in interviews that North Koreans were at the vanguard of the latest waves of attacks, along with elite Russian drone units. Ukrainian soldiers said the North Koreans were now better adapted to waging war on a battlefield that has been transformed by the proliferation of drones. They still engage in the same ferocious frontal assaults that led to so many casualties, but they are operating more cohesively.



TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

No	Tender Title	Tender Title
1	Tender-25-03-04	Pre-qualification for: Interior Fit out works and loose furniture supply.
2	Project Scope	Covering an area of approximately 5,000 m², the scope includes MEP, HVAC, Firefighting and life safety, IT, carpentry and joinery, partitions and ceilings, proprietary finishes, supply and installation of loose furniture, flooring, wall finishes and all other associated works.

OMAN HOUSING BANK

invites qualified contenders to participate in the tender process for an interior fit-out project located in Ghala, Muscat. This tender announcement will follow a structured pre-qualification stage to ensure that only capable contenders proceed to the final bidding phase.

Pre-Qualification Process: Interested contenders must submit the required information below (a to e) to obtain the electronic Tender Documents. Only contenders who meet the specified criteria will be eligible to participate in the tender process, failure to strictly submit the required information will result in a direct disqualification.

To qualify, contenders must submit a signed confirmation letter from an authorized signatory, confirming compliance with the following initial assessment criteria:

- A minimum of five (5) years of continuous industry experience, with a proven track record of successfully completing at least five (5) interior fit-out projects for banks or corporate offices or similar financial institutions. Each project must meet a minimum contract value requirement ranging between OMR 500,000 - OMR 3,000,000. Completion certificates and client contact details must be provided for verification. Moreover, bidders must confirm their role in the listed projects, specifying whether they acted as the main contractor or subcontractor.
- c) Submission of financial audit reports for the last three (3) years.
- d) Proven capacity to carry out a fast-track project without time overruns with references of completed projects.
- e) Interested tenderers must submit the following documents as part of their pre-qualification: Company Registration Certificate, Business License, Power of Attorney, Tax Compliance Certificate, Company Profile, ISO Certification, a Joint Venture Agreement (if applicable), and Company Organization Structure.
- b) In-house expertise in executing carpentry and joinery, partitions and ceiling works, as well as mechanical, electrical, and plumbing (MEP) services, Firefighting and life safety along with IT installations. If subcontractors are engaged, their complete details must be included in the pre-qualification submission.

Additionally, all Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) must provide their Riyada Card along with the required documents.

Key Dates & Submission Guidelines

• Tender Fees: A non-refundable fee of OMR 1000 will be applicable to the contenders who successfully pass the initial assessment stage and receive the Tender document. Successful tenderers must remit the Tender fee using the bank details provided below:

A/C Name	Oman Housing Bank SAOC
A/C No	0423024031280012
Bank Name	BankMuscat SAOC
Swift Code	BMUSOMRXXXX

• Submission Deadline: All the above required documents must be submitted no later than 27th March 2025 through the BIDBID e-Procurement Portal (<https://bidbid-forms.com/>) or by scanning the QR code below. Late submissions will not be considered.

Only contenders who fully meet the pre-qualification criteria will receive the official tender documents and be invited to participate in the tendering process.

Oman Housing Bank (SAOC) reserves the right to accept or reject any application at its sole discretion, without the obligation to provide justification.

For further inquiries, please contact procurement-ohb@ohb.co.om



SHORT TAKES



Syrians demonstrate in support of the Syrian government, in Aleppo, Syria. — Reuters

Syria’s Sharaa urges gunmen to surrender after clashes

DAMASCUS: Syria’s leader Ahmed al Sharaa urged insurgents from ousted president Bashar al Assad’s minority to lay down their arms and surrender after the fiercest attacks on the war-torn country’s new rulers yet. “You attacked all Syrians and made an unforgivable mistake. The riposte has come, and you have not been able to withstand it,” Sharaa said in a speech broadcast on Telegram by the Syrian presidency. “Lay down your weapons and surrender before it’s too late.”

Restoring security has been one of the most complex tasks for Syria’s new authorities, installed after they ousted Assad in a lightning offensive in December. In his Friday address, Sharaa, who headed the coalition that forced out Assad, also vowed to keep working towards “monopolising weapons in the hands of the state”. “There will be no more unregulated weapons,” he pledged. Western powers and Syria’s neighbours have emphasised the need for unity in the new Syria, which is seeking funds for reconstructing a nation ravaged by years of war under Assad. — AFP

South Korea’s President Yoon free, trials continue



South Korean impeached President Yoon Suk Yeol gestures outside the Seoul detention centre after his release. — Reuters

SEOUL: South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol walked out of a detention centre on Saturday after prosecutors decided not to appeal a court decision to cancel the impeached leader’s arrest warrant on insurrection charges. Yoon, 64, remains suspended from his duties, and his criminal and impeachment trials continue over his short-lived imposition of martial law on December 3.

The Seoul Central District Court cancelled Yoon’s arrest warrant on Friday, citing the timing of his indictment and questions about the legality of the investigation process. “I would like to thank the Central District Court for their courage and determination in correcting the illegality,” Yoon said in a statement. As he left the facility, a relaxed and smiling Yoon, in a dark suit with no necktie, stepped out of his car, waved, raised his fist and bowed to cheering supporters waving South Korean and US flags.

His lawyers said the court decision “confirmed that the president’s detainment was problematic in both procedural and substantive aspects,” calling the ruling the “beginning of a journey to restore rule of law”. — Reuters

SCHEDULED VOTE

Myanmar election to be held by January



Myanmar’s junta chief said the country would hold an election in December or January, the first in the war-torn nation since the military staged a coup in 2021. “We are planning to hold the election in December 2025 or... by January 2026,” General Min Aung Hlaing said. The vote would be “free and fair” he said on Friday during a state visit to Belarus, adding that 53 political parties had “submitted their lists” to participate. — AFP

DR CONGO OFFERS BOUNTY FOR ARREST OF M23 LEADERS

KINSHASA: Authorities in the Democratic Republic of Congo are offering a five-million-dollar reward for help in arresting leaders of the M23 group that recently captured two major northern towns, the justice ministry announced. “A reward of five million dollars is offered to any person who helps arrest the convicts Corneille Nangaa, Bertrand Bisimwa and Sultani Makenga.”

Nangaa, a leader in the River Congo Alliance (AFC) that is a

military-political coalition to which the M23 belongs, is a former president of the DRC’s electoral commission. Bisimwa and Makenga are respectively the president and military chief of the M23.

DRC authorities are also offering a bounty of four million dollars for any information leading to the arrest of the three men’s “accomplices on the run” and “other sought individuals”, the statement said. Meanwhile, at least 35 people were killed when pro-government

militia attacked a village in the restive eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, local and security sources said on Friday.

The attack happened at about 3:00 am on Thursday in the North Kivu province controlled by the Rwanda-backed M23 armed group. A community leader and a medical source said villagers had recently returned to the area after having fled fighting between the Rwanda-backed M23 and the Congolese army and local group. — AFP

European countries hail Arab plan to rebuild Gaza

BRITAIN, France, Germany and Italy on Saturday backed a proposal by Arab nations to rebuild Gaza as a “realistic path”. The counter-proposal to US President Donald Trump’s plan to take over Gaza and displace its residents “promises -- if implemented -- swift and sustainable improvement of the catastrophic living conditions for the Palestinians living in Gaza,” the foreign ministers of the four countries said in a joint statement. The 57-member Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) at an emergency meeting in Saudi Arabia, on Saturday formally adopted a plan put forward by the Arab League. The Egyptian-crafted plan, an alternative to Trump’s widely condemned takeover, proposes to rebuild the Gaza Strip under the future administration of the Palestinian Authority. Unlike the Trump plan, it aims to do so without displacing the territory’s 2.4 million inhabitants, who have suffered 17 months of war.

The OIC in a statement urged “the international community and international and regional funding institutions to swiftly provide the necessary support for the plan”. The Egyptian proposal -- which does not outline a role for Hamas, which controls Gaza -- has already been rejected by both the US and Israel. But the European foreign ministers said it “shows a realistic path to the reconstruction of Gaza”. “We are clear that Hamas must neither govern Gaza nor be a threat to Israel any more,” they said in their



Palestinian orphans pose for a picture at the war-damaged Al Amal orphanage in Gaza City. — AFP

“We commend the serious efforts of all involved stakeholders and appreciate the important signal the Arab states have sent by jointly developing this recovery and reconstruction plan ...We are committed to working with the Arab initiative, the Palestinians and Israel to address those issues together.”

Meanwhile, over 50 freed Israeli hostages urged Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to implement the Gaza ceasefire deal and secure the release of those still held in the Palestinian territory. “We who have experienced the inferno know that a return to war is life-threatening for those still left behind,” a group of 56 freed hostages said in a letter posted on the social media platform Instagram on Friday evening. “Implement the agreement in full, in one single manoeuvre.” Among those to sign the letter was Yarden

statement. “We commend the serious efforts of all involved stakeholders and appreciate the important signal the Arab states have sent by jointly developing this recovery and reconstruction plan ...We are committed to working with the Arab initiative, the Palestinians and Israel to address those issues together.”

Meanwhile, over 50 freed Israeli hostages urged Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to implement the Gaza ceasefire deal and secure the release of those still held in the Palestinian territory. “We who have experienced the inferno know that a return to war is life-threatening for those still left behind,” a group of 56 freed hostages said in a letter posted on the social media platform Instagram on Friday evening. “Implement the agreement in full, in one single manoeuvre.” Among those to sign the letter was Yarden

Bibas, whose wife and two young sons died while held captive in Gaza. Their plea came as Hamas released a video showing Israeli hostage Matan Angrest alive. In the footage, Angrest also calls on the Israeli authorities to implement the second phase of the ceasefire deal.

The first phase of the ceasefire ended on March 1 after six weeks of relative calm that included exchanges of Israeli hostages for Palestinian prisoners, though hostilities have not resumed.

While Israel has said it wants to extend the first phase until mid-April, Hamas has insisted on a transition to the second phase, which should lead to a permanent end to the war. Of the 251 hostages taken by Palestinian groups during the 2023 attack on Israel, 58 remain in Gaza, including 34 the Israeli military has said are dead. — AFP



ALFRED BATTERS AUSTRALIA

LABRADOR: Australian troops were seriously injured on Saturday in a major road crash while responding to ex-Cyclone Alfred, which has battered a swathe of the eastern coast and cut power to more than 330,000 properties. The former tropical cyclone -- now downgraded to a tropical depression -- made landfall in the late evening over Bribie Island on the Queensland coastline after lingering for days offshore.

The weather system has whipped up gale-force winds that toppled trees, brought down power lines, and damaged buildings. And it is still creating heavy rainfall, swelling rivers in parts of a 400-kilometre stretch of the coast. — AFP

TRADE AGREEMENT

Hungary, US to agree on package



Hungary and the United States will agree on an economic cooperation package that will help the Hungarian economy and could aid in restricting or negating the effect of possible US tariffs, Prime Minister Viktor Orban said on Saturday. Orban also said that such an economic agreement would help Hungary even if a trade war breaks out as all European Union member states and Hungary would suffer losses in case of such a trade war. — Reuters

UNDERWATER CITY

Hundreds evacuated in Argentina floods



At least ten people were killed and more than a thousand evacuated in the Argentine port city of Bahia Blanca as torrential rains flooded homes and hospitals. Eight hours of nonstop rain left the city of 350,000 people largely underwater, and forced authorities to evacuate the Jose Penna hospital. Some 1,321 people were evacuated to safety in the city, which is about 600 kilometers south of the capital Buenos Aires. — AFP

OPINION

Making the most of your time in Ramadhan



DR HAMED
AL SINAWI

The writer is author
of ‘The Road to
Jerusalem’

A few days before Ramadhan, I was giving a talk about work-life balance and one of the participants asked, “How can a working mother balance her time during Ramadhan when she is expected to go to work then get home to prepare meals for the family and squeeze in some time for sleep and prayers?”

Ramadhan is a time for spiritual growth, self-reflection and self-discipline.

However, with the demands of daily life, many people struggle to make the most of the holy month and feel guilty about not doing enough. If you find yourself in this situation, here’s a simple plan to help you stay focused, organised and balanced.

Start each day with a clear goal for your fast. Ask yourself: “What will I do differently today?” Setting small, achievable objectives will help you stay mindful of your spiritual and personal growth throughout the month.

Establish a routine by structuring your day to include time for prayers, reading the Quran, and self-reflection. Creating a schedule that works for you will help maintain focus and prevent distractions.

When you walk into a supermarket during Ramadhan you will often find them filled with tempting food displays, many promoting high-sugar and high-fat products. While these may be a traditional part of the month, they aren’t always the healthiest choices. Instead, select a balanced diet that provides sustained energy.

One of the core values of Ramadhan is giving back. Whether it is donating money, volunteering at a mosque, or distributing food before Maghrib prayers, small acts of kindness foster a sense of community and purpose.

Sleep is essential for both physical and mental health and changes in eating schedules and late-night shopping can disrupt your sleep patterns. To ensure adequate rest, consider completing Eid shopping before Ramadhan when stores are less crowded. Limit TV and social media at night to improve sleep quality.

One of the common questions asked each Ramadhan is when is the best time for physical exercise? According to medical experts, people who exercise before Iftar

Many people struggle to make the most of the holy month and feel guilty about not doing enough. Here is a simple plan to help you stay focused, organised and balanced

would have an opportunity to eat for recovery and hydrate at Iftar but their bodies will have minimal pre-exercise hydration and nutritional support. While those exercising after Iftar would have adequate hydration before and after exercise.

