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RAMADHAN
1446 AH
TUESDAY
MAR 4, 2025

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PRAYER TIMINGS

FAJR

05:11 AM

DHUHR

12:24 PM

ASR

03:45 PM

MAGRIB

06:16 PM

ISHA

07:26 PM

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INBRIEF

SAYYID BADR, RUBIO DISCUSS RELATIONS

Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, and Marco Rubio, US Secretary of State, discussed in a phone call on Monday the deep historical ties, friendship and cooperation relations between the two countries and ways to foster them in various political, economic and cultural fields.

The two sides exchanged views on a number of regional and international issues and developments, expressing the common interests of the two countries and their support for efforts to achieve just peace, reduce escalation and find peaceful solutions through constructive dialogue on various issues and challenges.

MALAYSIA TALKS: Sayyid Badr and Dato' Seri Utama Haji Mohamad bin Haji Hasan, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Malaysia, underscored the depth of bilateral relations and cooperation between the two countries in various fields. This took place on Monday during a telephonic call between the two ministers. — ONA

19.5% RISE IN VISITORS TO AL BATINAH SOUTH



The number of people visited historical landmarks in the Al Batinah South Governorate increased by 15.8 per cent during 2024 to reach 56,203 visitors compared to 48,493 in 2023. The statistics, issued by the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MoHT), indicate that the number of visitors to castles and forts in the Al Batinah South Governorate peaked during the month of November 2024 (10,962), constituting a rise by 19.5 per cent. The month of February 2024 came next with 8,436 visitors, followed by January 2024 with 7,839 visitors.

Ahd Foundation provides financial support to Fak Kurba initiative

MUSCAT: Ahd Foundation has provided financial support to the 'Fak Kurba' humanitarian initiative, now distributing aid through its 20th edition in 2025.

'Fak Kurba' initiative, sponsored by the Omani Lawyers Association, contributes to the release of insolvent people in all governorates of the Sultanate of Oman.

The initiative's support, which absolves some insolvents held on civil, commercial, legal, or labour cases, seeks to enhance the values of solidarity and cooperation among members of society. It activates partnership and augments the standards of social responsibility among institutions.

'Fak Kurba' initiative has been



lending support to the needy since 2012. It contributed to the release of more than 7,110 insolvents so far.

Donations can be made to 'Fak Kurba' electronically through the initiative's website "www.fakkrba.om" and through the initiative's bank account, in addition to donating through the Thawani application. Most of the people acquitted of

minor and unintentional financial offenses were those facing legal proceedings or detained for financial offenses.

Payments ranging from a minimum of RO 100 to a maximum of RO 2,000 were made for the release of each individual, with the amount varying from person to person and from case to case. — ONA

Royal Decrees ratify international agreements

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on Monday issued four Royal Decrees.

Royal Decree No (23/2025) on ratifying the agreement of cooperation in the field of maritime transport and ports between the Government of the Sultanate of Oman and the Government of the Kingdom of Morocco, signed in Rabat on July 4, 2023.

Article (1) ratifies the aforementioned agreement in accordance with the version attached to this Decree.

Article (2) says that this Decree shall be published in the Official

Gazette and enforced from its date of issue.

Royal Decree No (24/2025) on ratifying the agreement between the Government of the Sultanate of Oman and the Government of the Republic of Cyprus on avoidance of double taxation and prevention of fiscal evasion with respect to taxes on income, signed in Muscat on December 8, 2024.

Article (1) ratifies the aforementioned agreement in accordance with the version attached to this Decree.

Article (2) says that this Decree shall be published in the Official

Gazette and enforced from its date of issue.

Royal Decree No (25/2025) on ratifying the agreement between the Government of the Sultanate of Oman and the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania on the Elimination of Double Taxation on Income Taxes and the Prevention of Tax Evasion, signed in Muscat on December 15, 2024.

Article (1) ratifies the aforementioned agreement in accordance with the version attached to this Decree.

Article (2) says that this Decree shall be published in the Official

Gazette and enforced from its date of issue.

Royal Decree No (26/2025) on ratifying the agreement on air transport between the Government of the Sultanate of Oman and the Government of the Republic of Djibouti, signed in Muscat on January 6, 2025.

Article (1) ratifies the aforementioned agreement in accordance with the version attached to this Decree.

Article (2) says that this Decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from its date of issue. — ONA

OMAN AFFIRMS SUPPORT TO PALESTINIAN RIGHTS

Assigned by HM, Sayyid Badr to attend extraordinary Arab Summit

ASSIGNED by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, will head the Sultanate of Oman's delegation at the extraordinary Arab Summit, scheduled to be held in the Egyptian capital Cairo on Tuesday.

He will be accompanied by an official delegation including Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali al Harthy, Under-Secretary of the Foreign Ministry for Political Affairs, Abdullah bin Nasser al Rahbi, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Arab Republic of Egypt and its Permanent Representative to the League of Arab States, Ambassador Shaikh Faisal bin Omar al Marhoon, Head of the Arab Department, and a number of officials at the Foreign Ministry.

Earlier, the Sultanate of Oman affirmed its firm position calling for achieving a just and comprehensive peace for the Palestinian people, respecting their legitimate rights to establish their independent state on their land, and its firm and decisive position against any attempts to displace the residents of the Gaza Strip and the occupied Palestinian territories.

Abdullah bin Nasser al Rahbi told Oman News Agency that the Sultanate of Oman believes that the Palestinian cause is not just an Arab cause, but rather a just humanitarian cause linked to the principles of international law and international legitimacy.

Based on this firm position, it has affirmed in all international and regional forums its full support for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, most notably their right to establish their independent state on the borders of June 4,



Mourners react during the funeral of two Palestinians killed by Israeli fire in Rafah at Nasser hospital in Khan Yunis on Monday. — Reuters

1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with United Nations resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative.

He added that the Sultanate of Oman has always called for the necessity of respecting international legitimacy resolutions as the legal framework that guarantees the achievement of just and comprehensive

peace, stressing its categorical rejection of all policies that aim to impose a new reality on the Palestinian territories, whether through settlement, siege or forced displacement, as these practices only lead to further escalation, exacerbate the suffering of the Palestinian people, and threaten security and stability in the region. — ONA



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SHORT TAKES



The MoAFWR signed two agreements aimed at advancing Oman's fisheries sector

MoAFWR signs deals for shrimp farming, and fishing ports

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources (MoAFWR) has signed two important agreements aimed at advancing Oman's fisheries sector and supporting the country's economic diversification efforts.

The first agreement, worth approximately RO 28 million, involves a multi-purpose fishing port project in the Wilayat of Masirah. The contract was signed by Dr Saud bin Hamoud al Habsi, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, and Hritik Khimji, representing Khimji Ramdas Contracting Company, with the presence of Dr Yahya bin Badr al Maawali, Governor of Al Sharqiyah South.

The Masirah fishing port project will feature several key components designed to serve the fisheries, tourism, and commercial sectors. These include a 4,172-metre long breakwater, an expanded port basin with a depth of 5 metres, a sandy beach of 1,100 metres, and 13 floating berths. The port will also cater to the Royal Oman Police and include various service facilities for visitors.

Eng Yaqoub bin Khalfan al Busaidy, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources for Fisheries, emphasised that this project aligns with the government's plans for economic diversification and aims to boost the fisheries sector's contribution to the national economy. The project will cover an area of 1.8 million square metres and is expected to enhance maritime transport, tourism, and the livelihoods of Omani fishermen by improving access to landing, marketing, and boat maintenance facilities.

In 2023, Masirah's fish production reached 25,000 tonnes, valued at RO 23.2 million, with 2,345 fishermen and 804 fishing boats, alongside 38 artisanal fishing vessels. — ONA

OMAN MARKS WORLD WILDLIFE DAY



MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Environment Authority (EA), celebrates World Wildlife Day on March 3 every year. This year's theme focuses on "Financing Wildlife Conservation: Investing in People and Planet," with the aim of building a resilient future for both humans and the planet. Celebrating this occasion provides an opportunity to raise awareness of the numerous benefits of wildlife and to minimise encroachments on it, given its significant economic, environmental, and social impacts. — ONA

STATE COUNCIL
PANEL
DEBATES
ANTI-HUMAN
TRAFFICKING
BILL

MUSCAT: The State Council's Legal Committee discussed the Anti-Human Trafficking bill which was referred to it by the Council of Ministers at its eleventh meeting of the second regular session of the eighth term held on Monday. During its meeting, chaired by Shaikh Sultan bin Matar al Azizi, Chairman of the Legal Committee, and attended by the honourable members of the committee and a number of employees of



The Anti-Human Trafficking bill aims to keep pace with practical developments

the Secretariat-General, the Committee reviewed the report of Majlis Ash'shura on the draft law which the Sultanate of Oman's efforts to underpin human rights and consolidate the values of justice.