For most people, the working day is shorter in Ramadhan so it is important that you organise your schedule well and start with tasks that require more attention and focus when your energy levels are high. Avoid taking on too many tasks or responsibilities so you do not get overwhelmed. Focus on the essentials and allow time for rest and spiritual activities. Having shorter meetings allows workers to focus on finishing their tasks on time.

In my opinion, one can make the best of the holy month by setting clear intentions and balancing time effectively by focusing on what matters and avoiding unnecessary distractions.

While it’s important to have adequate food in the evening, remember to choose mindfully for a more fulfilling and rewarding Ramadhan.

S SUDAN HEATWAVE ‘MORE LIKELY’ DUE TO CLIMATE CHANGE

Man-made climate change increased the likelihood of the heatwave gripping South Sudan, a study said, saying soaring temperatures were disproportionately affecting women and girls.

The impoverished nation has been plagued by insecurity and instability since declaring independence in 2011, and is ill-equipped to counter increasing environmental disasters.

The heatwave comes as South Sudan endures yet another bout of political turmoil, provoking fears that a 2018 agreement -- which ended the vicious five-year civil war -- might be unravelling.

A February heatwave has seen temperatures hit 40 degrees Celsius in parts of the country, according to a recent report from IGAD (the Intergovernmental Authority on Development).

The heatwave prompted the government to close the capital’s schools, noting that an “average of 12 students had been collapsing in Juba city every day”, and order citizens to remain at home.

“Climate change means that dangerous heatwaves exceeding 40 degrees are becoming the new normal in South Sudan,” said Sarah Kew, a researcher at the Netherlands Meteorological Institute and one of the study’s authors.

“Once rare, these high temperature events are occurring every two years, posing enormous challenges for the people of South Sudan.”

The heat is expected to persist throughout March, according to the projections noted in the study.

Climate change “made the extreme heat at least 2C hotter and at least 10 times more likely”, according to a new study from the World Weather Attribution, a network of researchers examining links between environmental change and extreme weather events.

“Climate change is clearly making life even more difficult in South Sudan, a country already facing economic challenges and periods of instability,” Kiswendsida Guigma, a climate scientist for the Red Cross and Red Crescent in Burkina Faso and one of the study’s authors.

Significant numbers of people work outdoors in South Sudan, where many houses have tin roofs and no air conditioning — conditions that make it difficult to follow government directives to remain inside, the study said.

Drinking water remains in short supply, while access to electricity was 8.4 per cent in 2022, according to the World Bank.

It said women and girls were disproportionately affected because daily tasks — such as collecting water, cooking, and other household chores -- are usually carried out by women. Elizabeth Lodou Lochapio said from the southeastern town of Kapoeta that women were bearing the brunt of the burden. — AFP

Forgiveness is strength, not a sign of weakness

I have never been a forgiving person. When someone wronged me, I held onto it, letting anger and resentment fester.

Forgiveness always felt like letting them off the hook and giving them something they didn’t deserve. For most of my life, I believed holding onto my anger kept me strong, kept me in control.

I sought revenge. And while I’m not proud of it, I have, at times, taken it - strongly and decisively. I was capable of being extremely vengeful, and I was good at it. Perhaps too good. But recently, I had a conversation that changed everything.

A friend of mine, knowledgeable in Islam, spoke to me about the importance of forgiveness in our faith. We are both Muslims. That conversation planted a seed. And in an act I never thought myself capable of, I reached out to someone who had seriously harmed me and I forgave him.

To my absolute surprise, that act of forgiveness freed me. Not gradually. Instantly. It felt miraculous. Perhaps it was.

I have no idea how my forgiveness affected him. And, being honest, I don’t really care. My forgiveness was genuine, but whether it changed him, whether it made him reflect on his wrongdoing have no idea. I hope it did. But I doubt it. This man didn’t just disappoint me. He deliberately deceived me. He stole from me, manipulated me and acted fraudulently in a way that went beyond a simple mistake.

After my conversation with my friend, I made a decision that shocked even me. I sent the man who had wronged me a message. I told him I forgave him, not because he deserved it but because I no longer wanted to carry the weight of his actions.

I also made it clear that I never wanted to see him again, but I prayed that God would bless him and his family with happiness. And that prayer was genuine. I



KARIM
EASTERBROOK

The writer is a
former Cambridge
School Principal
and an Interview
Skills Advisor

wasn’t seeking an apology. I wasn’t trying to rebuild a relationship. I was simply letting go. I expected to feel foolish. Weak, even. Instead, I felt lighter. Stronger. The anger, the resentment and the bitterness had been chains around my mind, keeping me bound to this person long after our last interaction.

But the moment I forgave him, those chains broke. My thoughts were no longer occupied by what he had done or how I had been wronged.

I had detached from him in the most powerful way possible, not by ignoring him, not by pretending he didn’t exist but by choosing to release his hold on me. For years, I thought forgiveness was a gift you gave to the person who wronged you. I was wrong.

Forgiveness is something you give yourself. It’s not about erasing the past nor pretending the harm didn’t happen but about refusing to let it define you. Forgiveness doesn’t mean reconciliation. It doesn’t mean trust. It doesn’t mean weakness. It means deciding that your peace of mind is worth more than your grudge. And for the first time in my life, I understand that.

Since my act of forgiveness, I have not thought of this man with anger. In fact, I barely think of him at all. And that is the real power of forgiveness, it doesn’t just lighten your emotional load; it removes the person’s influence over you entirely. I never expected to be someone who forgives. But I have learned that sometimes the best revenge isn’t anger or justice, it’s freedom. And that’s exactly what I gave myself.

Nor is forgiveness about letting someone off the hook and it certainly isn’t about accepting that wrong is right. It’s about removing a burden from your own shoulders. In many ways, it’s more selfish than altruistic because you forgive for yourself, to free yourself from that person emotionally, forever.

Of course, there are situations where forgiveness may be far more difficult. When the wrongdoing involves violent crimes, when loved ones are harmed, when the pain runs deeper than words. But even in such cases, forgiveness doesn’t mean allowing injustice to go unpunished.

Because forgiveness, I have learned, is not a sign of weakness. It is a sign of strength.

The world is not enough... for some.



RAY PETERSEN

The writer is a media consultant

It will always be seen as the day the fog lifted, the gloves came off, preconceived illusions as to the strength and resilience of the so often quoted constitution and the true nature of the American socio-political machine was laid bare for the world to see.

It was the day, to be honest, most of us who have ‘been around for a while,’ never thought we would see, as only those who are extraordinarily naïve would believe that politically, what we see is what we get.

We mostly know and understand, that governance, power, rule, in whatever name, needs those working in the shadows, in the dark, doing whatever needs to be done to achieve the ‘right’ ends.

However, I think few of us ever thought that we would see such a brazen, calculated attack upon an ally, as that perpetuated in America’s once hallowed, now irrevocably tarnished, Oval Office last week.

Will this one day come back to haunt the Americans in the same way Hitler’s reversal of good relations with Stalin saw his lofty ambitions fall against the stubborn resistance of Stalingrad? Sometimes history has veiled warnings for us.

Unfortunately, I feel this bullying’s consequences will now be with us all forever and that what fragile trust may have been garnered in terms of politics and politicians,

they now lie in shreds. Inviting Zelensky into their lair upon the pretence of meaningful discussions and peaceful resolution of the Ukrainian conflict, it was much more like a ‘bear-baiting’ session at the colosseum, with Zelensky the bear... blindfolded, hamstrung, caught completely unawares by the coordinated wolves, not only Trump and Vance, but those nameless sycophantic ‘suits’ that filled the room, like those audiences of old, baying, albeit silently, for blood.

Incredibly however, it has been the faux political growth, the elevation and emergence, of Elon Musk that has become an even less palatable unfolding soap opera, as the ‘Dark Star,’ of business and commerce enforces a ‘smash and grab’ on America, with a brutal, even vengeful attack on the nation’s public and civil services and military.

If this wasn’t happening for real... it would have made a fascinating though horrific mini-series.

Musk is, no doubt, a phenomenon. According to Forbes Magazine, he is the richest man in the world, with a wealth of \$353 billion and a charitable foundation of circa \$9 billion. He is also, CEO and Chief Engineer of SpaceX; CEO and Architect of Tesla Inc; and Co-founder of OpenAI, Neuralink and the Boring Company. He owns ‘X’, formerly Twitter and was recently appointed Head of the Department of

Unfortunately, I feel this bullying’s consequences will now be with us all forever and that what fragile trust may have been garnered in terms of politics and politicians, they now lie in shreds.

Government Efficiencies, or DOGE, his imprint looming large over national governance in both style and substance.

Maybe he hasn’t designed Tesla, or the ‘reusable’ SpaceX rockets, but he has contributed towards them.

He has effectively re-written the nature of mega-scale lending and borrowing and in doing so, taxation... or not... effectively reshaping global financing to ensure that taxation, for the 1 per cent, is now merely an inconvenience, rather than an imposition.

He must be to business today what 1800s door-to-door hucksters were, what insurance salesmen of the 60s and timeshare salesmen of the 80s and 90s were, both a shot in the arm and a rampant liability. While some men though, want to rule the world, he has other fish to fry. He wants to own it. Insulated by his personal wealth, which will certainly be enhanced through now being the poacher with the keys to the estate, he will push and pull America’s society until it is out on its feet, and then, probably bored, he will find some other game to play.

Why? Because he can. Who will blink first? Will, or can Trump live in Musk’s shadow? This will surely be seen in time, as the most incredible social experiment ever, and like watching a tragedy unfold, Musk’s ‘hire and fire’ antics, though deeply unpleasant, also make watching from afar, unmissable!

FACED WITH RUSSIA, EU’S DEFENCE MUST INCLUDE TÜRKIYE

ANNE CHAON

Türkiye, with Nato’s second-largest army and a Black Sea coastline, is looking to play a key role in Europe’s security after Washington’s pivot away from the region.

After two rounds of crisis talks on Ukraine and security following Washington’s change of policy, Ankara has been quick to warn that European defences cannot be ensured without its involvement.

“It is inconceivable to establish European security without Türkiye,” President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said after Sunday’s London summit. Ankara has consistently defended Ukraine’s territorial integrity since Russia’s 2022 war and supplied it with combat drones and naval vessels. But it has also maintained good ties with Russia and remains the only Nato member not to have joined the sanctions against Moscow.

With its unique position between the two warring parties, Türkiye has repeatedly offered to host peace talks.

Erdogan and Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan have often received visitors such as Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelensky.

In recent years, Türkiye has considerably developed its defence industries, with exports growing by 29 per cent to reach \$7.1 billion in 2024, placing it 11th in global defence exports, Erdogan said in January.

Driving its success are the Bayraktar TB2 drones which have been sold to more than 25 nations, among them Poland and Romania, according to the International Institute for Strategic Studies’ Military Balance survey.

“Sales to European countries, particularly EU members, add credibility to Türkiye’s argument it is an important player in European security,” said IISS expert Tom Waldyn.

“Türkiye has maintained a consistent attitude in line with the UN Charter on the sovereignty and territorial integrity” of Ukraine, he said.

“It has the second largest military in Nato but also the most effective as it’s been in combat for decades,” he explained.

But EU cooperation with Ankara has been hampered by the Cyprus dispute, he said with a trace of exasperation.

“How long can we afford to continue this stance?” For Nebahat Tanriverdi Yasar, an independent researcher and policy analyst who works in Ankara and Berlin, Türkiye’s careful management of its ties with both Kyiv and Moscow has left it in a unique position.

“Türkiye aims to carefully navigate its relations with Russia and its strategic defence support to Ukraine — potentially with EU backing — to reshape the balance of power in the region amid the emergence of a ‘new order’ where the EU seeks to assume greater responsibility for its security amid shifting US policies,” she said. — AFP

Role of parents in raising digitally responsible kids

In a society, such as Oman, the family model represents the pillar upon which the people have developed a unique organised pattern of relationships through interaction with one another. The Omanis inherently have a habitual conduct and deportment marked by self-respect and respect for others.

Omanis are brought up to hold high and special regard for elderly persons. If you visit an Omani family, youngsters do not speak in the presence of elderly people, nor do they interrupt them while talking.

It is not necessarily the father or mother who directs youngsters if they misbehave. It is rather the responsibility of the whole of the society to bring to some standard and required condition of good social conduct. Elders set a good example especially within the Omani social edifice.

Based on this magnificently impressive solid societal basis, the parents should all the time set an exemplary model on their own use of social media. Children often closely imitate adult behaviour, so it is important for parents to show for purposes of demonstration respectful settled tendency and usual manner of online communication and social media behaviour, marked by responsibility and accountability.

Another important aspect is that Omani parents need to teach their children a digital conduct necessitated by good breeding and social life conventions. By doing so, children develop understanding, vicariously experiencing the feelings, thoughts and experience of another. As a result, digital etiquette and empathy should become an acquired mode of behaviour and respect in digital interactions that should be nearly or completely involuntary with children. Children should learn to form or have in their mind to be kind and helpful before they post. Arising from and characterised by sympathy and forbearance, it is important for the parents to make their children understand what it means to cause emotional pain



Children should be taught to plan for their future and have a goal in life. As they are still at their early stage of self-consciousness of digital footprints, parents need to explain to their children that their online actions cannot be easily washed away, or erased, making such marks is difficult to be removed.