The Anti-Human Trafficking bill aims to keep pace with practical developments, as well as adapt to regional and international experiences in the field of combating human rights violations. — ONA

ROP clarifies norms for minor road accidents

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
MUSCAT, MARCH 3

ROAD accidents can lead to significant stress, impacting both life and health. While the goal is often to reach a destination quickly, mishaps can be disruptive. How drivers respond after an accident is crucial, especially when people are fasting, adding to the complexity of the situation.

To simplify matters, the Royal Oman Police has outlined clear procedures for handling minor road accidents, where only vehicles are damaged and no one is injured.

Here are the key steps to follow:

Agreement on fault: If the parties agree on fault, both vehicles should be moved from



the road. They must fill out a simple traffic accident form, which both parties sign. The insurance company must act within a week of receiving the form.

Agreement on costs: If one or both parties

decide to bear the repair costs themselves, vehicles should still be moved from the road, and a traffic accident form filled out. Both parties need to visit the police station to obtain a repair permit.

Disagreement on fault: If the parties cannot agree on fault, the vehicles must be moved, and the police should be notified immediately. Any party refusing to move their vehicle will be considered to obstruct traffic.

Minor traffic accidents, as defined by the Royal Oman Police, involve only vehicle damage, with no fatalities, injuries, or damage to property. However, accidents involving public property, intoxicated drivers, suspended licences, uninsured vehicles, or military/security vehicles are not considered minor.

Ta'aruf meet to enlighten non-Muslims on March 7

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabiyousef

Ta'aruf, an exclusive event aimed at helping non-Muslims and new Muslims gain a deeper understanding of Islam, will be held under the auspices of the Department of Introduction to Islam and Cultural Exchange at the Ministry on Friday, March 7, at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre.

Now in its eighth edition, the annual event will be inaugurated by Azzan bin Qasim al Busaidy, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Heritage



and Tourism for Tourism, in the presence of renowned international preacher Abdul Rahim McCarthy on Friday

evening.

Held every year during the holy month of Ramadhan, Ta'aruf seeks to enlighten new converts and individuals from other faiths about the religion's principles, relevance in modern society and its stance on global issues. Against a backdrop of misconceptions and Islamophobia, the event aims to provide a clearer understanding of Islam's true teachings.

Attendance is limited to new reverts and non-Muslims interested in learning more about Islam. Participants must be 15 years or older, with prior

registration required via the official website. Priority will be given to the first 600 registrants, and attendees must arrive by 4:30 pm.

"This event, followed by a mass Iftar, serves as a gateway for those seeking an authentic understanding of Islam and its divine guidance for humanity," said a spokesperson from the Al Ifta Office.

To facilitate participation, free transportation to and from the venue is being arranged in collaboration with Mwasalat from various locations across the city and other governorates.

Project in Balad Sayt revives rural areas

RUSTAQ: The 'Agricultural Ecotourism in Aflaj Systems' project, launched in the village of Balad Sayt in Al Batinah South Governorate, represents a groundbreaking effort to revive rural areas in Oman and promote sustainable development.

The initiative, funded by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources and the Zubair Centre for Enterprise Development, seeks to transform rural Oman into a thriving hub for sustainable agriculture and ecotourism.

This pilot project, the first of its kind in Oman, aims to



Balad Sayt was chosen as the pilot site due to its rich agricultural history

create a model for agricultural ecotourism based on the region's unique Aflaj (irrigation) systems, which have been

recognised by the FAO under its Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS) programme.

The village of Balad Sayt was chosen as the pilot site due to its rich agricultural history, unique terraced landscapes, and the central role that Aflaj systems play in the livelihoods of its residents. The project's goal is to generate new economic opportunities by attracting tourists and promoting local agricultural products while also preserving the area's cultural heritage and environmental sustainability.

Dr Thaer Yassin, Acting Representative of the FAO in Oman, explained that the project is not only about promoting tourism but also about creating a sustainable future for local farmers and rural communities. — ONA

SHORT TAKES



The meeting discussed the implementation of groundwater recharge and protection dams

AL DHAHIRAH
REVIEWS WATER,
INFRA PLANS

IBRI: The Municipal Council of Al Dhahirah Governorate convened its second regular session of the year to discuss crucial developments and review responses from government agencies regarding several proposed projects.

The session included a comprehensive presentation from the General Directorate of Agricultural Wealth and Water Resources, which outlined the proposed implementation of groundwater recharge and protection dams across the governorate.

These proposed dams are vital to preserving the groundwater resources, supporting the sustainability of the area's water supply and contributing to the overall water security of Al Dhahirah Governorate.

The dam projects are aligned with the long-term goals of achieving water sustainability in the governorate, safeguarding the environment and supporting agriculture, which is a key industry in the area.

One of the key projects reviewed was the protection dam in the town of Al Dreiz, located in the Wilayat of Ibri. The final designs for this dam were presented, with the construction expected to begin shortly. The dam will play a critical role in managing water resources and protecting the surrounding agricultural land.

Muttrah mass Iftars bring
thousands together

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabiyousef

AS the holy month of Ramadhan unfolds, mass Iftar gatherings have become a defining feature across Oman. These communal meals, held at mosques, public spaces and business compounds, bring together people from all walks of life, fostering a sense of unity, generosity and shared devotion.

Among the many such gatherings, the daily Iftar at Muttrah Souq has emerged as a remarkable initiative, drawing widespread attention. Organised by labourers, employers and local benefactors, the initiative feeds nearly 1,000 people each evening — amounting to an estimated 30,000 Iftars over the course of the month.

The event serves as a vital support system for travellers, daily wage workers and individuals unable to reach home in time for Iftar. The central location allows passersby to join in, strengthening the communal spirit of the occasion.

The Iftar kits — consisting of dates, fruits and laban — are generously provided by workers from the souq, while Suhoor meals, featuring biryani and other traditional dishes, are sponsored by a local NGO. Volunteers play a key role in organising and distributing the food, ensuring that everyone who arrives is served.

“For more than a decade, we have been offering dates, water, juice and laban to hundreds of passersby daily. This is made possible through the generous support



The outpouring of generosity highlights the deep-rooted tradition of charity and community service during the holy month

of souq traders and small-scale vendors,” said Abdul Navas Kasargod, a long-time volunteer.

As Ramadhan progresses, the number of attendees at the Muttrah Souq Iftar continues to grow, along with contributions from local businesses and individuals eager to support the cause. The outpouring of generosity highlights the deep-rooted tradition of

charity and community service during the holy month.

Ramadhan is not just a time for fasting and prayer — it is a season of giving, reflection and renewal. The mass Iftars at Muttrah Souq stand as a powerful reminder of the values of compassion and unity, inspiring people to extend their generosity beyond Ramadhan and into everyday life.

Mubashir Broadens Its Outdoor Advertising
Footprint with a Large Scale DOOH Expansion



Mubashir, the leading digital out of home company in Oman, has announced further expansion of its networks, introducing 17 new digital screens across Muscat and strategic locations beyond the capital. This growth amplifies Mubashir's reach across prime business, educational, and high traffic areas, providing advertisers with expanded opportunities to connect with their audience.

Mubashir has onboarded multiple new networks, extending its footprint to A'Rayya Complex, Sultan Qaboos University, Sarooj Sky Bridge, Al Khuwair Mega, and a growing rooftop network in Nizwa, Ibri, and Salalah.

As a key highlight, the Sarooj Sky Bridge Network, strategically positioned on one of the busiest highways, features dual-sided LED screens that engage traffic from both

directions, contributing to an extensive reach of 4 million people monthly. Similarly, the A'Rayya Complex Network incorporates outdoor LED screens, LCD hanging screens, and dual-sided MUPIs, generating over 206,550 monthly impressions. Furthermore, the Sultan Qaboos University Network, one of the most targeted advertising locations for reaching students and professionals, delivers

94,500 monthly impressions with a reach of over 670,530.

This expansion is a significant milestone for Mubashir as we push the boundaries of digital out of home advertising in Oman,” said Mr Ali Al Raisi, CEO of Mubashir. “With this expansion, we are not only increasing advertising reach but also creating immersive brand experiences that resonate with audiences across Oman.”

RAMADHAN



KABEER YOUSUF
@kabiyousef

WHILE the essence of Ramadhan promotes moderation — whether in lifestyle, spiritual practices, or eating habits — doctors are seeing a rise in cases related to binge eating and poor dietary choices, especially during the first week of fasting.

A significant number of people tend to overeat after Iftar, leading to health issues such as gastroenteritis, high blood pressure, dehydration and digestive discomfort due to a lack of a structured eating pattern post-fast.

“Lifestyle diseases increase during Ramadhan due to improper eating habits, including gastro issues, high blood pressure and dehydration caused by insufficient water intake after Iftar,” says Dr Thashli Thankachan, Gastroenterologist at Badr Al Samaa Hospital.

Breaking a 14-hour fast with heavy, fried and sugary foods can trigger gas, bloating, constipation, acid reflux and food intolerances

HEALTHY FASTING HABITS

Avoid binge eating post-Iftar; opt for nutrient-dense foods

Drink plenty of water during Suhoor and Iftar to prevent dehydration

Eat slowly, avoid fried and sugary foods, and maintain oral hygiene

— all common complaints during Ramadhan. Experts stress that gut health is crucial for overall well-being and can be managed through mindful eating habits.

“Most cases I see during and after Ramadhan are directly linked to poor dietary changes,” says Dr Hamed al Isai, Internist at the Ministry of Health.

Dr Viresh Chopra from Oman Dental College emphasises the balance between spiritual reflection and physical well-being during Ramadhan: “Hydrate well at Suhoor and Iftar to prevent dehydration. Opt for fruits, vegetables and lean proteins to sustain energy. Avoid fried and sugary foods, which can cause fatigue. Good oral hygiene also plays a role in overall health.”

Mini Padikkal, Clinical Dietician at NMC, recommends a structured

and balanced diet during the holy month:

Suhoor (Pre-dawn meal):

- #Avoid overeating — excess food digests quickly, making you hungry sooner.
- #Stay hydrated but avoid excess water, which may disrupt sleep.
- #Include yogurt to help manage thirst during fasting.
- #Maintain oral hygiene by brushing the tongue or using miswaak.

Iftar (Breaking fast):

- #Avoid fizzy drinks and fried foods.
- #Always break your fast with dates for a natural energy boost.
- #Limit sugar intake, as excessive sugar contributes to lifestyle diseases.
- #Eat slowly and in moderation — let your digestive system adjust before heavy meals.
- #Avoid junk food or overloading the stomach immediately after breaking fast.

Alongside balanced nutrition, doctors recommend light to moderate exercise, such as walking or stretching, to maintain fitness without overexertion. Prioritising sleep and stress management also ensures a healthier fasting experience.

With mindful eating habits, proper hydration and balanced routines, Ramadhan can be a spiritually fulfilling and health-enhancing experience.

ROYAL DECREE
ENTRUSTS
FOREIGN
MINISTRY
WITH 42
MAIN TASKS

KHALID AL ADAWI
MUSCAT, MARCH 3

ROYAL DECREE No 21/2025 specified the specialisations of the Foreign Ministry which include 42 main tasks aimed at enhancing the role of the Sultanate of Oman at regional and international levels.

The most prominent among these tasks include establishing, maintaining and preserving diplomatic relations in a manner that serves the interests of Oman, enhancing international cooperation by building and strengthening friendship and cooperation relations with countries and peoples of the world, taking care of the interests of Oman with countries and regional and international organisations, encouraging dialogue between countries and resolving disputes through peaceful means, monitoring political events and following up on regional and international developments, and laying down the



SAYYID BADR
BIN HAMAD AL
BUSAILY
Foreign Minister

Foreign Minister, said that the two Royal Decrees defining the competencies of the Foreign Ministry and issuing the Law of the Diplomatic and Consular Corps keep pace with the requirements of the stage and the path of Omani diplomacy and enhancing its effective presence on the global stage, and reflect the wise vision that serves Oman and its international relations.

The Foreign Ministry's tasks include evaluating international relations by assessing the course of bilateral and multilateral relations between Oman and regional and international countries and organisations, exploring

the capabilities and resources of countries and evaluating them in a way that serves the country's interest, cooperating with the relevant authorities to promote investment and enhance trade exchange and exports.

The ministry's powers also include expressing an opinion and coordinating with government agencies before entering into international conventions and agreements as well as participating in external conferences and negotiations between Oman and other countries.

The Foreign Ministry should participate in updating national legislation related to the obligations and foreign relations of Oman, contributing to the preparation of international conventions, treaties and memoranda of understanding, issuing authorisation documents to participate in foreign conferences, signing international conventions and treaties, taking necessary measures to issue Royal Decrees to ratify international treaties, preserving the original international treaties and agreements to which Oman is a

party, supervising the enforcement of laws, charters and international and regional treaties in coordination with the relevant authorities.

As per the Royal Decree, the Foreign Ministry's specialisations include facilitating the tasks of diplomatic and consular missions and offices accredited to the Sultanate of Oman, recommending approval of countries' nominations for honorary consuls in Oman, performing the work of a notary public through the Sultanate of Oman's missions abroad in accordance with the law, organising the establishment of friendship committees or associations with other countries, the Friends of Oman Association, overseeing the diplomatic quarter and ensuring the provision of its security and health requirements.

The Foreign Ministry's tasks include supervising the Diplomatic Academy, developing its training programmes, preparing diplomatic and scientific studies, supervising the Diplomatic Club and developing its financial sustainability, and holding appropriate events.



Sultanate of Oman The Supreme Judicial Council

Tender Announcement

The Supreme Judicial Council announces its desire to submit the following tender:

Tender No.	Tender Title	Tender Document Sales End Date	Bid Submission Closing	Vendor Grade	Tender Document Fee
04/2025	Consulting services (design and supervision) for the construction of the court complex building in Duqm	11/03/2025	31/03/2025	Excellent & First	RO 25/-

Where you can buy the more detailed tender documents electronically via the link below website:
(<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>)

Bidders must submit a letter of commitment to the bid, addressed to the Chairman of the Internal Tenders Committee of the Supreme Judicial Council, based on directives from the General Secretariat of the Tenders Council and the latest updates to the electronic bidding system. Based on Circular No. (1/2024) issued by the General Secretariat of the Tender Board.

1- For inquiries and clarifications on the tender:
Submit inquiries related to the project electronically through the website of the electronic tender system (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>).

2- For inquiries and clarifications on the electronic bidding system:
Submit inquiries regarding technical support for the electronic bidding system via e-mail and the phone number shown below:
Phone: +968 24402200
Email: etenderhd@gtsb.gov.om



TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

Nama Electricity Supply Company S.A.O.C invites Local and International interested companies to participate in the following tender

Tender No.	Description	Last Date of Buying	Date of Submission	Grade	Tender Type	Tender Price (OMR)
NESC/ 2025/001	Supply, Implementation, and Support of an Advanced Billing and Customer Management System for Nama Electricity Supply Company (NESC)	25.03.2025	22.04.2025	*Specialized Companies	International Tender	1,575
NESC/ 2025/004	IT Division, Digitalization, And Emerging Technologies Strategy Development	10.03.2025	24.03.2025	Specialized Companies	Local Tender	52.5

The table below shows the instructions for participation: -						
Participation	- Local Companies registered with Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion may obtain Tender documents. - International companies and establishments not registered in the Sultanate may participate tender NESC/2025/001, provided they complete the registration in accordance with the prevailing regulations in the Sultanate within thirty (30) business day from the date on which they are notified of the acceptance of their bid. - The companies interested to participate NESC/2025/001 shall be specialized in " Software Development and Implementation, design, programming, software maintenance, web design and any other related activities". - The amount specified above is including 5% VAT. - The amount specified above is Non-Refundable payment (Terms and Condition apply) - To obtain the tender document and payment procedure, please visit https://supply.nama.om, under NESC vendor / E Tender					
Enquiries	- Any inquiry can be sent to Nama.om, using the inquiry form found in the tender document (10) Ten business days before bid submission date. (NESC/2025/001)Any inquiry can be sent to Nama.om, using the inquiry form found in the tender document (05) Five business days before bid submission date. (NESC/2025/004) - Any request for clarification received after the above-mentioned period will not be considered.					
Tender Submission	Please follow SUBMISSION OF TENDER and supplier guidelines available at NESC Website https://supply.nama.om, under NESC vendor / E Tender					
Guarantee	- Tender No. NESC/2025/001 should enclose a bank guarantee or a certified cheque issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman Unconditional and irrevocable and shall be disbursement as soon as it is submitted for the value of (1%) of the tender value valid for a period of at least One Hundred and Twenty (120) calendar days & Tender No. NESC/2025/004 shall be valid for Ninety (90) calendar days from the last date of tender submission and addressed to the CHAIRMAN OF MINOR TENDER COMMITTEE, Nama Electricity Supply Company S.A.O.C. - International companies may provide a bid bond issued by an internationally recognized bank, provided the bank has branches in the Sultanate of Oman. The bid bond shall be unconditional and irrevocable and shall be disbursement as soon as it is submitted for the value of (1%) of the tender value valid for a period of at least One Hundred and Twenty (120) calendar days from the last date of tender submission and addressed to the CHAIRMAN OF MINOR TENDER COMMITTEE, Nama Electricity Supply Company S.A.O.C. - The hard copy of the bid bond should be deposited in the Tender Box at the Nama Electricity Supply Company Main Office at Wilayat Al Seeb, before 12:00 PM for tender NESC/2025/001 and for tender NESC/2025/004 the submission will be before 10:00 AM (Oman Time) on the day specified for bid submission or any extended deadline. - Any tender not accompanied by a Tender Bond shall be rejected.					
Terms and Conditions	- Tender No. NESC/2025/001 shall be valid for a period of One Hundred and Twenty (120) calendar days & Tender No. NESC/2025/004 shall be valid for Ninety (90) calendar days from the last date of tender submission including any extension thereof. - If the submission date extended, the bank guarantee or a certified cheque shall be extended in accordance with the bid extension date. - NESC is not bound to accept the lowest (or highest) Tenderer. - A certificate confirming a minimum Omanization level of 60% within the organization, which includes their subcontractors. Failure to meet this Omanization requirement will result in exclusion from the participation. This is only applicable for local Companies. - Preference of awarding the tender will be given to those bidders who achieved a high percentage of purchasing from Local Products and have a High-level percentage of Omanization. - NESC gives priority to award the projects to SMEs companies. - Failure to comply with the instructions in tender document may lead to disqualification.					
Incentives and exemptions	- Riyada card holders from Small and Medium Enterprises, SME, are exempted from Tender fees - Riyada card holders from Small and Medium Enterprises, SME, are exempted from bid bond requirements. - Riyada card holders from Small and Medium Enterprises, SME, are exempted from registration fees on business opportunities platform and supplier registration with Nama Group.					