DR MUSALLAM AL MAANI

The writer is Dean of Al Zahra College for Women, Oman

or anguish to someone’s feelings. Instead, youngsters should learn to develop inherited characteristics and traits of being appreciative and having responsive awareness and recognition of others.

Further, children should be taught to plan for their future and have a goal in life. As they are still at their early stage of self-consciousness of digital footprints, parents need to explain to their children that their online actions cannot be easily washed away, or erased, making such marks is difficult to be removed.

As inherited, established and customary patterns of thought, action and behaviour are matters which vary according to time and

place, parents should take into account the changes in the rule of conduct and behaviour.

They should not impose on their children conventions that have become no longer current by depriving them of the useful benefits of the digital age.

But we need to show children that everything they share or post online can be traced back to them and can be retrieved by going backward over them. Sharing personal information, images, or comments can have consequences not only in the short term but also in the long run. Such online footprints can be used as evidence against them in the future, causing long-term serious damage.

SPORTS

SHORT TAKES



SHOOTING STARS LEAD WOMEN’S RAMADHAN BASKETBALL

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, MARCH 8

The fourth Women’s Ramadhan Basketball Championship, organised by the Women’s Sports Committee of the Oman Basketball Association, kicked off at the secondary hall of Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher. The tournament features five participating teams: Shooting Stars, Betal, Al Amerat Club, Ahli Sidab Club and OQ8 Team. The first week witnessed four decisive victories, with Shooting Stars leading the standings with four points after securing two consecutive wins, marking a strong start in the competition.

In the opening match, Shooting Stars clinched a hard-fought and thrilling victory against Betal with a score of 27-25. The game saw significant shifts in momentum, as Betal initially took the lead in the first two quarters. However, Shooting Stars made a strong comeback in the fourth quarter, managing to equalise and forcing the game into a decisive fifth period, where they emerged victorious. The team’s triumph was largely attributed to the outstanding performances of Fatima al Numani and Noor al Kharousi, while Kristyna Storkova and Warda Ibrahim stood out for Betal.

In the second match, Al Amerat Club dominated their encounter against Ahli Sidab Club, securing a commanding 39-6 victory. Al Amerat controlled the game from the start, finishing the first quarter with a remarkable 20-0 lead and maintaining their dominance throughout the second and third quarters. The win was fuelled by the stellar performances of Nareem al Maamari, Asilah Yasser and Reema al Khameini. On the other hand, Fay al Jardani and Maryam al Mahrouqi made efforts to narrow the gap for Ahli Sidab, but to no avail.

The third match was a much closer contest between Shooting Stars and Al Amerat Club, ending in a narrow 21-20 victory for Shooting Stars. The game remained competitive until the final seconds, with Al Amerat taking the lead in the first quarter before Shooting Stars fought back in the second. The four quarters concluded with tightly contested scores. Shamssldsha, Nelly Slaibi and Sara al Said played key roles in Shooting Stars’ win, while Ghadeer al Ismaili was the standout performer for Al Amerat, scoring 17 points.

In the fourth match, OQ8 Team secured their first win in the tournament by defeating Betal 27-23. Duqm Refinery started strong, leading in the first three quarters before Betal mounted a late comeback attempt in the final period. However, the decisive performances of Alina Perosko, Aida Mohamedi and Tamathir Yousef ensured victory for OQ8. On the opposing side, Katherinsi and Warda Ibrahim were the top scorers for Betal.

With these results, Shooting Stars remains at the top of the standings with four points, while the other teams look to improve their rankings in the upcoming rounds.

Rustaq, Sohar win in OPL; Al Nahda settle for a draw

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, MARCH 8

AL NAHDA AND SUR played to a 1-1 draw on Friday in a match held at Al Buraimi Sports Complex as part of Round 16 of the Oman Professional League (OPL).

Al Nahda dominated the game from the start, relying on offensive pressure through the wings and midfield. However, they faced a well-organised Sur defence, which opted for counterattacks. One of these counterattacks resulted in the opening goal in the 20th minute when Yusef al Ghailani fired a powerful shot that hit the crossbar before finding the net.

In the second half, Al Nahda intensified their attacks and were awarded a penalty in the 62nd minute, which Billel Bensaha successfully converted to equalise. Al Nahda pushed for a winning goal, especially after Sur’s Yahya al Hudhaifi was sent off in the 80th minute, but they failed to capitalise on their chances and the match ended in a 1-1 draw.

With this result, Al Nahda raised their tally to 36 points, trailing league leaders Al Seeb by two points, while Sur remained at the bottom of the table with 10 points.



From the match between Al Rustaq and Al Nasr

AL RUSTAQ BEAT AL NASR

Al Rustaq earned a crucial 2-1 win against Al Nasr in a match held at Al Rustaq Sports Complex.

Al Nasr took the lead first through Marwan Taib, who converted a penalty in the 37th minute. However, Al Rustaq quickly responded, with Ahmed al Adawi scoring an equaliser with a header in the 43rd minute, ending the first half at 1-1.

In the second half, both teams exchanged attacks, with Al Rustaq coming close to scoring when Ernest’s shot struck the post in the 64th minute. The decisive moment came in the 87th minute when Luqman al Jadidi scored the winning goal with a powerful strike from outside the box. With this victory, Al Rustaq climbed to 17 points, placing ninth in the standings, while Al Nasr remained in fifth place with 20 points.



From the match between Al Nahda and Sur

SOHAR CLAIM VITAL WIN

Sohar secured a valuable 2-1 victory against Al Shabab in a match held at Sohar Sports Complex.

Sohar started strongly, controlling possession and took the lead in the 26th minute through their foreign player Prince Claude. He capitalised on a cross from Ahmed Mal Allah amid defensive

confusion and slotted the ball past Al Shabab’s goalkeeper Abdulmalik al Badri.

In the 78th minute, Mohsen Johar doubled Sohar’s lead with a brilliant finish after a one-on-one situation with the goalkeeper. Al Shabab managed to pull one back in the 94th minute through their professional player Emerson Golo, who headed a cross into the net, deceiving Sohar’s goalkeeper Majdi al Ajmi.

With this win, Sohar reached 16 points but remained in 11th place, the first relegation spot, after Rustaq’s victory over Al Nasr pushed them to 17 points. Meanwhile, Al Shabab, who recently won the His Majesty’s Cup title, stayed at 17 points, sitting in eighth place ahead of Rustaq and Saham only on goal difference.

OMAN AND IBRI GOALLESS DRAW

Oman and Ibri shared the points in a goalless draw at Seeb Stadium.

With this result, Oman raised their tally to 29 points, maintaining third place in the standings, while Ibri reached 19 points, placing sixth.

Omani referee named for Fifa Beach Soccer World Cup

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, MARCH 8

Oman’s intentional referee, Falah al Balushi, has been nominated to officiate in Fifa Beach Soccer World Cup Seychelles 2025, scheduled to be held in Seychelles from May 1 to 11, 2025 in Victoria, Mahé island.

The 16 qualified teams will be drawn into four groups of four. The two in each group will reach the knockout phase in which quarter-finals, semi-finals, a third-place play-off and final will ensue. Oman beach soccer team is among the Asian teams which will vie for spot in the World Cup during the AFC Asian qualifiers in Thailand during March 20 to 30.

The selection of Oman’s umpire Falah al Balushi marks a significant milestone in his refereeing career fulfilling a long held ambition to be part of the sport’s most prestigious global event.



FALAH
AL BALUSHI



“Definitely for any referee, officiating at the world’s biggest tournament is the ultimate goal from the moment they earn their international badge. As I had received my Fifa referee badge in 2016, my focus has been on setting clear goals and working tirelessly to achieve them. This selection is a testament to years of effort, dedication and continuous development including technically and physically,” said Falah.

Falah will appear for the first time ever in the upcoming Fifa Beach Soccer World Cup

and will be available on the grand stage as a reward for his commitment to the profession.

KEY MILESTONES

“I used to be an active umpire and involved in various tournaments under the Oman Football Association umbrella. Since obtaining the international referee badge in 2016, I could manage to build up an impressive portfolio of officiating experiences at local, regional and international levels,” he added

“My main referring stations were in Arab Tournaments

including the Arab Beach Soccer Championship in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt and another significant event in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. At the regional championships, I had officiated in two Oceania Beach Soccer World Cup Qualifiers as the first was in Tahiti in 2022 and then in the Solomon Islands last year. In the Asian Competitions, I took part as an official umpire in the AFC Beach Soccer Asian Cup & World Cup Qualifiers for four times including this year qualifiers which are set to begin on March 20 in Thailand. My accompanying referee from Oman Zakariya al Hinai will join me in this Asian assignment,” he said.

“I attended in several International events to extend my experience to globally recognised championships including the Intercontinental Cup in Dubai and the prestigious Neom International Tournament in Saudi Arabia,” he said.

SHORT TAKES



Cleveland Cavaliers centre Jarrett Allen (31) shoots against the Charlotte Hornets during the third quarter at Spectrum Center. — Reuters

CAVALIERS STRETCH UNBEATEN STREAK TO 13 GAMES

LOS ANGELES, United States: The Cleveland Cavaliers staged a dramatic late rally to stretch their unbeaten streak to 13 games with a nail-biting 118-117 over the lowly Charlotte Hornets in the NBA on Friday.

Charlotte, buoyed by a stellar 46-point display from Miles Bridges, looked ready to score a massive upset after opening up a nine-point lead with just over five minutes remaining.

But Eastern Conference leaders Cleveland, who this week became the first team to punch their ticket to the post-season, rallied superbly to claw their way back into the game.

A sensational Evan Mobley three-pointer tied it for the Cavs at 106-106 with just over two minutes remaining, before Donovan Mitchell put the Cavs into a winning position with six straight free throws.

Mitchell led the scoring for Cleveland with 24 points while Darius Garland finished with 20 and Mobley 19 as the Cavs improved to 53-10. Cleveland lead the East by eight games.

Bridges almost single-handedly inspired Charlotte to what would have been a remarkable upset. Only two other Hornets players finished with double figures as Charlotte fell to 14-48 to remain one place off the bottom of the table.

Cleveland coach Kenny Atkinson said his team's determination to dig out victory augured well for the looming playoff campaign.

"Thirteen in a row — I think yes, we're in a good groove," Atkinson said.

"We've had to scratch and claw these last couple of games, which is great for playoff prep — playing in some tight games and having to execute at the end of the game.

"Our group's in a really good place. It did feel like our energy was a little bit down, but when our energy's high it's really tough to beat us." — AFP



New Zealand's captain Mitchell Santner plays a shot during the ICC Champions Trophy. — AFP

India face New Zealand in Champion Trophy finals

INDIA play New Zealand in the Champions Trophy final in Dubai on Sunday in what could be a last hurrah for veteran stars Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma.

The 36-year-old Kohli and skipper Rohit, 37, came into the 50-over tournament with speculation swirling over when they will retire following lean patches in Test cricket.

Mainstays of a formidable India side for more than 15 years, the duo retired from T20 internationals after winning the World Cup last year.

This weekend could be the end for them in ODIs, with the next 50-over World Cup not until 2027.

India go into the final at Dubai International Cricket Stadium as favourites and with their confidence sky-high.

They have won all four of their matches at the eight-nation tournament, including beating New Zealand by 44 runs in the group phase, although both teams had already reached the semifinals by then.

Rohit's side have played all their games in Dubai after refusing to visit Champions Trophy hosts Pakistan because of political tensions.

India won all four of their matches at the eight-nation tournament, including beating New Zealand by 44 runs in the group phase, although both teams had already reached the semifinals by then.



India's Virat Kohli in action. — Reuters

Rohit and Kohli came into the competition under pressure. Master batsman Kohli silenced his critics with an unbeaten 100 against arch-rivals Pakistan, then hit a match-winning 84 against world champions Australia in the semifinals.

India, who are looking to win the Champions Trophy for a record third time, also boast a world-class spin attack.

They unleashed four spinners in beating New Zealand with Varun Chakravarthy returning figures of 5-42 to help bowl out the Black Caps for 205 in their chase of 250.

HENRY INJURY DOUBT

In front of them lies a New Zealand team hoping to win the tournament for the second time, having done so in 2000 in what was the second edition of a competition likened to a mini World Cup.

The Black Caps powered into the final by beating South Africa by 50 runs in Lahore.

But the victory came at a price with an injury to pace bowler Matt Henry after he landed on his shoulder awkwardly while taking a catch.

Henry, who took 5-42 against India in the group phase, is in a race to be fit for Sunday.— AFP

Omani athletes ready for Turin Special Olympics World Winter Games

MUSCAT: Omani athletes are gearing up to compete in the 12th Special Olympics World Winter Games 2025, which began in Turin, Italy, from March 7 to 16.

This prestigious event will see over 1,500 athletes with intellectual disabilities from 102 countries competing in eight winter sports, including alpine skiing, cross-country skiing, dance, figure skating, snowshoeing and short-track speed skating.

Oman is sending a strong contingent, comprising six athletes with intellectual disabilities and Down syndrome, along with six coaches, three administrators and a doctor. The delegation will compete in snowshoeing, cross-country skiing and short-track speed skating.