Nama Electricity Supply Company SAOC
PO Box 1239, PC 131, Sultanate of Oman
Tel: +968 24250800 | CR 1/71235/7
records@supply.nama.om | www.supply.nama.om





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

إعلان مناقصة Tender Notice

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

TENDER NUMBER	TENDER NAME	DATE OF PUBLISHING	LAST DATE TO PURCHASE TENDER DOCUMENT	SUBMISSION DATE	COMPANIES WHO SHOULD PARTICIPATE IN THIS TENDER	DOCUMENT PRICE
MTGIT/ 36/2025	CONSULTANCY AND PUBLIC RELATIONS SERVICES TO SUPPORT THE CANDIDACY OF THE SULTANATE OF OMAN FOR MEMBERSHIP IN THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL CATEGORY (C) OF THE INTERNATIONAL MARITIME ORGANIZATION	3-3-2025	9-3-2025	17-3-2025	EXPERIENCED COMPANIES AND REGISTERED WITH THE SECRETARIAT GENERAL OF TENDER BOARD (EXCELLENT & FIRST CLASS)	(25/-) TWENTY- FIVE OMANI RIALS FOR (LOCAL, REGIONAL & INTERNATIONAL) (10/-) TEN OMANI RIAL FOR SME NON-REFUNDABLE

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WORLD

SHORT TAKES



People stand at the Torkham border crossing following the closure between Pakistan and Afghanistan. — Reuters

PAKISTAN, AFGHAN FORCES CLASH AT BORDER CROSSING

PESHAWAR: Pakistani and Afghan security forces clashed on Monday at the recently shuttered main border crossing between the two countries, killing at least one combatant and injuring several, officials said. The conflict erupted on the first working day of the month of Ramadhan, when food imports from Pakistan usually peak in Afghanistan, which is facing a humanitarian and hunger crisis.

A 10-day-old closure of the Torkham border point has stranded thousands of trucks filled with essential goods. The Taliban-run Afghan Interior Ministry said on Monday the latest firing took place overnight and that one Taliban fighter had been killed and two injured. Two Pakistani security officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, said that members of the Pakistani security forces had been wounded. Pakistan's foreign office did not respond to a request for comment.

The latest closure, which chamber of commerce officials said was sparked by a dispute over the construction of a border-area outpost, has left 5,000 trucks stranded and traders alarmed at rising losses. — Reuters

AOUN LANDS IN SAUDI ARABIA FOR FIRST TRIP ABROAD



Lebanese President Joseph Aoun meets with Deputy Emir of Riyadh Prince Mohammed bin Abdulrahman during his visit to Riyadh on Monday. — Reuters

RIYADH: Lebanese President Joseph Aoun arrived in Saudi Arabia on Monday for his first trip abroad since taking office earlier this year, the presidency and Saudi media said. Aoun, a former army chief thought to be backed by Riyadh and Washington, was elected on January 9, ending a more than two-year power vacuum.

Aoun said he would meet Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. "I look forward with great hope to the talks I will hold with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman this evening," the Lebanese presidency posted on X, as Saudi TV station Al Arabiya also reported his arrival. He said he hoped their talks would "pave the way for a later visit in which agreements strengthening cooperation between the two brotherly countries will be signed", a statement from the presidency said.

Aoun told Saudi newspaper Asharq Al Awsat on Friday that he would "seek, if possible, to reactivate military aid". The president added that he chose Saudi Arabia as his first destination because of its "historic links" with Lebanon and its role as a regional and global player. — AFP

PHILIPPINE AMBASSADOR TO US ‘CONFIDENT’ TIES WILL STAY STRONG

MANILA: The Philippines' ambassador to Washington said on Monday he was "confident" the two countries' military ties would remain strong under the Donald Trump administration, while also acknowledging the unravelling of the US-Ukraine relationship. Ambassador Jose Manuel Romualdez said he believed that US backing in the disputed waterway and military assistance would continue, pointing to a \$336-million exemption granted amid a freeze on

foreign spending. "I think all of that will remain, I am confident that it will," he told foreign journalists in Manila.

Romualdez said Trump's approach was that of a businessman looking to invest in countries he believed could be valuable partners. "We're not there to ask for money and that's it. We're asking for investment because we want to be part of a partnership," he said, adding that President Ferdinand Marcos wanted a face-to-face

meeting with Trump in Washington as soon as feasible. Romualdez pointed to a \$2.5-billion bill for Philippines defence currently before the US Congress, saying there was strong bipartisan support for the legislation.

"Many of our energy requirements could possibly use LNG as an alternative source of energy. So that's one of the many things we're trying to put together as part of our give-and-take, if you want to call it that," he said. — AFP

Israel kills 2 Gazans amid impasse over ceasefire

ISRAELI fire killed at least two people in Rafah and injured three others in Khan Yunis in the south of Gaza, raising fears among Palestinians that the ceasefire could collapse altogether after Israel imposed a total blockade on the shattered enclave. A first phase of a ceasefire between Israel and Palestinian group Hamas that began in January ended over the weekend with no agreement on what will happen next. Hamas says an agreed second phase must now begin, leading to a permanent Israeli withdrawal and an end to the war. Israel has instead offered a temporary extension into April, with Hamas to release more hostages in return for Palestinian detainees, without immediate talks on Gaza's future.

Later on Monday, Hamas official Osama Hamdan said Israel's demand to extend the first phase of the ceasefire was pushing things back to "square zero". "The mediators and guarantors bear full responsibility for preventing (Israeli Prime Minister) Netanyahu from sabotaging all efforts made to reach the agreement and for protecting the agreement from collapsing," said Hamdan in a news conference. Two Israeli government officials said mediators had asked Israel for a few more days to resolve the standoff.

Israel raised the stakes on Sunday by imposing a total blockade on all supplies, including food and fuel, to sustain the 2.3 million Gazans living among the ruins after the 15-month conflict.



Palestinian children gather to receive food cooked by a charity kitchen, in Khan Yunis. — Reuters

“The mediators and guarantors bear full responsibility for preventing (Israeli Prime Minister) Netanyahu from sabotaging all efforts made to reach the agreement and for protecting the agreement from collapsing”

OSAMA HAMDAN

Hundreds of lorries carrying supplies were backed up in Egypt and denied permission to enter. Gaza residents said shops had been swiftly emptied of all supplies and the price of a sack of flour had more than doubled overnight.

"Where will our food come from?" said Salah al Hajj Hassan, a resident in Jabalia, on Gaza's northern edge where families have returned to destroyed homes to live in the rubble. "We are dying, and we don't want war or the alarm bells of displacement or the alarm bells of starving our children."

Residents said Israeli tanks stationed near the eastern and southern borders of Gaza intensified gunfire and tank shelling into the outskirts throughout the night.

A Palestinian official with a group allied to Hamas said that a state of alert had been declared among

fighters. At least two people were killed by Israeli drone fire in Rafah, and three people were wounded by a helicopter that fired on Khan Yunis, medics said.

The Gaza interior ministry called on residents to provide information about merchants raising food prices in the wake of the new blockade.

Aid agencies have warned that goods could spoil and that they don't have limitless means to stockpile goods on the Gaza border.

"Aid is arriving at our warehouses every day... We have warehouse capacity for now, but we cannot be sure how long that will continue," operations coordinator for the International Federation of the Red Cross in Egypt Jurgen Hogl, said.

Israel's onslaught has killed more than 48,000 Palestinians in Gaza and displaced most of the population. — Reuters



JAPAN DEPLOYS 2,000 FIREFIGHTERS

TOKYO: More than 2,000 firefighters are battling Japan's biggest forest fire in three decades, officials said on Monday, as some 4,600 residents remain under an evacuation advisory. "Although it is inevitable that the fire will spread to some extent, we will take all possible measures to ensure there will be no impact on people's homes," Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba said in parliament.

The fire near the city of Ofunato has burned through some 2,100 hectares since Thursday, the Fire and Disaster Management Agency said on Monday. Firefighters from 14 Japanese regions, were now tackling the blaze, with 16 helicopters trying to douse the flames. — AFP

TOURIST SHIPWRECK

42 rescued after Colombia boat sinks



More than 40 tourists were rescued from the Caribbean Sea off Colombia after the boat carrying them to a paradise island near the colonial city of Cartagena sank, the navy said on Monday. The shipwreck took place on Sunday, about an hour after the vessel set sail from Cartagena for Isla Palma. The navy released pictures of the rescue operation, showing people wearing life jackets floating in the water. — AFP

RIGHTS ADVOCACY

Ethiopia lifts suspension of four NGOs



The suspension of four independent human rights NGOs in Ethiopia has been lifted, the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) said. The government ordered the Center for the Advancement of Rights and Democracy, and Lawyers for Human Rights to stop operations in mid-November, accusing them of harming national interests. The EHRC said it was "pleased that its advocacy efforts have been successful" in lifting the suspension of the NGOs. — AFP

SCHEDULED DEPORTATION

Mexico receives 20,000 people from US



Mexico President Claudia Sheinbaum said on Monday that the country had received around 20,000 people since US President Donald Trump took office in January. The people were Mexican nationals as well as citizens of other countries, Sheinbaum said in her regular press conference. Mexican officials met with their US counterparts in Washington last week to tackle trade and security policy, a bid from Mexico to stave off tariffs. — Reuters

SHORT TAKES



Austria's caretaker Chancellor Alexander Schallenberg (L) meets the newly sworn-in Chancellor Christian Stocker, in Vienna. — Reuters

Austria's three-party coalition government takes office

VIENNA: Austria's first three-party coalition since the aftermath of World War Two took office on Monday, ending the country's longest-ever wait for a new government and keeping the Russia-friendly, far-right Freedom Party (FPO) out of power. Although the FPO won September's parliamentary election with about 29 per cent of the vote, the Eurosceptic party failed to form a workable coalition, opening the door to a centrist alternative.

When the FPO bid crumbled, the conservative People's Party (OVP), Social Democrats (SPO) and liberal Neos struck an alliance, overcoming their own earlier failure to do a deal. The new government takes office after two years of recession, and plans spending cuts and tax hikes on big business to bring Austria's budget deficit back within European Union limits and avoid disciplinary proceedings from Brussels.

The OVP will head the interior and defence ministries while the Social Democrats will control finance and justice, with the liberal Neos running foreign affairs. Although the three parties have agreed a 200-page government programme, they will have to hammer out many more policies as they go along, potentially causing tensions in their alliance. — Reuters

A CALL TO EXPEL MUSK



Britain's Royal Society is set to hold a crunch meeting following calls to expel the world's richest man, technology billionaire Elon Musk, from the prestigious institute of scientists. Researchers say changes Musk made to X after his 2022 takeover of the social media site, formerly known as Twitter, have led to a spike in misinformation. — AFP

UN RIGHTS CHIEF ALARMED BY 'FUNDAMENTAL SHIFT' IN US DIRECTION

GENEVA: The UN rights chief voiced deep concern on Monday over the United States' "fundamental shift" in direction since Donald Trump returned to power, and decried the "unchecked power" of "unelected tech oligarchs". Addressing the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva, Volker Turk voiced the UN's strongest rebuke to date of the dramatic about-face in the United States in recent weeks. "We have enjoyed bipartisan support from the United States

of America on human rights over many decades," he said, before adding: "I am now deeply worried by the fundamental shift in direction that is taking place domestically and internationally". He decried that "policies intended to protect people from discrimination are now labelled as discriminatory". "Disinformation, intimidation and threats, notably against journalists and public officials, risk undermining the work of independent media and

the functioning of institutions." Turk also said "divisive rhetoric is being used to distort, deceive and polarise". Presenting an overview of the rights situation globally, Turk sounded "alarm" over conflicts from Gaza and Ukraine to Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo, and accompanying rights abuses. The current "turbulence and unpredictability" is cutting "to the very core of the international order", he warned. — AFP

Zelensky demands security guarantees for ceasefire

UKRAINE'S President Volodymyr Zelensky has told British media that a ceasefire without security guarantees for his country would not bring a lasting end to Russia's attack after allies called for a truce. At a press conference on Sunday after talks with European allies in London, Zelensky dismissed as "not enough" the idea that a ceasefire would end the war. Following the crisis summit on Sunday, French President Emmanuel Macron said that France and Britain were proposing a one-month truce in Ukraine "in the air, at sea and on energy infrastructure" although not, initially at least, covering ground fighting.

Zelensky told journalists shortly before departing Britain that "it will be a failure for everyone if Ukraine is forced into a ceasefire without serious security guarantees". He predicted that Russia would break the deal and Ukraine would retaliate. "Imagine a week later, the Russians will hit us, and we will shoot at their side, totally understandably, and what will it be?" Zelensky said, predicting years of wrangles over who was first to fire. "Who will benefit for this? The Russians, but definitely not us." Describing Sunday's talks as a "very powerful start", however, Zelensky said that negotiations in coming weeks "will provide a more actionable plan and a better understanding of what Ukraine's security guarantees could look like".

During an angry encounter in Washington on Friday, US President Donald Trump and Vice President JD Vance accused Zelensky of not being "thankful" and refusing to accept their proposed truce terms, while Zelensky said he needed security guarantees. The contentious meeting resulted in Zelensky leaving the White House without signing a preliminary pact on sharing Ukrainian mineral rights. Some senior US Republicans suggested after that Zelensky should resign.

"We need a leader that can deal with us, eventually deal with the Russians, and end this war," National Security Advisor Mike Waltz told CNN. Zelensky said on Sunday it would not be easy to replace him, but repeated his offer to step down in exchange for Nato membership for his



Ukrainian soldiers and relatives of fallen soldiers walk with national flags to the sites of airstrikes, in Kharkiv. — AFP

war-torn country. "If they replace me, given what is going on, given the support, simply replacing me will not be simple," Zelensky said. "It's not enough to just hold an election. You need to also not let me run. This will be a bit more difficult. Looks like you will have to negotiate with me," he added. "And I said that I am exchanging for Nato. Then I fulfilled my mission."

Russia has repeatedly insisted that Zelensky is not legitimate president since he would have faced a 2024 election in peacetime. Ukraine's martial law imposed a legal ban on holding elections.

Meanwhile, Ukrainian officials on Monday reported an unspecified number of fatalities from a Russian missile strike on a military training ground around 130 kilometres from the front line.

The attack on Saturday was on "an army training ground near the village of Cherkaske" outside the city of Dnipro, a military source said.

A respected Ukrainian military blogger,

Yury Butusov, said that between 30 and 40 soldiers were killed and 90 more were injured. No official toll has been released. "The tragedy... is a terrible consequence of an enemy strike," Ukraine's land forces commander Major General Mykhailo Drapaty said, expressing "heartfelt condolences to the families of the victims".

Ukrainian lawmaker Mariana Bezugla said on Facebook that the strike happened when soldiers were lined up in formation, accusing commanders of "stupidity" and an "inability to adapt to new realities". A military source said that there was "no lining up or gathering of people". "The enemy used an Iskander-M Ballistic missile with a cluster munition," the source said, adding that "elements of destruction were scattered over a large area".

There have been several similar incidents during the three-year war including a strike on a military institute in Poltava in September last year in which some 60 people were killed. — AFP

German chancellor-in-waiting promises swift moves on defence

BERLIN: The prospect of a military spending boom by Germany unprecedented since the Cold War sent Europe's defence stocks soaring after Reuters reported the likely next government was mulling a fiscal sea change for Europe's biggest economy. Germany's likely next chancellor, Friedrich Merz, did not confirm that his conservatives and the Social Democrats were mulling setting up special funds worth nearly a trillion euros to finance urgent defence and infrastructure spending. But he said spending decisions had to be taken "with great urgency" after US President Donald Trump and his deputy harangued Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in the Oval Office on Friday, crystallising European fears that Washington had cooled on backstopping Europe's defence. "We must now show that we are in a position to act independently in Europe," he said. "The question of

defence has priority." News of the proposed funds sent shares in defence contractors including Thyssenkrupp, Hensoldt, Renk, Rheinmetall, BAE Systems and Leonardo jump by double-digit percentages on Monday morning. Neither party has confirmed that a special fund for defence worth 400 billion euros and for infrastructure worth as much as 500 billion euros were under discussion, a sum which combined would amount to 20% of German GDP. "There is an enormous need for investment and we won't create consent for it if we just invest in defence," said SPD General Secretary Matthias Miersch on Monday. "The two need to be considered together."

Merz made no comment on the numbers which, if confirmed, would amount to an extra 2% of economic output in spending over the next 10 years, kicking in from next year. "This would be



Friedrich Merz, chancellor-in-waiting and leader of Christian Democratic Union party (CDU), addresses the media, at the CDU headquarters in Berlin. — Reuters

about as much as the country has invested in East Germany since reunification," Deutsche Bank wrote in a note. "It would be a fiscal regime shift of historic proportions." Bild newspaper reported that an extraordinary session of parliament might be called for next Monday,

which would allow the measure to be passed with the backing of the Greens — who on Monday urged Chancellor Olaf Scholz's outgoing government to approve a further 3 billion euros' funding for Ukraine. The soaring shares reflect investor confidence that the makers

of military vehicles, ammunition and other battlefield kit will be big winners from the bonanza.