THE OMAN'S TEAMS FOR TURIN 2025 ARE:

Snowshoeing: Salem al Ghafri and Amira al Raisi (Coaches: Khamis al Muqbali and Dalal Ambusaidi)

Cross-Country Skiing: Al Baraa



Omani athletes seen before departure to Turin to compete in the 12th Special Olympics World Winter Games 2025

al Battashi and Nabaa al Harthy (Coaches: Kamil al Lawati and Nima al Hashemi)

Short Track Speed Skating: Hossam al Amri and Retaj al Salami (Coaches: Safwan al Balushi and Maryam al Dhamri)

The Oman Special Olympics has been meticulously preparing its athletes through skill assessments, intensive training sessions and

international coaching programmes.

Chairman Mohammed bin Salem al Rashdi highlighted that the selection process involved specialised skill tests in winter sports, conducted by experienced coaches.

As part of their preparation, Omani coaches participated in an external training course in Egypt in November 2024, aimed

at enhancing their expertise in snowshoeing and cross-country skiing.

Omani athletes trained at Majid Al Futtaim (MAF) Snow Centres across Oman and the UAE, joining teams from the UAE and Egypt in their preparations. A significant boost to the programme came with the launch of the Special Olympics UAE Snow Sport Team Development

Strategy in October 2023, which outlined a four-stage roadmap (Outsourcing, Recognition, Team Formation and Continuity) to ensure long-term sustainability.

This initiative led to a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Majid Al Futtaim and Special Olympics UAE in January 2024 during the FIS World Snow Day celebrations.

Inspired by the UAE's success, similar training programmes were adopted across MAF Snow Centres in Oman and Egypt, resulting in the formation of nine snow sport teams and one ice sport team.

Oman has a history of strong performances in the Special Olympics World Winter Games: They won 4 Gold, 3 Silver, 3 Bronze in South Korea in 2013 and 1 Gold, 2 Silver, 1 Bronze in Austria in 2017. Omani athletes are ready to make their mark on the world stage, showcasing their skill, resilience and the spirit of inclusion in winter sports in Turin.

SPORTS

SHORTTAKES



Nottingham Forest’s Callum Hudson-Odoi celebrates scoring their first goal. — Reuters

Callum Hudson-Odoi shines as Nottingham blank Man City

NOTTINGHAM: Nottingham Forest dealt a major blow to Manchester City’s bid to qualify for the Champions League as Callum Hudson-Odoi’s late winner sealed a 1-0 victory in the top four shoot-out on Saturday.

City have been reduced to battling for a place in next season’s Champions League after a dismal campaign.

Even that usually routine target is far from assured for Guardiola’s men following their ninth league defeat this term.

With six titles in the past seven seasons, City have rarely had to worry about their place in the Premier League’s top four in the Pep Guardiola era. Yet they left the City Ground looking anxiously over their shoulders after a first league loss to Forest since 1997.

Fifth-placed Chelsea, just one point adrift of City, will go above the champions if they beat lowly Leicester on Sunday.

Finishing fifth could still be enough for City to reach Europe’s elite club competition depend on the results of the English clubs who remain in continental competitions this term.

For City to achieve that modest goal, they will have to significantly improve on the latest limp display in a turbulent season.

Third-placed Forest are four points clear of City thanks to only their third win in their last eight league games.

Enjoying a fairytale season just a year after battling relegation, the former European champions are closing on a berth in the Champions League for the first time since 1980-81.

After Forest’s former defender Stuart Pearce was rushed to hospital having been taken ill on a flight this week, his old club displayed a big screen message reading ‘Get Well Soon Stuart’, after three minutes of the Premier League game, recognising Pearce’s old shirt number three.

City Ground erupts

Forest were able to draw on the ultra-aggressive Pearce’s trademark fire and brimstone in a stirring finale that followed a tepid first half.

Nico Gonzalez fired just wide from 25 yards as City tried in vain to seize the initiative in a nervous start from both teams.

The unseasonably sunny weather by the banks of the River Trent gave a soporific feel to what should have been a high-tempo clash with so much at stake.

City went close when Josko Gvardiol picked out Phil Foden, whose goal-bound shot was blocked by Nicolas Dominguez, before Bernardo Silva wastefully fired over with Erling Haaland unmarked and waiting for a pass that never came.

Jeremy Doku’s strike forced Forest keeper Matz Sels into action for the first time.

But a woeiful effort from Forest midfielder Morgan Gibbs-White finished closer to the corner flag than the goal, an ugly misfire in keeping with the scrappy fare.

Anthony Elanga crossed to the far post where Dominguez’s volley finally forced Ederson to make a save soon after the interval. — AFP



Alexander Zverev

2ND ROUND OF INDIAN WELLS WITNESSES UNEXPECTED RESULTS

Tallon Griekspoor



Casper Ruud



Daniil Medvedev



Holger Rune

TALLON

GRIEKSPoor upset top seed Alexander Zverev 4-6 7-6(5) 7-6(4) in a marathon second round clash at Indian Wells on Friday.

The Dutchman collapsed on the court after converting his sixth match point to end an absorbing three hour, seven minute affair under sunny skies on Stadium One court.

“I’m incredibly proud. It was such a mental battle to beat him,” Griekspoor said after claiming the win over the German, who had dominated their head-to-head matchups coming into the contest.

“I beat him once but then lost the next six times so it was such a mental thing. Happy to finally get it out of the way.”

Zverev served for the match in the second set but was unable to get over the line and Griekspoor edged him in the second set tiebreaker to force a decider.

Griekspoor failed to convert five match points with the match on his racket at 6-5 in the third but regrouped to take the deciding tiebreak.

It was Griekspoor’s first win over a top five opponent in 19 attempts.

“Finally,” Griekspoor wrote with a smiley face on the TV camera lens after the hard-fought victory.

Griekspoor will face big-serving Frenchman Giovanni Mpetshi Perricard in the third round.

Zverev has struggled with his form and is 4-4 since losing to world number one Jannik Sinner in the Australian Open final in January.

“I’m just not playing good tennis at the moment. It’s as simple as that,” he told reporters.

“I’m not playing a level that I want to play, definitely not playing anywhere near what I played in Australia.

“I’m just disappointed with my game.”

The world number two said he would need to go back to the drawing board.

“Right now it’s not clicking. I have to find a way to make that happen.”

RUUD UPSET

Fourth seed Casper Ruud fell to American Marcos Giron 7-6(4) 3-6 6-2 in the other big upset of the day.

Giron was ecstatic after shocking the Norwegian, leaping into the air and shouting as the crowd erupted after he reached the third round of the tournament for a second time.

“That was an amazing win. It will be one I look back on with amazing memories,” Giron said. “To do it here at my favourite tournament is special. It was the tournament I came to when I was younger and it was an amazing atmosphere.

Popular 10th seed Tommy Paul eased past fellow American Tristan Boyer 6-3 6-1 in front of a packed stands on court three and will face Britain’s Cameron Norrie, who defeated 23rd seed Jiri Lehecka 3-6 6-4 7-5.

Eighth seed Stefanos Tsitsipas failed to convert his first match point while his opponent was down on the court but ultimately prevailed 6-2 6-4 over Thiago Seyboth Wild.

Dane Holger Rune, seeded 12th, will face 18th seeded Frenchman Ugo Humbert in the third round after they both enjoyed straight-sets victories on Friday.

Russia’s Daniil Medvedev, the finalist in Indian Wells the last two years, made quick work of China’s Yunchaokete Bu with a straight sets win. — Reuters

BUSINESS

Terms And Condition Applies



Enjoy priority for transactions

With AI Rifaa Privilege Account

Visit your nearest branch today



البنك الدولي
BANK DHOFAR

الأعمال المصرفية الحصرية
PRIVILEGE BANKING

2479 1111

www.bankdhofar.com



bankdhofar

Scan to learn more





NEWRECORD



The growth in reserves highlights global confidence in Oman's economy.

OMAN'S FOREIGN RESERVES CROSS RO 7 BILLION MARK

MUSCAT: The Central Bank of Oman's (CBO) foreign assets surpassed RO 7 billion by the end of December 2024, reflecting a 4.9% increase from RO 6.734 billion recorded a year earlier.

The growth in reserves highlights global confidence in Oman's economy, which expanded by 2.7%, with GDP at current prices reaching RO 30.6 billion by Q3 2024.

CBO's foreign assets include RO 2.865 billion in foreign currency deposits, RO 3.510 billion in securities and RO 458.7 million in the reserve account with the International Monetary Fund.

Gold holdings also saw a remarkable surge, increasing over 200% from RO 77.3 million to RO 234 million.

Meanwhile, foreign assets in commercial banks grew by 9.2% to RO 4.578 billion, up from RO 3.995 billion in December 2023, signalling the sector's resilience and ability to navigate global financial fluctuations.

The banking sector's total assets stood at RO 7.429 billion, a 4.7% increase from the previous year. Net profits of listed banks on the Muscat Stock Exchange rose by 15.2% to RO 522.6 million in 2024, compared to RO 453.5 million in 2023.

The positive trend is expected to support economic growth and private sector expansion. — ONA

Oman strengthens standards & quality sector

OMAN has made significant strides in the specifications and standards sector, driven by strategic initiatives aimed at enhancing product quality, improving competitiveness and supporting the national economy.

The Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Investment Promotion has outlined a comprehensive vision to further develop this sector, aligning with the country's broader economic diversification efforts under Oman Vision 2040.

Imad bin Khamis al Shukailli, Director-General of Specifications and Standards at the Ministry, highlighted that the coming years will witness the implementation of several key initiatives, including the launch of the national standardisation and quality strategy for the period 2026–2030.

This strategy aims to strengthen regulatory frameworks, introduce new quality standards and expand the scope of conformity certification services.

One of the most significant advancements in the sector has been the exponential growth in revenues, surging from RO 56.9 million in 2022 to RO 362.9 million in 2024, marking an impressive 537% increase. This remarkable expansion has been attributed to a series of policy reforms, enhanced legislation and digital transformation initiatives.

The introduction of the “Hazm” platform has played

One of the most significant advancements has been the exponential growth in revenues, surging from RO 56.9 million in 2022 to RO 362.9 million in 2024.

a crucial role in streamlining certification processes, facilitating electronic standardisation services and expediting product compliance procedures.

Additionally, the Ministry has focused on strengthening the sector's infrastructure by adopting international best practices in standard specifications and expanding the network of authorised conformity assessment bodies.

The drive for higher quality standards has extended across various industries, with new specifications being introduced for essential products such as water meters, smart bricks and precast ceilings.

The Ministry has also intensified efforts to implement quality management systems, ensuring that locally manufactured and imported

products meet strict regulatory requirements.

As part of a broader market surveillance plan for 2025, authorities will conduct extensive inspections to monitor compliance and prevent the circulation of substandard goods.

The precious metals sector has also witnessed substantial growth, with revenues amounting to approximately RO 203.7 million between 2020 and 2024. This reflects increased consumer confidence in certified gold, silver and platinum products, supported by rigorous quality control measures and a robust licensing framework.

The Ministry has introduced a set of electronic services to enhance efficiency, including an automated system for issuing conformity certificates

through the “Oman Business” platform. In 2024 alone, a total of 13,526 permits were issued, significantly reducing bureaucratic delays and improving ease of doing business.

Oman's focus on standardisation is not only aimed at improving local market conditions, but also at enhancing the country's export potential.

By ensuring that Omani products adhere to global quality benchmarks, businesses can gain greater access to international markets, strengthening trade relations and attracting foreign investment.

The government's commitment to reducing import dependency has also been evident, as sustainable industrial strategies have led to a sharp decline in the number of product release permits — from 6.3 million in 2020 to just 22,005 in 2024.

This shift underscores the growing capability of domestic industries to meet market demands while maintaining high standards of production.

Oman plans to expand its electronic standardisation services further, integrating artificial intelligence and automation to enhance efficiency and accuracy in regulatory compliance.

The Ministry is also exploring new partnerships with international standardisation bodies to facilitate knowledge exchange and ensure that Omani regulations remain aligned with evolving global trends. — ONA

Automatic ship identification mandatory in Oman's waters

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, MARCH 8

OMAN'S authorities have made it mandatory for all ships – commercial as well as wooden dhows – to keep their Automatic Identification Systems (AIS) in operational mode when traversing the Sultanate of Oman's territorial waters.

The measure is set out in a new Maritime Circular issued by the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology. Signed by Muhanna bin Musa bin Baqer, Director-General of Ports and Acting DG of Maritime Affairs, the circular requires all ships to have their AIS devices in “continuous operation when the vessel is in or passing through Omani territorial waters”.

Similar to transponders on aircraft, Automatic Identification Systems (AIS) are designed

The measure is designed to ensure the safety of maritime navigation along Oman's shores.

to automatically transmit the position, identification and other information about the ship to other ships and to coastal authorities.

International Maritime Organization (IMO) regulations

require the device to be fitted aboard all ships of 300 gross tonnage and upwards engaged on international voyages, cargo ships of 500 gross tonnage and upwards not engaged on international voyages, and all passenger ships

irrespective of size.

In issuing the circular, the Ministry noted that it is exercising its prerogative as a coastal state under IMO conventions and treaties to “implement precautionary measures to ensure the safety of maritime navigation along its shores”. Vessels that fail to comply are liable to “legal consequences”, it warned.

AIS tracking monitors a vessel's location and movements using its onboard GPS or an internal sensor within the AIS unit.

This data, including the ship's identity, is transmitted via the very high frequency (VHF) maritime band.

The transmitted information serves three key recipients, each with distinct purposes: nearby ships use it to prevent collisions, shore stations such as ports rely on it for logistics planning, and satellite stations distribute the

data globally for stakeholders.