Scholz's previous attempts to boost military spending also relied on a special fund, formally separate from Germany's 2 trillion euros in public spending.

They are legally tricky: a court ruling against his use of another fund paved the way for the collapse of his government and the election he lost last month, while the state auditor has called for their use to be reined in.

The economic impact of the defence fund would be modest in the short term, Deutsche Bank wrote, since much of it would be spent on imports.

The infrastructure fund, badly needed after years of frugality have left much of Germany's public realm, from bridges to railways, in a ragged state, would have a bigger impact. — Reuters

OPINION

Food wastage in Ramadhan needs permanent solution



RAMADHAN is a sacred month for Muslims, marked by fasting, prayers and communal gatherings. In Oman, as in many other countries, the month is characterised by elaborate Iftar meals that break the fast at sunset.

However, this period also sees a significant increase in food wastage with tonnes of food being discarded. The culture surrounding food preparation during Ramadhan often leads to excessive cooking.

Many families prepare large quantities of food out of tradition or the belief that it is better to have too much than too little. This mindset can result in significant leftovers that ultimately go uneaten.

The tendency to over prepare not only contributes to waste but also places an unnecessary burden on resources and the environment.

Food wastage has far-reaching consequences beyond just the loss of edible items. It strains natural resources and increases the costs associated with waste management.

The Oman Environmental Services Holding Company (be'ah) indicated that managing food waste requires additional

manpower and equipment due to its volume during Ramadhan.

Moreover, the economic impact is substantial; Omani households reportedly waste food worth millions of Omani Rials annually. This financial loss could be redirected towards more sustainable practices or charitable efforts aimed at feeding those in need.

Addressing the issue of food wastage requires collective action from individuals, communities and governments alike. It necessitates a shift in cultural perceptions regarding hospitality and abundance while promoting sustainable practices throughout the food supply chain.

As we reflect on our habits during Ramadhan and other festive occasions globally, it becomes imperative to adopt mindful approaches towards food preparation and consumption that honour both our traditions and our responsibility towards the environment.

By fostering awareness and implementing practical solutions at both local and global levels, we can work towards minimising food waste effectively ensuring that resources are utilised efficiently while also addressing hunger issues faced by millions around the world.

To combat this growing concern, various

As we reflect on our habits during Ramadhan and other festive occasions globally, it becomes imperative to adopt mindful approaches towards food preparation and consumption that honour both our traditions and our responsibility towards the environment.

stakeholders must collaborate on awareness campaigns aimed at educating communities about responsible consumption practices.

Additionally, fostering community engagement through shared meals can help mitigate individual excesses while reinforcing social bonds among neighbours.

Food wastage during Ramadhan presents both an ethical dilemma and an environmental challenge that requires immediate attention from individuals, communities and governments alike. By addressing cultural practices that contribute to excesses and implementing educational initiatives focused on responsible consumption, it is possible to make meaningful strides towards reducing food waste not only in Oman but across the globe.

Despite the Islamic teachings urging restraint, Ramadhan has in many ways become a month of over-consumption, especially of food products. Iftars have become extravagant spreads rather than a humble breaking of the fast. Tackling food waste during this time is a good starting point for Muslims seeking to contribute to cutting back on food waste. On a grander scale, food waste and food scarcity require dedicated policies, informed by data, as well as investments in technology, infrastructure, education and monitoring.

BRAZIL FACES PAST GHOSTS WITH OSCAR TRIUMPH

LOUIS GENOT

“I’m Still Here” — which on Sunday won Brazil’s first Oscar, in the best international film category — traces a family’s painful history during the country’s military dictatorship, forcing a reckoning with the past.

The movie from Walter Salles — based on a true story — also earned Fernanda Torres a best actress nomination for her role as Eunice Paiva, the resilient wife of a leftist politician who disappeared during the 1964-1985 dictatorship. “This goes to a woman who, after a loss suffered during an authoritarian regime, decided not to bend and to resist. So this prize goes to her. Her name is Eunice Paiva,” Salles told the audience in accepting the award. The global success of “I’m Still Here” — nominated for three Oscars and many other international awards — sparked a national fervour usually reserved for Carnival or the football World Cup. The film, which drew more than four million viewers into Brazilian cinemas, won best screenplay at the Venice Film Festival, and Torres triumphed over major Hollywood stars to win a Golden Globe for best actress in a drama. “I’m Still Here” is based on the true story of Rubens Paiva, a former lawmaker kidnapped by agents of the military regime in Rio de Janeiro in 1971. Eunice, who finds herself alone with five children and the mystery of what happened to her husband, decides to reinvent herself and spends decades fighting to know his fate.

Salles is also known for Che Guevara biopic “The Motorcycle Diaries” and “Central Station,” which was nominated for two Oscars.

“But given the rise of the far right in Brazil, starting in 2017, we realised that this film would also help us understand the present.” His comments referred to the divisive and turbulent rule of former president Jair Bolsonaro, an ex-army captain who openly admires the military regime. In February, Bolsonaro was charged with attempting a coup bid after losing 2022 elections to President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva. “This film calls for important reflection, it touches the hearts of people from all sides. All the people who watch this film say to themselves: ‘This is not good, this family should not be persecuted,’” Torres said.

The title of the movie even inspired a speech by Lula in January as he marked two years since Bolsonaro supporters ransacked government buildings in the capital, demanding the military intervene to stop the leftist from taking power.

“If we are still here, it is because democracy has won,” Lula said. — AFP

Trump is doing real damage to America

PRESIDENT Donald Trump is doing damage to America that could take a generation or more to repair. The next election cannot fix what Trump is breaking. Neither can the one after that.

To understand the gravity of the harm Trump has inflicted on the US in the first month and a half of his presidency, a comparison with the Cold War is helpful. Republicans and Democrats often had sharp differences in their approach to the Soviet Union — very sharp. The parties would differ, for example, on the amount of military spending, on the approach to arms control and on US military interventions against Soviet allies and their proxies.

Deep disagreement over Vietnam helped drive American political debate, both within and between parties, for more than a decade. During the Reagan era, there were fierce arguments over the MX, a powerful intercontinental ballistic missile, and over the deployment of intermediate-range missiles in Europe. These differences were important, but they were less important than the many points of agreement. Both parties were committed to Nato. Both parties saw the Soviet Union as the grave national security threat it was.

At no point did Americans go to the polls and choose between one candidate committed to Nato and another candidate sympathetic to the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact. The very idea would have been fantastical. US elections could reset our national security strategy, but they did not change our bedrock alliances. They did not change our fundamental identity.

Until now. Consider what happened in the Oval Office on Friday. Trump and



DAVID FRENCH

The writer a columnist for The New York Times

Vice-President JD Vance ambushed President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine on live television. Trump’s attack on Zelensky is just the latest salvo against our allies. Back in office, Trump has taught our most important strategic partners a lesson they will not soon forget: America can — and will — change sides. Its voters may indeed choose a leader who will abandon our traditional alliances and actively support one of the world’s most dangerous and oppressive regimes. Even if Democrats sweep the midterms in 2026 and defeat the Republican candidate in 2028, that lesson will still hold. Our allies will know that our alliances are only as stable as the next presidential election — and that promises are only good for one term (at most).

It’s extraordinarily difficult — if not impossible — to build a sustainable defence strategy under those circumstances. It’s impossible to enact sustainable trade policies. And it’s impossible to conduct any form of lasting diplomacy. If agreements are subject to immediate revocation with the advent of a new administration, will any sensible world power rely on America’s word — or America itself? At the same time that Trump was turning on Ukraine, his administration cancelled thousands of contracts funding malaria prevention, polio vaccine initiatives, tuberculosis treatments, Ebola surveillance and hospitals in refugee camps. If these cancellations stand, then the US will essentially dismantle a vast humanitarian network that has saved millions of lives. The same principle applies at home. Trump’s waves of layoffs in the federal government, his promiscuous pardons of political allies and his attempts to shutter statutorily created agencies mean that domestic policy is now just as contingent as foreign

policy. A nation cannot effectively serve its people if it is gutting and rebuilding the civil service every four years. It cannot close and reopen agencies with every election cycle.

Much ink has been spilled (including by me) outlining exactly how Trump is attempting what amounts to a constitutional revolution. January 6 can now be seen for what it truly was — Trump exposed his will to power and his complete contempt for the law. He is attempting to upend the structure of the American government to place the president at the unquestioned pinnacle of American power.

As we experience the consequences of Trump’s actions, we’re learning exactly why the founders did not want the president to reign supreme. We’re reminded once again that they possessed keen insight into the perils of governing a large, fractious nation by executive fiat. If Trump is able to accomplish his will, the chaos could revive the electoral prospects of the Democratic Party, but that alone won’t fix the problem, cure our instability or heal us as a nation. That’s why the court battles that are unfolding now are so vital. The Supreme Court can’t make Trump support Ukraine, nor should it be able to, but it can enforce government contracts. It can protect civil servants from unlawful termination. It can protect congressionally created agencies from presidential destruction.

But even as I type the words “constitutional order”, I worry that sounds too academic, too esoteric, for the moment. By challenging the constitutional order, Trump is challenging the stability of the American system itself.

As Trump destroys institutions, he destroys trust. And trust, once destroyed, is the most difficult thing to restore.

Accepting imperfections in life...



LAKSHMI KOTHANETH

The writer is senior editor of Observer

THERE are days that seem to be like a dream, and there are days that can be choppy. For some, the days which are smooth could be boring and at the same time, they might thrive on the choppy days because they find the days adventurous. It must be the adrenaline rush, but they find the rough day to be active and fulfilling because of the problem solving opportunities, while others can sink down under the weight of pressure. So what makes some people have all the resilience and bounce back when others tend to give up easily? You will be surprised that this too is connected to childhood. ‘Resilience is acquired throughout life, but especially during childhood,’ writes Sparrks Coaching. Emmy Werner who had done extensive research on the subject in 1955, explained that resilience is not innate, but can be learnt. This was a fresh look because earlier it had been concluded that if an individual had a tough beginning, it was almost impossible to be successful later in life. But, we have come across so many successful stories of people who had difficult childhood. Now, according to experts, there is a key factor that can make a difference. And that is relationships. Moreover, genetics also play a significant role

in the shaping of resilience. It also depends on how well one’s HPA axis (Hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis) is functioning. Misregulation of the stress hormone also creates a difference. Eventually, it is easy for us to understand how the miss regulation of stress hormone can also be related to mental health. Knowing so much more than ever before, it is important for us to know the impact of our words on other people. If the objective is to communicate, that is to convey a message for another person to improve or do better, insulting them or being aggressive might have the reverse effect. So why do people say hurtful things especially at work places when actually we want the best performances from our team members? Breaking someone’s self-esteem might be easy if the individual is not strong enough but what the doer doesn’t realise is that they lose an important part of their team. Instead of nurturing we tend to destroy and the destruction can take a long journey of recovery. Came across in an article on National Library of Medicine, US, an interesting definition of self-esteem and resilience. ‘High self-esteem has been regarded as a protective factor for resilience, at the same time, resilience is seen as a promoting factor for self-esteem.’ Along with resilience and self-esteem is an

For some, the days which are smooth could be boring and at the same time, they might thrive on the choppy days because they find the days adventurous

integral element that can ease into smooth transition and that is social support. This is extremely important during adolescence. Resilience and self-esteem has another interesting cultural practice from Japan called Wabi Sabi. Dr Jo Nash wrote about Wabi Sabi, published in Positive Psychology titled, Wabi Sabi Lifestyle: How to Accept Imperfections in Life. According to the Zen Philosophy, Wabi Sabi has seven aesthetic principles which were explained by Lomas, Etcoff, Van Gordon and Shonin in 2017. The seven aesthetic principles are simplicity, asymmetry or irregularity, the beauty of the understated, naturalness without pretension, subtle grace, freeness and tranquillity. Basically Wabi Sabi requires you to be authentic. Dr Nash writes, “A Wabi Sabi lifestyle prizes maturity, depth and wisdom over the vitality of youth.” So acceptance of our imperfections can make a difference in how we look at ourselves. Could acceptance lead to confidence? Looks like it, because each experience can make us stronger. This leads us to grow. Why do we hide our flaws? We hide our flaws because we are afraid of being judged. We fear that when we are judged we might lose opportunities. But the reality is that with perseverance it is tough to lose out in life. Belief in oneself is the key.

EUROPE KEEPS TRYING WITH TRUMP ON UKRAINE

ANDREW GRAY AND LILI BAYER

Even as they have rallied to Volodymyr Zelensky’s side after his Oval Office clash with Donald Trump, European leaders’ approach to the war in Ukraine and the continent’s security remains highly dependent on the US president. For all their sympathy for Zelensky and European anger at his treatment by Trump, they see no way to bring peace to Ukraine or protect Europe against Russia without US support. That view reflects a harsh reality for Europeans that US hard power is vastly superior to anything they can muster, even as they scramble to ramp up defence spending and vow to take more responsibility for their own security. Whether Europeans can still rely on that power to come to their aid, as they have done for decades, is an existential question not only for Ukraine but for the continent’s security and the Nato alliance. Even after Trump’s public berating of the Ukrainian president, European leaders are essentially sticking to the strategy they have pursued since the US president began his second term. It is the same for both Ukraine and broader European security: try to keep the US engaged while also boosting Europe’s own efforts. “Do we consider Volodymyr Zelensky an important resistance fighter, a hero? The answer is yes. Should we be making judgement or taking the moral high ground? Then the answer is no,” French Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot told RTL Radio on Monday. The European strategy was on display at a leaders’ meeting in London on Sunday and will likely feature again at a European Union summit on Ukraine and defence on Thursday in Brussels. Leaders including Nato boss Mark Rutte urged Zelensky to find a way to rebuild ties with Trump. And even as he declared Europe is ready to do the “heavy lifting” on security guarantees for Ukraine after a peace deal, British Prime Minister Keir Starmer said they would need “strong US backing” - which Trump has not promised so far. Some doubt whether such a strategy has much chance of success, given Trump’s treatment of Zelensky and his swift moves to warm up US relations with Russia. “It seems to me that many have still not fully accepted that Trump simply does not want to play the role that Europeans want him to play,” said Jana Puglierin, head of the Berlin office of the European Council on Foreign Relations think tank. “No ‘strong US backing’ will materialise,” she posted on X in a comment on Starmer’s remarks. However, European officials feel they have no alternative but to keep trying, even though some were privately fuming over how Trump treated Zelensky. One senior official declared in the aftermath of the blow-up: “Donald Trump has to choose if he wants to call himself a leader of the free world, or leader of an extortion gang. The latter is not interesting for Europe.” — Reuters

Is Feb 23, 2025 Europe’s Independence Day?

COULD February 23, 2025, become known as Europe’s Independence Day? It might as well be if the winner of Germany’s election, Friedrich Merz, has his way. It was striking that Merz, the quintessential German Atlanticist and fiscal hawk who many considered hopelessly stuck in the 1980s, should celebrate his victory by knocking away one of the fundamental pillars of German conservative politics since Konrad Adenauer, the country’s first postwar chancellor. “My absolute priority will be to strengthen Europe as quickly as possible so that, step by step, we can really achieve independence from the USA,” he said in his first post-election interview.

Some other leaders are still trying to have their cake and eat it: talking about defending Europe while working with the United States. Not Merz, who has launched what amounts to a full-frontal attack on Germany’s closest ally, even going so far as to accuse the US of election interference, on par with Russia. Since Donald Trump’s return to the White House, US-Europe relations have been mired in a fundamental paradox. On one hand, Europeans are trying to demonstrate to Trump that they are willing to do more in exchange for US security guarantees. On the other hand, the US whose protection they seek is trying to force a Nato ally to give up its own territory and pressing Ukraine to consent to its own economic plunder. Demanding that a desperate, war-ravaged country sign over half of its revenues from critical minerals and rare-earth metals in perpetuity is a shakedown that would make even a mob boss blush. Perhaps this is why Merz has gone where angels fear to tread, insisting that Europe will need to find a way to move from total dependence on the US to some sort of independence. At my think tank, the European Council on Foreign Relations, we have launched a “European Security Initiative” to explore what this



Friedrich Merz says my absolute priority will be to strengthen Europe as quickly as possible.



MARK LEONARD

The writer is Director of the European Council on Foreign Relations, is the author of The Age of Unpeace: How Connectivity Causes Conflict

might look like. Before Trump’s election victory, we talked about how we can defend Europe with less America. But Europeans are increasingly wondering how to defend themselves from America. Merz seems to be clear-eyed about the fact that becoming the leader Europe needs doesn’t just mean recasting Germany’s relationships with France and Poland, but also working out a completely different relationship with the United Kingdom. Once UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer returns from what will surely be an intensely frustrating first trip to Washington, he might see things this way as well. But, to have any chance of success, Merz will also have to overcome the self-harm of German economic ultra-orthodoxy. Scrapping the constitutional “debt brake,” introduced by his predecessor and party colleague, Angela Merkel, is necessary not just to enable Europe to rearm but also to finance urgently needed investment in infrastructure, renewables, and digitalisation. Merz has been adamant that mainstream parties in Europe need to rethink their approach to immigration. But he has been much less clear about how to do that in a way that reflects Europe’s demographic challenges. Ultimately,

what is needed is a set of policies that re-establishes control over borders and population flows, limits the negative impact of those flows on the most vulnerable members of society, and simultaneously considers the workforce necessary for economic growth, innovation, and public services. Looking at green policy and the environment, the question for Germany and Europe will be how to avoid a zero-sum tradeoff between reducing emissions and reducing prices. The only answer is to create an environmental policy which is also an industrial policy. But how? A fundamental question behind all these issues, from immigration and the green transition to trade and defence, is how to make interdependence less risky. How do you give people who have been left behind the sense that the government will keep them safe in a dangerous world, without walling ourselves off? The independence Merz is promising will force Europe to rethink many of its relationships, including with China, Israel, India, and, of course, the US. And we will need a political class that is able to see things clearly and make radical changes. Merz will not be alone in leading Germany to a new consensus. ©Project Syndicate, 2025

SPORTS

2025 SQUAD



15 SAILORS MAKE IT TO ASYAD TEAM AFTER OMAN SAIL CAMP

MUSCAT: Oman Sail’s Winter Training Camp at the Musannah Sailing School concluded after two weeks focused on developing the skills of talented young sailors from across the nation. Out of the 49 sailors present at the Winter Training Camp, 15 were selected to represent the Asyad Sailing team throughout 2025.