Since their global rollout, starting in the 1990s, AIS have helped enhance visibility of the real-time movement of ships as they sail from one destination to the next.

As a result of this ability to monitor ships and their routes, international maritime bodies and shippers have been able to make informed decisions on efficient and cost-effective shipping routes.

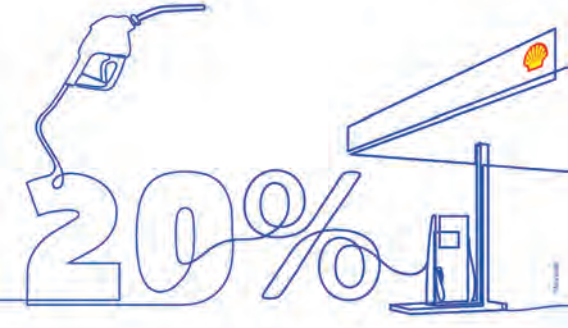
These measures have also helped strengthen the monitoring of shipping compliance with maritime navigation and environmental safety standards.

Of late, AIS-based monitoring has proved useful in detecting ships going “dark” by switching off, or disabling, their transponders when engaging in illicit maritime activities, skirting international sanctions regimes, or simply masking their identity.

ADVERTORIALS

ENHACINGEXPERIENCE

Fuel up and get Cashback using your Credit Card



The campaign aims to enhance customer benefits and drive increased card usage.

NBO AND SHELL OMAN REIGNITE 20% CASHBACK OFFER ON FUEL PURCHASES

MUSCAT: The National Bank of Oman (NBO), in collaboration with Shell Oman Marketing Company (Shell Oman), is launching an exclusive cashback campaign for its retail Visa Credit Cardholders, offering 20% cashback in the form of Rewards Points on their first fuel purchase at Shell service stations across Oman.

Running from March 1 to 31, 2025, the campaign aims to enhance customer benefits and drive increased card usage.

As part of the offer, the first 3,000 customers to make a fuel purchase at Shell service stations using their NBO Retail Visa Credit Card will qualify for the cashback, capped at RO 3 per customer.

The rewards will be credited within 30 days from the end of the campaign, ensuring a seamless and rewarding experience for cardholders.

Maha bint Saud al Raisiyah, Assistant General Manager and Head of Products at NBO, commented, “At NBO, we design our campaigns with one key goal: to enrich our customers’ banking experience.

This initiative allows our cardholders to enjoy tangible rewards on their essential purchases while reinforcing the convenience and value of banking with us.

Whether they are fuelling up for their daily commute or a weekend getaway, this campaign ensures that every journey starts with added benefits.”

Suresh Nair, General Manager, Mobility at Shell Oman, added, “At Shell Oman, we are committed to elevating our customer’s experience through value adding offers at our service stations.

This is evident through this collaboration with NBO which allows us to bring greater value with every visit to our service stations. This campaign not only enhances the fuelling experience but also demonstrates our ongoing dedication to delivering exceptional benefits to our customers in Oman.”

The offer applies exclusively to POS transactions made at Shell service stations across Oman and is available to both NBO customers and staff. It does not apply to cancelled or reversed transactions.

This initiative aligns with NBO’s commitment to delivering innovative banking solutions and enhancing customer experiences through rewarding financial benefits.

KR SHIPPING SUCCESSFULLY MANAGES COSTA SMERALDA’S MAIDEN SEASON

MUSCAT: Khimji Ramdas Shipping LLC (KR Shipping), an integrated shipping and multimodal logistics service provider in Oman, successfully facilitated the maiden season of Costa Smeralda in the Sultanate of Oman, reinforcing its role as a key player in the region’s cruise industry.

The vessel, a flagship of the Costa fleet, made its first visit to Oman on December 19, 2024, after circumnavigating Africa from the Mediterranean before commencing its scheduled operations in the Arabian Gulf.

Throughout the season, Costa Smeralda operated one-week round-trip cruises from Dubai, with scheduled stops in Muscat (Oman), Doha (Qatar), and Abu Dhabi (UAE). On March 3, 2025, the vessel departed from Muscat, embarking on a 37-day voyage back to the Mediterranean. En-route to its



final destination in Genoa, Italy, scheduled for April 7, 2025, the ship will make calls in Mauritius, South Africa, Namibia, the Canary Islands, Morocco, Spain, and France (Corsica).

KR Shipping played an instrumental role in managing the ship’s operations, ensuring efficient port services and smooth logistical support for each

call at Port Sultan Qaboos in Muscat.

Malvika Khimji, Director of Khimji Ramdas, remarked: “The successful conclusion of Costa Smeralda’s maiden season in Oman reinforces the Sultanate’s growing appeal as a global cruise tourism destination. As Oman’s cruise industry continues to expand, Khimji Ramdas Shipping remains committed to contributing to its diversification.

Our well-trained national staff managed Costa Smeralda’s port call, ensuring a seamless experience for the passengers aboard. We are honed to have handled the port operations for this prestigious vessel during its scheduled calls to Muscat.”

Costa Smeralda is the largest ship ever commissioned by Costa Crociere and is a true celebration of Italian design, culture, and craftsmanship.

Get everything that you wish for with Kia Sonet

THE Kia Sonet – a smart urban compact SUV – is built for young, socially connected and tech savvy consumers who admire the finer things in life.

In this blessed month of Ramadhan, Kia takes the burden off your pockets by covering the VAT. Get more and experience great savings when you become a Kia customer and Kia pays VAT for you.

Moreover, get free service plans up to 10 years/100,000 km, 1-year registration and insurance. Plus, you can also win a Kia EV6 Crossover in the Grand Raffle Draw. Terms & Conditions apply.

In keeping with Kia’s trendy, bold, and youthful brand persona, the Sonet’s driving experience has been designed to provide a pleasurable yet sporty journey for all passenger. Kia gives you every reason to drive the smart urban compact SUV.

Built on Kia’s versatile Smart stream powertrain, the Sonet features a 1.5-litre four-cylinder engine, producing 114 hp at 6,300 rpm, paired with an IVT



Get more and experience great savings when you become a Kia customer and Kia pays VAT for you.

transmission.

The Sonet is also equipped with Kia’s revolutionary Intelligent Variable Transmission (IVT) that makes every ride a breeze. The drivetrain system offers a fuel efficiency of 17.5 km/l as per GSMO standards, allowing you to experience an SUV without breaking the bank.

Customer safety is a top priority for Kia, with an array of safety measures including an anti-lock braking system with an Electronic Stability Program, Brake Assist

System, rear parking sensors, fog lamps, LED headlamps, and ISOFIX child-seat anchoring points, to name a few.

Keeping the comfort of the driver and passengers in mind, the Sonet’s interior offers a modern, dynamic, and bold design with a lengthy 2,500 mm wheelbase. It intelligently incorporates convenience, with plenty of legroom, headroom, and shoulder room for all passengers, alongside a 392-litre luggage capacity the Sonet provides ample space to

OWN YOUR DREAM CAR THIS RAMADHAN WITH NATIONAL FINANCE’S INSTANT AUTO FINANCING

MUSCAT: Committed to delivering exceptional value to its diverse clientele, National Finance, the Sultanate of Oman’s leading finance company, has introduced an exclusive Ramadhan Auto Finance offering designed to enable customers to acquire their dream vehicles during Ramadhan, with the added benefit of commencing repayments after Eid Al Fitr.

This compelling offer boasts instant approvals within just 60 minutes, competitive interest rates, a two-month deferment on instalment payments, and extended repayment tenures of up to 12 years.

Applicable on the purchase of



both new and used cars, National Finance’s Ramadhan Auto Finance offering underscores the company’s dedication to delivering fast, seamless and flexible financing solutions.

This enables customers to efficiently handle their financial obligations while securing their dream vehicle immediately.

load your essentials for both leisure and everyday life activities.

Integrated dashboard with 4.2” Cluster + 8-inch audio touchscreen with Android Auto and Apple Car Play with steering audio controls, a sunroof, a rearview camera that makes parking in tight spaces easy, and a remote engine starter as part of its advanced technologies. Additionally, the rear view mirror provides important information to the driver in vivid color and clarity.

Take a closer look at Kia’s dynamic product lineup available at your nearest dealership. Hurry and grab the best benefits in town before the offer ends on 23rd April 2025.

Reliable International Automotive LLC (RIA), the official distributor for Kia in Oman, offers a rewarding ownership experience.

Ranked #1 by Kia in 2024 for Sales Customer Satisfaction in the Middle East and Africa, RIA provides excellent products and unmatched facilities to ensure customers’ absolute satisfaction every mile.

Tariq bin Sulaiman al Farsi, Chief Executive Officer at National Finance, said, “At National Finance, we are dedicated to maximising the value we provide to our customers through offerings that include exceptional benefits.

We aim to support our customers in enhancing their lifestyles while ensuring they can manage monthly payments with ease. Whether they are looking to upgrade to a more luxurious vehicle, or purchasing a new car for the first time, National Finance’s Ramadhan Auto Finance solution guarantees a smooth, affordable and convenient path to ownership.”

Sohar Islamic recognised as ‘Most Innovative Islamic Bank in Oman’

MUSCAT: Sohar Islamic, the Islamic banking window of Sohar International, has been recognised as the ‘Most Innovative Islamic Bank in Oman’ by Malaysia-based Islamic Finance News at its awards ceremony held in Dubai, UAE. This accolade underscores the bank’s unwavering commitment to driving innovation in Sharia-compliant financial solutions, further reinforcing its leadership in the evolving landscape of Islamic banking.

The award is a testament to Sohar Islamic’s excellence in digital transformation, product innovation and customer-centric services, setting new benchmarks in the industry.

Representing Sohar Islamic at the event were Fahad bin Akbar al Zadjali, Head of Islamic Banking, and Dr Al Muatasim



The award is a testament to Sohar Islamic’s excellence in digital transformation, product innovation and customer-centric services.

al Mutairi, Vice-President and Head of Investment Islamic Banking.

Fahad bin Akbar al Zadjali stated: “Innovation is integral to the evolution of Sharia-compliant banking, ensuring that we meet the dynamic financial needs of a diverse clientele. At Sohar Islamic, we continuously push the boundaries by integrating advanced financial technologies with Sharia-based principles, offering solutions that are both ethically grounded and future-ready. By embracing digital transformation and maintaining a customer-centric approach, we deliver sophisticated and adaptable financial products that align with modern financial aspirations while upholding Islamic values.”

Sohar Islamic’s recognition is built upon

its ability to integrate cutting-edge fintech solutions, such as AI-driven financial tools and seamless digital banking platforms, ensuring a modern yet fully Sharia-compliant banking experience.

The bank has consistently pioneered unique Islamic financial products, including structured Islamic investments, that cater to the evolving needs of retail, corporate and wholesale banking clients.

With a strong focus on market leadership, Sohar Islamic continues to expand its offerings, support national economic growth through Sharia-compliant financing, and actively contribute to financial inclusion, ensuring that more individuals and businesses benefit from ethical and innovative Islamic banking solutions.

BUSINESS

MARKETPOTENTIAL



This year, a key focus was placed on integrated tourism services and innovative travel experiences tailored to international markets.

OMAN WRAPS UP ITB BERLIN 2025 WITH KEY TOURISM DEALS

BERLIN: The Sultanate of Oman successfully concluded its participation in ITB Berlin 2025, securing several agreements and launching new tourism partnerships aimed at boosting international visitor flow.

The Omani pavilion attracted strong interest, showcasing the country's rich cultural heritage, diverse tourism offerings and emerging investment opportunities. This year, a key focus was placed on integrated tourism services and innovative travel experiences tailored to international markets.

Officials and private sector representatives engaged in bilateral meetings with global tourism companies to establish joint programmes and incentives designed to position Oman as a premier travel destination. These discussions aimed at enhancing Oman's appeal to a broader range of international tourists and strengthening its tourism sector.

Saada bint Abdullah al Harthiyah, Director of Market Development at the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, emphasised the importance of Oman's participation in international travel fairs like ITB Berlin. She highlighted that such events help reinforce Oman's global tourism presence, foster collaborations, and create business opportunities for local operators, including SMEs.

A key initiative discussed was the role of Oman's tourism representation office in Germany, which is set to intensify promotional campaigns tailored to German travellers. Adventure tourism, leisure, and cultural discovery were identified as high-potential segments.

The ministry plans to strengthen Oman's global presence by expanding its network of tourism offices to key markets, including China, Russia, Spain, Latin America and Southeast Asia. It also aims to partner with over 80 international tourism firms and launch more than 50 media campaigns with top-tier global outlets.

In addition, Oman is set to collaborate with international airlines and Gulf carriers on joint promotional efforts and will host over 100 familiarisation trips for travel industry professionals and media representatives. These initiatives align with the "Oman 2040" vision, which prioritises tourism as a key economic driver. — ONA



OMAN'S BANKING SECTOR EXTENDS RO 32.5 BILLION IN CREDIT

MUSCAT: Oman's banking sector, comprising conventional and Islamic banks, increased total credit issuance by 6.7% in 2024, reaching RO 32.5 billion by year-end, according to the Central Bank of Oman (CBO).

Credit to the private sector grew by 5.9%, totaling RO 27.1 billion. The non-financial corporate sector accounted for the largest share (45.6%), followed closely by individual borrowers (44.8%). Financial institutions and other



Credit to the private sector grew by 5.9%, totaling RO 27.1 billion.

sectors held smaller portions at 5.6% and 3.9%, respectively.

Meanwhile, total banking sector deposits rose by 9.1% to RO 31.7 billion.

Private sector deposits climbed 8.5% to RO 20.8 billion, with individuals making up the largest share at 49.9%, followed by non-financial corporations (30.7%) and financial companies (16.7%).

The steady rise in credit and deposits reflects the sector's robust growth, positioning it as a key driver of economic activity in Oman. — ONA

Omani-Malaysian JV wins drug rehab PPP project

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, MARCH 8

AL Salwa Care and Health Services LLC, a joint venture between Omani investor Neem Projects and Malaysian addiction treatment services operator Solace Asia, has been awarded the Omani government's mandate to develop and operate a major drug rehabilitation centre in Suhar on a Public Private Partnership (PPP) basis.

An agreement for the Al Taafi Suhar Centre for Drug Treatment and Rehabilitation was signed in Muscat recently with representatives from the Omani-Malaysian JV, as well as high-level officials from the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Health, and the Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit.

UK-based Concept Realisation, a specialist advisory practice retained as the Lead Transaction Adviser on the PPP deal, hailed the award as the "first social sector PPP transaction to be signed in the Sultanate of Oman", as well as the "first PPP deal globally for drug treatment and rehabilitation".

Significantly, the signing caps a multi-year effort by the Ministry of Finance, which oversees the procurement of all PPP projects on behalf of the government, to deliver this landmark project in partnership with private players.

The Al Taafi Suhar Centre is envisioned as a modern de-addiction and rehabilitation facility designed to enable users of narcotics and psychotropic substances to reintegrate back into the society.

The longer term hope is for the facility to evolve into a Centre of



This is a landmark transaction, as it is an integrated healthcare PPP i.e. includes clinical services, one of the first in the region. It includes detoxification and rehabilitation, offering inpatient, outpatient and aftercare services. It is structured around service delivery with availability measures and key performance indicators that can attract deductions.

CONCEPT REALISATION



Officials representing the stakeholders at the agreement signing.

Excellence for drug rehab services in Oman. Under the long-term PPP arrangement with the government, the new JV will oversee the Design, Build, Finance, Operation and Maintenance (DBFOM) of the facility.

Announcing the signing of the agreement, Concept Realisation said: "This is a landmark transaction, as it is an integrated healthcare PPP i.e. includes clinical services, one of the first in the region. It includes detoxification and rehabilitation, offering inpatient, outpatient and aftercare services. It is structured around service delivery with availability measures and key performance indicators that can attract deductions."

The advisory firm further added in a post: "This PPP transaction sets many new precedents for achieving the United Nations SDGs, specifically SDG3: Ensure healthy lives and promoting well-being for all at all ages, and SDG17: Partnerships for the goals."

Solace Asia, the international partner in the JV, is recognised as one of Asia's leading addiction services providers accredited by regulators in Malaysia and internationally as well.

Kuala Lumpur-headquartered Solace Asia operates a network of fully equipped scientific treatment and research centres designed to treat various substance and behavioural addictions.

Concept Realisation, as the Lead Transaction Adviser, was responsible for the financial, clinical, technical, commercial, legal and procurement aspects of the transaction.

"Concept Realisation developed the PPP structuring, the business case and fiscal obligations, public sector comparator, bid documents. We prepared the bid evaluation report, the Partnership Contract and managed the procurement process for the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Finance through to contract signing," the firm added.

Oman showcases urban vision at MIPIM 2025

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman is set to participate in MIPIM 2025, one of the world's premier urban development forums, held in Cannes from March 11-14.

This year's event, themed "Shaping Sustainable Cities," will bring together 20,000 participants from 90 countries, including investors, developers and policymakers.

Oman's pavilion will highlight major real estate and urban development projects, including Sultan Haitham City, Al Khuwair Downtown, Salalah Future City, Oman Mountain Front, and Thuraya City. These projects align with the country's commitment to creating smart, sustainable and investment-friendly urban spaces.

Jamal bin Nasser al Hadi, spokesperson for the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning, emphasised that Oman's participation is geared toward attracting global investors, showcasing



Oman's pavilion will highlight major real estate and urban development projects.

large-scale developments, and positioning Oman as a leading real estate destination.

The country is actively integrating advanced urban planning and smart city technologies to enhance the competitiveness of its property sector.

A key highlight of Oman's presence at MIPIM 2025 will be a session by Dr Khalfan

bin Said al Shueili, Minister of Housing and Urban Planning, discussing how long-term demographic shifts influence urban sustainability, with comparisons between Europe and emerging markets. Oman's delegation will also host nine specialised discussions, focusing on future real estate trends, investment incentives, and smart city

infrastructure.

Adding to its prominence, the Sultan Haitham City project has been shortlisted among the top four finalists for the prestigious MIPIM 2025 Awards, which recognise excellence in urban innovation and sustainability. The winners will be announced at a ceremony attended by global real estate leaders. — ONA

Can Oman successfully transition to a renewables economy?



QASIM AL
MAASHANI

The writer is the head
of Oman Observer's
Business section

OMAN'S economy is currently heavily reliant on oil and gas, which form the backbone of its revenue and exports. Hydrocarbon revenues account for approximately 70% of budget income, while the sector contributes around 30% to GDP. However, excessive dependence on oil is not a sustainable long-term strategy due to the finite nature of reserves and the global shift away from fossil fuels. Oman's proven reserves stand at approximately 5.2 billion barrels of oil and 24 trillion cubic feet of natural gas, which—at current production rates—could last only a few more decades. Consequently, the country is focusing on boosting non-oil sectors, particularly mining. Mining has been identified as a key pillar for economic diversification in Oman's current Five-Year Plan and Vision 2040. The country is rich in diverse mineral resources, including metallic ores such as copper, chromite, iron ore, and manganese, as well as non-metallic minerals like marble, limestone, gypsum, silica, and dolomite. Some of these minerals have gained global significance—Oman is now the world's largest exporter of gypsum, thanks to its high purity and abundant reserves. Additionally, the country has a long history of copper mining, particularly in Sohar, which is now experiencing a revival. In December 2024, Oman's state-owned

Minerals Development Oman (MDO) joined a growing list of mining firms that have begun exporting concentrated copper ore, marking Oman's reentry into global copper exports. MDO's first shipment in 30 year comprised around 900 tonnes of concentrators mined from the Lasail mine in Suhar. The development of other copper mines, such as Al Bidaya and Al Ghuzayn, is also underway to enhance production in the coming years. The mining sector has undergone significant restructuring to maximize its potential. In 2020, the Public Authority for Mining was merged with the Ministry of Energy, forming the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, reflecting the strategic integration between traditional energy resources and mineral wealth. The ministry has been modernizing geological surveys and mapping, while also launching initiatives like the "Mining Lab" in 2018 to accelerate investment by identifying viable projects. These efforts have led to numerous mining sites being opened for private and foreign investment. PROMISING RESOURCES To date, Oman has signed 16 mineral exploration and exploitation agreements, including: 12 metallic mineral concessions granted to MDO for development; An agreement with British company Knights Bay for laterite ore exploration; and Three agreements with Omani companies, such as Mawarid Mining and Tasnim, for potash and

The country is rich in diverse mineral resources, including metallic ores such as copper, chromite, iron ore and manganese, as well as non-metallic minerals like marble, limestone, gypsum, silica and dolomite.

lithium extraction. This strategic approach—fostering partnerships between state-owned, private, and international firms—aims to accelerate mining projects while ensuring knowledge transfer and workforce development. Authorities expect these initiatives to triple the mining sector's GDP contribution by 2023, reaching approximately RO 378 million, while creating at least 1,600 direct jobs for Omanis. In the longer term, mining is expected to play an even greater role in the economy, particularly with the expansion of copper mining and potential commercial production of strategic minerals like potash (for fertilizer production) and lithium (for battery manufacturing). While mining revenues may not match oil earnings in the near term, they will provide a complementary economic pillar, ensuring income diversification and long-term sustainability even after oil reserves are depleted. Both mining and renewable energy are expected to serve as sustainable and diversified economic alternatives for Oman. In mining, the growing global demand for minerals—especially those used in future industries—makes the sector increasingly attractive. Copper, for instance, is crucial for clean energy technologies, including electric vehicles and power grids, meaning Oman's increased copper production has a secure export market.

EUROPEAN AIRLINE TAILWINDS CLOUD M&A GLIDE PATH

BY OLIVER TASLIC

EUROPE'S flag carrier scene is becoming less of a one-horse race. Deutsche Lufthansa and Air France-KLM shares leapt on Thursday after strong finishes to the year, closing the gap with bigger \$20 billion rival IAG. Eventually, Europe's market could slim down to a small group including these players. But the stronger German and Franco-Dutch showing suggests British Airways owner IAG won't have things all its own way. Lufthansa and Air France-KLM's improved fortunes represent a reversal of most of 2024. Last year's headwinds included the Olympic Games, which reduced the number of tourists holidaying in Air France's crucial Paris hub, as well as strikes and aircraft delivery delays at Lufthansa. The German carrier had to fly older, less fuel-efficient planes that require more maintenance. Thursday's fourth-quarter results showed that things are improving. At Air France-KLM, operating profit came in at almost 400 million euros, more than double analysts' estimates per a company-compiled consensus, helped by higher-than-expected revenue and lower fuel costs. At Lufthansa, a stronger-than-expected performance from its passenger airlines unit, and a forecast for "significantly higher" adjusted operating profit, both lifted sentiment. Shares in Lufthansa and Air France-KLM were up 8% and 20% by mid-morning. The question is where that leaves Europe's M&A chessboard. Many industry insiders agree that the continent's independent carriers are ripe for consolidation. With good reason: the International Air Transport Association noted in November 2023 that in North America just three carriers held 50% of the region's scheduled seat capacity, whereas in Europe 10 airlines held half the market. North American airlines are generally more profitable, too. The impetus for bigger, stronger groups is likely grow more pronounced as the industry tackles a wave of upcoming climate-related expenses: one study recently upgraded the long-term cost of decarbonising European aviation by around 500 billion euros, due in part to stubbornly high prices of sustainable aviation fuel. Key among the M&A pieces is Portugal's TAP, which has strong transatlantic links to North America and Brazil, and which the government in Lisbon wants to privatise. On the face of it, the carrier, worth perhaps \$1 billion, looks a shoo-in for IAG, which has lower leverage and therefore more borrowing capacity than Air France or Lufthansa. But if Portugal decides to sell only a minority stake, that could limit IAG's ability to raise operating margins to its current high group levels, potentially putting it off. — Reuters

Reskilling and upskilling a future-ready workforce

INDUSTRY 4.0, often termed the Fourth Industrial Revolution, has profoundly deepened the shift in economies of the world by making businesses operate, manufacture and service in a distinct ways. Every single business and industry throughout the world will be transformed by automation, artificial intelligence (AI), the Internet of Things (IoT) and other developing technologies. The workforce must adapt to these changes along with technological enhancement. Oman, as part of economic diversification under Vision 2040, is realising the importance of reskilling and upskilling its workforce to remain globally competitive while meeting the requirements for sustainable development. This article will cover the need for transformation within the workforces together with the predominant challenges, strategies, and every stakeholder's role in getting Oman ready for Industry 4.0 and beyond.

IMPACT OF INDUSTRY 4.0 ON THE WORKFORCE Industry 4.0 creates a smart factory where everything is controlled by computers or IoT devices, therefore, applying automation and management intelligent systems with integration of digital technologies to traditional industrial and business practices like smart manufacturing, and decision-making powered by data. The key technological components driving this revolution are:

- Machine Learning and Artificial Intelligence (AI) which enhance automation, predictive analytics, decision-making and system management.
- IoT (Internet of Things) refers to connecting devices and systems.
- Robotics and Automation replace humans in performing tasks in the manufacturing, logistics and service sectors.



The human capital development programmes launched by Oman are aimed at increasing participation and productivity of the Oman labour force thus improving economic efficiency.



DR HILAL
AL SAWAI

A specialist in local content/In-country value, the writer is the Acting Director-General of Local Content, previously assigned to the General Secretariat of the Tender Board

- Business Intelligence, consisting of Big Data and Analytics enable real time captured data to make business decisions.
- Cybersecurity and Cloud Computing: Providing flexibility and scalability, ensuring security and data protection.
- Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR): Improving the customer service experience, as well as the training and simulation.

These shifts in technology create a great need for a workforce that possesses a high level of adaptive literacy, critical and creative thinking. Oman must aggressively put efforts towards retraining and upskilling its citizens if they wish to remain competitive on the global stage.

WHY RESKILLING AND UPSKILLING ARE KEY

- Economic diversification and Oman Vision 2040: The Oman Vision 2040 aims at changing the country from being oil based to becoming a diversified knowledge-centric economy. Key arms of the economy such as Manufacturing, Supply Chain

Management, Tourism, Mining Fishing and many others need to be integrated with the use of skilled Industry 4.0 trained personnel. The human capital development programmes launched by Oman are aimed at increasing participation and productivity of the Oman labour force thus improving economic efficiency.

- Filling the skill gaps: The advance of technology is making a number of roles redundant, accompanied by a rise in demand for technical roles such as AI, Programming, Data Analytics and Cyber Security. There is a clear skills gap that exists within the workforce of Oman which needs specific training and assistance for them to be able to meet the demand of the job market.
- Boosting employment opportunities: Oman has problems relating to youth unemployment and ensuring that educational results meet the requirements of the labour market. With the inclusion of reskilling and upskilling programmes, economy growth is achieved as well as increased employability of job-seekers and employees.

CLASSIFIEDS

ALL SEASON AYURVEDA CLINIC
The most efficient and authentic Ayurvedic Treatment & Medicine, Panchakarma, Yoga, Kalari, Massage Dhara etc.... Rehabilitation, Marma Therapy & Post Delivery Care
Zaher Building, 1st Floor, Flat 8A, Al Khuwair Service Road, Near Al Zawawi Mosque & Burger-King
Tel: 24475280, GSM: 95371664, 92504980, Website: www.siddhayur.com

Auditors & Accountants
• Audit & Accounting • CFO Services • Secondment
• VAT & Tax Return Filing • VAT Refund Assistance
Contact: 92182750 • Email: contact@umpauditors.com

Driving School
Special offers for those wishing to learn driving in (Aziba - Khwair Qurum - Ruwi Al Amirat)
Contact No: 99074072

WJ Towell Group Company

Quality car rentals at competitive prices.
Muscat 9014 6672, 9679 0684
Sohar 9731 6218 Salalah 9429 9325
www.orbit-oman.com

- Fleet of 2,000 vehicles
- Choose from a wide range of brands & models
- PDO, OXY and BP spec vehicles available
- Attractive rates for short-term & long-term lease

SIT. WANTED

Experienced in Industrial Sales & Marketing - 78501743

SALES & Marketing Expert, Indian Having D/L- 78501743

LOOKING for part time OR full time Accounts/ Finance job. 20yrs experience in Muscat. Upto finalization & Audit.
Please contact: 92065499

MECHANICAL ENGINEER (8+ yrs exp, Indian Male) Planning, MEP, QA/QC certified. Elevator & construction industry background.
Contact: 92712939, anwarmhdas@gmail.com

PEST CONTROL
Al-Basheq Grey Trad. & Cont. LLC
100% Professional & Competitive rate!!!

Anti Termite, Cockroaches, Bed Bugs, Ants, Rodent on monthly, yearly or one time service.
All We use quality products which approved by Oman Ministry
E-mail: albasheqgrey@gmail.com
Web: www.albasheqoman.com
CALL US : 9145 22 33

SIT. WANTED

ACCOUNTANT/ AUDITOR Indian Female, 3+ yrs exp. in Accounting & Auditing. Expertise in IFRS, GAAP, VAT, Financial Mgmt & Compliance.
Contact: 7841408, fzahrasr@gmail.com

Architecture & Civil Draughtsman with 15 yrs experience ,can join immediately.
Contact 97222039

HOTEL FOR RENT/SALE
PRIME LOCATION IN QURUM HEIGHTS LUXURY HOTEL

7 STORIED BUILDING WITH 44 SUITES, BREAKFAST AREA RESTAURANT & OTHER FACILITIES.

CONTACT NOS: 99643760 / 92192020

PTC Rent A Car
Travel & Tours

Daily, Weekly, Monthly Car Rental Available
9345 3444

SIT. WANTED

SEEKING a new Job / Logistics & supply chain professional with 10-plus years experienced in Export & Import of Sea, Land & Air transport modes (Email: nouchimp1986@gmail.com, Mob: 79820286)

B. COM. 35 years of experience in accounts, sales coordinator, admin, HR, personal assistant, document controller with Oman D/L, looking for a job.
Contact: 92558734

INDIAN male MBA , 20 years experience in Oman & GCC in Project sales/ Dealer market in All construction materials including Cables & Accessories having D/L looking for the post of Sales Manager/Assistant Manager.
Contact: 00968 78099493

INDIAN Male /10+ years of experience in Sea, Air & Land shipments/ Looking for Sr. Logistics operations role. Aware of Incoterms & international procedures.
MOB: 79820286
EMAIL: nouchimp1986@gmail.com

MASTER'S graduate in MSc Global logistics, operations & supply chain management from London, seeking a full-time job in Oman. Possess 2 years of sales executive experience in London and 1 year as a purchase executive in Oman. Holding a valid Oman D/L. Contact: 77231865, email: finan8157@gmail.com

ACCOUNTS/ Finance: Indian male (MBA Fin) having more than 19 years of experience in Oman accounts & finance looking for suitable placement, NOC available and can join immediately.
Contact: 92076716

ACCOUNTANT with 5 years expertise in Accounts Payable, Receivables, Financial Reporting, VAT, Payroll, and Bank & Cash Reconciliation. Actively looking for new opportunities.
Contact: 79791746
Email: Ibrahimsaw52@gmail.com

ACCOUNTANT with overs 6 years of experience Detail-Oriented Financial Professional: Expert in Accounting, Audit Prep and Expense Management.
Contact: +968 78320801, Ready to join immediately.

FINANCE Manager, CA,CPA,20 years experience (Oman& India). Financial reporting, Budgeting, Taxation, Financial modelling, Feasibility, Valuation. Available to join immediately.
92148608

INDIAN Male, Storekeeper / Document Controller 2+yrs of experience in GCC, Completed BCA, ready to join immediately. Email: swamierzhasouth@gmail.com
GSM: +968 71818173

.....
SENIOR accountant - Indian male above 11 years' experience (9years in Oman) NOC & D/L available.
Contact: 78109909.
Email: shinsjohn@gmail.com
.....
A SUDANESE resident in Salalah, BSc of administrative sciences with 21 years of experience in the fields of (sales/ management/ logistics and fleet).
Contact: +968 98510880.

.....
29 years old Indian female, MBA holder with 2 years experience. Seeking a suitable position. Currently in Muscat on visit visa.
Contact: 78641071, shazashakeel@gmail.com

INDIAN male (Mechanical Engineering) with 3 years experience in Diesel engine works (Gensets/ Engines), 2 years in Machine Maintenance, seeks job.
Contact: 78022420

INDIAN male 14 years experience light/ heavy driver. Looking for suitable opening currently in Oman.
Contact: 77050986/ 91280205, email: kokkadmou@gmail.com

SRI LANKAN Male — (CGMA ACMA+ CPA+BBA) Asst. Finance Manager/ Chief Accountant, 12+ Experience in Oman & GCC, Expert in Finan. Reporting (MIS), VAT, Audit, Cashflow, Budget, AR AP Recon, IFRS, Payroll, Banking.
Contact: 78773250.
Email: ali.mohamedown@gmail.com

INDIAN Male /CPA, CMA, CA Finalist & BCOM/ 10+ years of Experience/ Currently Working as Finance Manager, Looking for Senior Management Roles in Finance.
Contact: 78611653.
Email: jobcpacma@gmail.com

INDIAN Female, M-Tech in Environmental Engineering, B-Tech in Civil Engineering. 7 years of Teaching experience as Asst. Professor, 2 years of professional experience in civil construction and soil investigation. Seeking suitable job, now in Muscat.
Contact: 95136664, 79620397
Email: mayakrish.1804@gmail.com

PLANNING Engineer, PMP. Indian male 11 years experience in Construction Projects. Well versed with Primavera P6 Software, strong communication skills, Interpersonal skills, EDT Claims, Recovery schedules, project control. Having Omani Driving Licence.
Contact: 78002582
Email: engineer4planning@gmail.com

PEST CONTROL OMAN CO. L.L.C.

Supply of Pesticides, Gel (crocroaches), Public Health chemicals, Agriculture chemicals, Snake repellent, Rodent baits and other insect repellent from UK & USA

PROFESSIONALS in Pest Control Service, Bedbug Treatment, Rodent Treatment, Snake Treatment and Termite Treatment [Pre & Post Construction]

**Tel: 24787606, 24787503
Direct Line: 24786077
GSM: 99382355, 99172309**
pcomctom@omantel.net.om
P.O. Box 565, Al Wadi Al Kabir 117, Sultanate of Oman

SIT. VACANT

SALES executive Male. with driving License
Contact sangita@dhiyahilal.com
+968 93559800

AN Oman entrepreneur seeks a marketing expert to promote construction materials across Oman. Applicants should have key industry contacts , send CV to the project's marketing's. Operations@rshoman.com

Observer

FREE* CLASSIFIEDS
• **SITUATION WANTED**
★ **NOW FREE CLASSIFIED IN OMAN DAILY OBSERVER ON THE ABOVE CATEGORIES ONLY**
Send your advertisement (Only one per coupon & no photocopies), either by mail or in person, with your local identity.

**To advertise please contact:
Tel: 71455532/ 71455531/ 71455530
Email: adv@omaninfo.om**

Urgently Required

A reputed company in Oil & Gas sector in Oman seeking **Experienced and knowledgeable**

SENIOR SALES ENGINEER

Requirements:

- Male, Mechanical Engineer in early 30's.
- Oman driving license.
- 5 to 7 years Oman oil & Gas industry experience.
- Responsible, Self-motivated, strong leadership and excellent interpersonal skill.

E-mail your CV: hrmuscat888@gmail.com

Urgently Required

A reputed Company in Oman seeking Smart and **Qualified**

Finance & Administration Manager

Requirements:

- Male, age in the early 40's
- 10 years of Managerial experience in Oman/GCC
- Strong leadership, high integrity and good attitude
- Knowledge of Finance/IT/Admin
- Oman Driving License

The applications are to be sent to the following email address: hroman007@gmail.com

FOR RENT

IN Ruwi, 2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, hall, kitchen, with car parking. RO 150 monthly only. Tel: 94402003.

10000 sqm open yard available for rent in Jifnain. Please contact: 99853040.

To advertise in Ministry of Information channels



To advertise

71455532- 71455531- 71455530
adv@omaninfo.om
[izdiyar_info](https://www.instagram.com/izdiyar_info) [izdiyar.info](https://www.facebook.com/izdiyar.info)

ازديهار
izdiyar



Ramadhan

4

BASIC
RAMADHAN
GUIDES

FATWA

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



Does bleeding for any reason, such as using a tooth stick (siwak) or shaving, invalidate the fast?

No, the fast remains valid. Bleeding due to reasons like using a tooth stick or shaving does not break the fast. And Allah knows best.



HADITH GUIDE FOR THE FAITHFUL

Hadith: Ubayy ibn Ka`b, may Allah be pleased with him, reported the Prophet, may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him, said: "Do not curse the wind. If you see what you dislike thereof, then say: 'O Allah, we ask You for the good of this wind, the good of what it contains, and the good of what it is ordered to do. We seek refuge with You from the evil of this wind, the evil of what it contains, and the evil of what it is ordered to do.'"

QURAN VERSE OF THE DAY



"By which Allah guides those who pursue His pleasure to the ways of peace and brings them out from darkness into the light, by His permission, and guides them to a straight path."

Surat Al Ma'idah, verse 16



DUA SUPPLICATION TO ALLAH

O Allah, on this day, do not let me abase myself by incurring Your disobedience, and do not strike me with the whip of Your punishment, keep me away from the causes of Your anger, by Your kindness and Your power, O the ultimate wish of those who desire.



RAMADHAN IS THE BEST TIME TO SHOP BUT AVOID IMPULSE BUYING

BY YERU EBUE

AS THE holy month of Ramadhan approaches, the Sultanate of Oman undergoes a remarkable transformation. Streets are adorned with vibrant decorations, and the air is filled with anticipation. However, beyond the spiritual significance lies an economic phenomenon: Ramadhan is fast becoming a shopper's paradise, with discounts and promotions that attract a wide range of consumers. For many, it is the perfect time to shop — a period when the retail scene thrives, offering unparalleled deals that turn Oman into a discount haven.

Oman has a rich retail landscape, with an array of shopping malls, traditional souqs and local boutiques, each brimming with opportunities for savvy shoppers. As a local retail analyst stated, "Ramadhan creates a unique shopping culture in Oman. It's an annual ritual for many families to take advantage of the substantial discounts available during this period." Indeed, the confluence of religious observance and consumerism makes Ramadhan a distinctive time for both retailers and shoppers.

Leading brands across Oman capitalise on the month-long festivities by offering steep discounts that can range anywhere from 20% to a staggering 70%. From fashion retailers to electronics outlets, promotions abound. For instance, renowned chain like Lulu Hypermarket and Nesto had been known to offer incredible sales on food items, electronics and household essentials, catering to the varied needs of

consumers preparing for Iftar meals. "Shopping has always been an essential part of Ramadhan for us," shares Fatima al Habsi, a mother of three. "We save during this time and plan special family Iftars, indulging in delicious discounts while we do so."

The retail environment in Oman adapts beautifully to the spirit of Ramadhan. Shopping malls experience extended hours, encouraging families and friends to gather, browse and shop together in a festive atmosphere. Muscat City Centre and Oman Avenues Mall, two of the largest shopping destinations in the country, promise to become bustling hubs, featuring unique promotional events, themed decorations and activities for children. Retailers also host special events and competitions, adding an element of excitement to the shopping experience.

Discounts on food items are particularly noteworthy during Ramadhan. Supermarkets and grocery stores promote special deals on traditional ingredients such as dates, flour and spices, essential for preparing Iftar and Suhoor meals. Local restaurants, too, present attractive offers for families looking to dine out after sunset. Many establishments craft special Iftar menus at reduced prices, allowing patrons to enjoy a lavish meal for less. The combination of home-cooked meals and dining out creates a fulfilling culinary experience that is both economical and enriching.

Beyond the immediate benefits of purchasing discounted goods, taking advantage of these deals can lead to long-term savings for families. Shoppers are encouraged to explore various shopping channels — from online shopping to in-store purchases — fostering

a culture of informed consumerism. Omani consumers are reminded to compare prices across different retailers, ensuring that they secure the best deals possible. "In the digital age, tech-savvy shoppers have access to multiple platforms where they can scout for promotions. This advantage plays a significant role in making informed decisions," explains a local consumer advocate.

While shopping is undeniably an integral part of Ramadhan, it is essential for consumers to approach their purchases with a discerning eye. The abundance of promotions can sometimes lead to impulse buying, which undermines the intended benefits of discount shopping. Instead, consumers are encouraged to create a shopping list ahead of time, focusing on essentials and seasonal treats. By prioritising what they truly need, shoppers can alleviate financial stress and maximise the joy of the festive season.

Ramadhan in Oman represents more than just a spiritual journey; it is an expansive and vibrant shopping season that offers unique opportunities for consumers. With vast discounts viewable from all corners of the retail sector and food promotions that cater to the heart of family gatherings, the holy month beckons shoppers to seize the moment. As you navigate this bustling bazaar of bargains, remember to shop smart. Embrace the spirit of Ramadhan by seeking out the best deals, and allow the benefits of your prudent choices to last long after the festivities end. As this holy month draws near, gear up for a shopping experience that intertwines spirituality with savings — truly the perfect time to shop.



Exploring the spiritual journey of Ramadhan through Oman’s mosques

AS A MUSLIM country, Oman is home to a stunning array of mosques, with estimates suggesting there are over 600 mosques scattered throughout the nation. From grand architectural marvels to modest community spaces, these places of worship vary in size and design, but each plays a pivotal role in the lives of the Omani people. With Ramadhan stretching over 30 days, this holy month presents a unique opportunity for Muslims in Oman to deepen their spiritual connection by visiting a different mosque each day. Such a pilgrimage not only enhances one’s devotion, but also enriches the experience of communal worship during this sacred time.

Among the many mosques that adorn the Omani landscape, a few stand out due to their historical significance and architectural beauty.

Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque: Located in Muscat, this emblematic mosque is the largest in Oman and can accommodate up to 20,000 worshippers. With its intricate designs, majestic dome and a stunning 14-tonne chandelier, the mosque is a beacon of Islamic architecture. It serves as a central point for worship during Ramadhan, where the community gathers for Iftar — the meal that breaks the fast

at sunset — and nightly prayers.

Al Zawawi Mosque: Renowned for its striking blue tiles and impressive minaret, Al Zawawi Mosque is another essential site for Islamic worship in Oman. This mosque embodies the country’s commitment to preserving Islamic culture, making it a popular destination for both locals and visitors seeking to indulge in spiritual reflection during Ramadhan.

Nizwa Mosque: Situated in the historic town of Nizwa, this mosque holds historical significance and is known for its serene atmosphere, especially at dusk when the sun sets over the surrounding mountains. The mosque’s design features traditional Omani architecture, and it often attracts communities for nightly prayers and community gatherings during Ramadhan.

Each mosque serves as not only a site for individual prayer but also a gathering place for the community, embodying the essence of collective worship in Islam.

During Ramadhan, it is this sense of unity that enriches the experience, as believers come together to observe rituals while forming connections within their communities.

Praying Culture in Oman: The Heartbeat of Islam

In Oman, prayer is more than a mere obligation; it is a life-affirming practice that brings individuals

closer to their faith and community. The act of praying, or Salah, occurs five times a day, and during Ramadhan, this routine transforms into a powerful spiritual journey.

Omani culture places profound importance on prayer, especially during this blessed month when believers reflect on their faith, seek forgiveness and perform acts of charity. The atmosphere in the mosques during prayer times is charged with a palpable sense of devotion. The beautiful recitation of the Quran and the synchronised movement of the congregation create a harmonious experience that reinforces communal bonds.

During this period, Muslims are encouraged to be particularly mindful of their prayers, ensuring they are performed correctly and at appropriate times. The ritual of communal Iftar fosters a sense of togetherness, wherein families and friends come together to break their fast, share meals and perform prayers side by side.

As Ramadhan unfolds, the practice of visiting different mosques imbues the month with a fresh sense of spirituality and connection to the Omani community.

Each mosque visit offers insights into the diverse Islamic practices across regions and allows for interactions with fellow believers. This pilgrimage during Ramadhan becomes a meaningful way for individuals to engage with their faith on a deeper level, fostering mutual appreciation and respect for the Islamic teachings.

The essence of Ramadhan lies in the significance of performing prayers at the designated times and doing so with sincerity and mindfulness.

For those seeking a more profound and memorable Ramadhan experience, embarking on a mosque pilgrimage throughout Oman not only nurtures personal faith, but also strengthens community ties.

Each visit reveals a slice of Omani Islamic culture, allowing believers to savour the beauty of prayer and fellowship during this holy month. Through the shared experience, one truly appreciates the richness of Islam and its vital role in the lives of the faithful.

RAMADHAN TRADITIONS AROUND THE WORLD

SPECIAL NIGHT PRAYERS, AND COMMUNITY IFTARS IN BANGLADESH

In Bangladesh, Ramadhan is a time of profound spiritual reflection and vibrant community activity. As the crescent moon appears, families prepare for the holy month by organising shared meals and engaging in charity. Each evening, as the sun sets, the streets come alive with the excitement of Iftar gatherings. Locals indulge in traditional sweets like “chakri” and savoury dishes while sharing smiles and stories. Mosques, adorned with lights, resonate with prayers, as thousands gather for special night prayers known as Taraweeh. Throughout Ramadhan, acts of kindness abound, with many participating in charitable giving. Community initiatives flourish, ensuring that the less fortunate can also partake in Iftar. This month fosters unity among diverse cultures, creating a deep sense of togetherness that resonates beyond the festive days. For Bangladeshis, Ramadhan is not merely about abstaining from food; it’s a time for spiritual growth, empathy, and strengthening societal connections.

DAILY HEALTH TIPS TO REMEMBER



INCREASE FIBRE INTAKE

Maintaining digestive health during Ramadhan is crucial, especially with the abrupt changes in eating patterns. An effective way to achieve this is by increasing your fibre intake. Fibre plays a key role in digestion, helping food move smoothly through the digestive tract and preventing constipation, a common issue when fasting. Start incorporating a variety of fibre-rich foods into your Iftar and Suhoor meals. Whole grains like oats, brown rice and wholemeal bread should be staples, providing sustained energy and fullness. Additionally, include fruits and vegetables, which are high in fibre and hydrating. Consider adding foods like apples, bananas, carrots and leafy greens to your meals, as they can easily be included in salads or smoothies for Suhoor. Legumes, such as lentils and beans, are excellent sources of fibre and can serve as hearty additions to soups or stews at Iftar. Remember to increase your water intake alongside fibre consumption to prevent digestive issues.

SIGNIFICANT HISTORICAL EVENTS IN ISLAM



630 CE: The Conquest of Mecca

Muhammad’s return to Mecca in 630 CE culminated in the peaceful conquest of the city. This event marked the end of hostilities and led to the widespread acceptance of Islam in Mecca. Prophet Muhammad cleansed the Kaaba of idols, restoring it as a monotheistic sanctuary. The event is celebrated for its demonstration of mercy and forgiveness as Muhammad granted amnesty to many of his former enemies. This pivotal moment united the Arabian Peninsula under Islam, reinforcing the community’s identity and expanding the faith’s reach.

FEATURES

BY NAJAH AL RIYAMI

OUR NIGHT skies are a beautiful canvas to the great galaxies beyond. We look up at the expanse and marvel at the different magic our night sky extends to us, from constellations that tell ancient stories to the wandering planets tracing their celestial paths. Each night unveils its own charm — whether it is the brilliance of meteor showers streaking across the heavens, the serene glow of the Moon, or the distant twinkle of stars that have travelled light-years to meet our gaze. The night sky is a timeless canvas, a source of inspiration, curiosity, and a gentle reminder of our place in the universe.

However, there is another reason to appreciate the dark night skies, unpolluted by light; dark nights are better for our health, signalling the brain to produce melatonin, which is necessary for a good night's sleep (this is why it is important to reduce screen time before bed). Good sleep, in turn, has a host of benefits — it is how we reset and recover, and it even strengthens our memory and learning. It is after proper rest that we are able to give our best.

But darkness does not only have positive implications for our health. It is beneficial for our planet's health and ecosystem too, allowing wildlife to thrive in their natural rhythms. From safeguarding nocturnal animals' sleep and hunting patterns to improving plant growth by preserving their natural light cycles, the benefits of dark skies are extensive.

Migrating birds and sea turtles, which rely on the stars for navigation, are particularly vulnerable to the disorienting impact of excessive lighting. In Oman, significant steps are being taken to address these concerns through legislation aimed at reducing light pollution. In 2022, Oman launched its National Programme for the Preservation of the Night Sky, which focuses on minimising light pollution and promoting sustainable lighting practices. This initiative aims to protect wildlife, including sea turtles, that depend on natural light for navigation.

To further mitigate light pollution, measures such as using turtle-friendly lighting, shielding lights and turning off unnecessary illumination during nesting seasons are being encouraged. Such measures help ensure that turtles can safely nest and that hatchlings can reach the ocean, ultimately supporting their survival and population recovery.

“A lot of the practices that improve the night sky are also good for people's finances. Wasteful lighting practices, especially very bright lights that do nothing but illuminate the sky, can be avoided,” explains Hilmi al Kindi, an astronomer and operator of an astronomy retail shop. He highlights the detrimental effect of spotlights that point upwards or out from buildings.

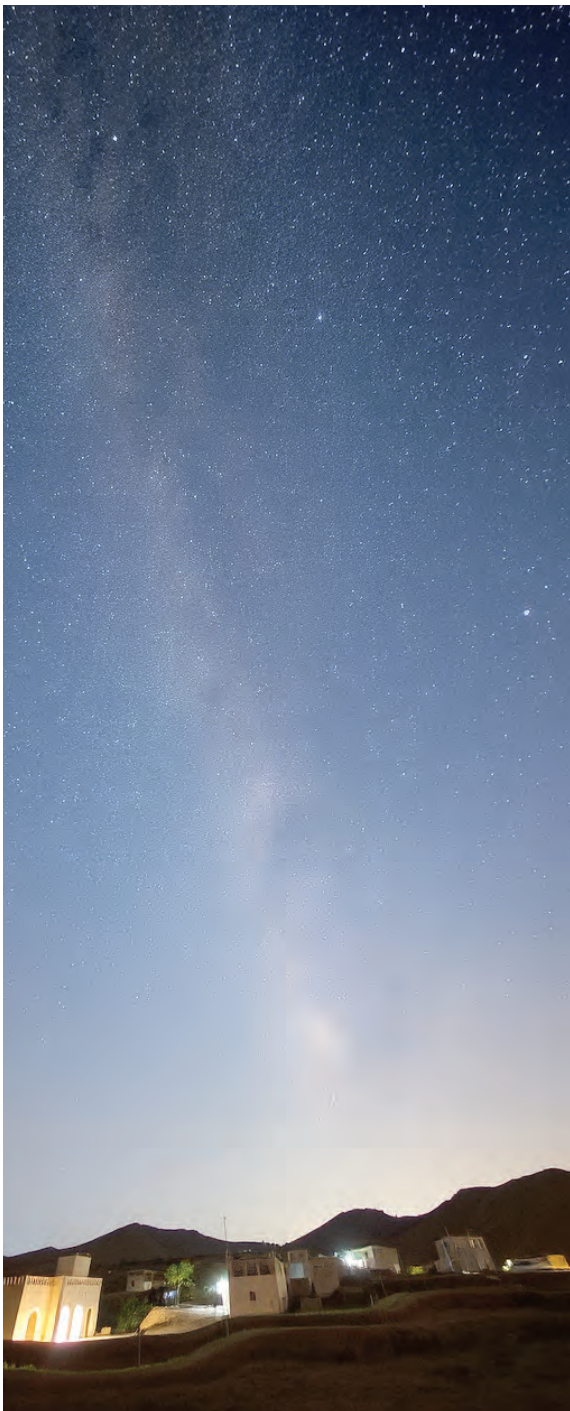
Hilmi advises keeping lighting focused where it is needed, using full-cutoff fixtures with shades that prevent light from spreading unnecessarily. By adopting mindful lighting practices, we can significantly reduce light pollution while preserving the natural beauty of our night skies.

Shielded, full-cutoff fixtures, warm-coloured lights, and motion-sensor systems not only minimise unnecessary illumination, but also conserve energy and support wildlife.

Oman has several designated areas that are recognised for their dark skies, making them ideal for stargazing and astronomical



Preserving the night: Protecting Oman’s dark skies



observation. One prominent area is the Raz Al Jinz Nature Reserve. This site is not only important for its marine and coastal biodiversity, but is also acclaimed for its low light pollution, making it an excellent location for observing celestial events.

Another notable area is Jabal Shams, Oman's highest peak, which offers stunning views of the night sky due to its elevation and remote location away from urban lighting.

Additionally, Oman has been exploring the potential for Dark Sky Parks, which are protected areas where the night sky is

preserved for the enjoyment and education of the public and astronomers. Efforts to promote stargazing tourism and increase awareness about light pollution have been part of Oman's broader environmental initiatives.

Small, intentional changes in how we use light can have a profound impact — not just on the environment but also on our health and well-being. By protecting our dark skies, we reconnect with the wonders of the universe and ensure that future generations can experience the magic of an unpolluted, starlit night.