Following a series of impressive performances during camp, Hassan al Wahaibi, Tamim al Balushi, Saoud al Shaqsi, Firas al Nabhani, Abdulrahman al Hadi, Hassan al Araimi, Firas al Hashmi, Zakarya al Ghafri, Sami al Balushi, Hammad al Mujaini, Redah al Balushi, Mohammad al Balushi will compete in ILCA 4 class, while Abdulatif al Qasmi, Saleh al Balushi, and Aws al Busaidy will compete in the ILCA 6 class and represent Oman regionally and internationally.

The also camp provided an opportunity for Optimist coach Sultan al Zadjali and ILCA coaches Munther al Kindi and Ahmed al Wahaibi to prepare the sailors, work on tactical and technical aspects of sailing and assess their physical fitness.

Abdulaziz al Shidi, Oman Sail’s Acting Director of Sailing, said, “This was a great chance to assess the progress of our young sailors in Optimist, ILCA 4, ILCA 6, ILCA 7 and 29er classes. We are preparing the teams to compete in a variety of events this year, and we are happy to see the sailors embrace the opportunity to learn from each other and improve on the water shows how committed the teams are.”

“This group of young sailors is incredibly promising in all categories, which bodes well for the future of sailing in Oman. We wish those chosen to represent the Asyad Sailing team all the best for the coming season. They earned their place and have shown great determination to take this next step in their journey,” he added.

Mohammed bin Hamed al Shueili, VP Corporate Support from the Asyad Group, commented, “The Asyad Sailing Team is a new venture created to support the development of young sailors by providing the opportunity to represent Oman and compete internationally. We are committed to nurturing talent and engaging the next generation. Those joining the team can be role models for sailors coming through the ranks at Oman Sail’s Sailing Schools and we hope they can inspire others to achieve their goals.”

Recently the Asyad Sailing Team has participated in the Oman Sail Winter Cup, held over four days from February 11 to 14, at Barceló Mussanah Resort, put 50 of the best young sailors from across Oman Sail’s three sailing schools to the test in Optimist, ILCA 4, ILCA 6 and ILCA 7 classes.

The Asyad Sailing Team will represent Oman in several regattas throughout the year, including GCC Beach Games in April, Oman Sailing Championships in August and the 13th edition of Mussanah Race Week in October.



Seeb to take on Kuwait’s Al Arabi in AFC Challenge



Seeb team delegation arrives in Kuwait.

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, MARCH 3

OMAN’S Seeb Club are gearing up to take on Kuwait’s Al Arabi on Wednesday at the latter’s home at Jaber Al Mubarak Al Sabah Stadium in Sulaibikhat in the quarterfinal first-leg match of 2024-25 AFC Challenge League.

Seeb’s delegation arrived in Kuwait on Monday and they will have two training sessions ahead of the encounter. The second-leg matches of quarterfinal round are on March 12 and 13 while the semifinals are scheduled on April 9 and 17 in two legs too. The final match of the AFC Challenge League will be held on May 10.

The runners-up of the HM Cup and the league leaders are entering the match with strong advantage as they have managed to win all the three matches to top Group C. Seeb had a memorable continental debut in 2022 after they lifted the historic AFC Cup.

Seeb are inch closer to lift the second consecutive and fourth overall Oman Professional League shield as they are currently leading the table order of the top domestic league.

Seeb head coach Nikola Djurovic will



Seeb head coach Nikola Djurovic.

depend on the stars who are representing the current squad of the national football team including: Jameel al Yahmadi, Mohammed al Musallami, Ahmed al Khamisi and Zaher al Aghbari besides former players like Eid al Farsi, Abdulaziz al Maqbali and others.

On the other hand, Al Arabi from Kuwait advanced to the knockout stage as the best runners-up in the West Region, besides that they are 17-time Kuwait Premier League champions. Al Arabi SC managed to earn a 2-1 win over Al Nasr in the last round of Kuwait’s league and they revived their hopes to compete against Kuwait SC in the standings list of the league.

In the other matches of West Asia, the Vivekananda Yuba Bharati Krirangan Stadium in Kolkata will host Group A winners East Bengal of India against Group B winners FC Arkadag. The home side, who won their maiden Super Cup in 2024, are appearing in a knockout stage for a fifth time and were AFC Cup semifinalists in 2013.

Their opponents from Turkmenistan, meanwhile, have enjoyed a remarkable rise since being founded in 2023 – two successive league and cup doubles have been achieved by winning all 66 domestic matches to date and they will eye further progress on their continental debut.

India brace for ‘nervy times’ against Australia

DUBAI: Rohit Sharma warned his India team on Monday to expect “fightbacks” and “nervy times” against Australia in the Champions Trophy last four in a rematch of the 2023 ODI World Cup final.

India hammered New Zealand by 44 runs on Sunday to be unbeaten in three matches and top Group A of the 50-over tournament played in Dubai and Pakistan.

They next face the Steve Smith-led Australia on Tuesday in Dubai for a place in the final of the eight-nation event. “Look, it is a great opposition to play against,” skipper Rohit told reporters.

“All we have to do is what we have been thinking about the last three games and we have to approach that game in a similar fashion.

“We understand the opposition and how they play and stuff like that.”

Australia are on paper a weaker team from the one that beat India by six wickets



India’s Virat Kohli (R) celebrates with teammates after taking a catch to dismiss New Zealand’s Matt Henry in the ICC Champions Trophy in Dubai. — AFP

in Ahmedabad in November 2023.

“Look, Australia have been such a great team over the years,” said Rohit.

“So we will expect some fightbacks, we will expect some nervy times as well in the middle.

“But that is how the game is being played these days. And you are talking about a semifinal.”

‘DUBAI NOT HOME’

India went in with four spinners including two all-rounders in their last group match in Dubai and came up trumps with Varun Chakravorthy returning figures of 5-42.

Rohit said he will be tempted to keep the same combination against Australia.

“He just showed what he is capable of,” Rohit said of man

of the match Chakravorthy, a wrist spinner with many variations up his sleeve.

“Now it is up to us to think and see how we can get that combination right. He did everything that was asked for... it is a good headache to have.”

India have been slammed for playing all their matches at one venue, in Dubai, while other teams shuttle between three Pakistani cities and the UAE. India refused to play in tournament hosts Pakistan because of political tension.

Rohit dismissed the notion it gives India an advantage.

“Even for us it is a little bit of a question mark as to which pitch is being played,” said Rohit.

“Because there are four or five surfaces that are being used here. I don’t know which pitch is going to be played in the semifinals. But whatever happens we will have to adapt and see what is happening and what is not. And this is not our home, this is Dubai.” — AFP

CRUSHING WIN



Emma Navarro celebrates with the trophy. — Reuters

NAVARRO DEFEATS
ARANGO FOR MERIDA
OPEN TITLE

MERIDA: Top seed Emma Navarro made light work of Colombian qualifier Emiliana Arango with a crushing 6-0, 6-0 victory in the final of the Merida Open on Sunday as the American claimed her second career title.

World number 10 Navarro, who won the WTA 250 Hobart International last year, needed just 55 minutes to lift her first WTA 500 trophy, wrapping up a dominant run in the tournament in which she didn't a set.

With a strong serve and powerful groundstrokes, Navarro never allowed Arango to reach a break point, while the US Open semifinalist won 71 per cent of points on return.

The 23-year-old became only the fifth player this century to win a WTA final with a 6-0, 6-0 scoreline, and the first since Iga Swiatek's victory over Karolina Pliskova in the 2021 Italian Open.

Arango, who will reach a career-high singles world ranking of 80 on Monday, could not find her stride following a nearly three-hour semifinal battle against fellow qualifier Daria Saville late on Saturday.

The Colombian world number 133 reached Sunday's final on the back of an 11-match winning streak, including last week's winning run at the WTA 125 Cancun Open, but had to play three sets in each of her last three matches. — Reuters



Emma Navarro with the trophy alongside runner-up Emiliana Arango. — Reuters



Joe Highsmith of the US holds up the champions trophy in the Cognizant Classic at Palm Beach Gardens. — Reuters

Highsmith claims maiden
PGA Tour win at Cognizant

AMERICAN Joe Highsmith earned his first win on the PGA Tour after a final round 7-under-par 64 clinched the Cognizant Classic at Palm Beach Gardens by two strokes.

The 24-year-old flirted with the cut-line on Friday when he made a second-round 72, but back-to-back rounds of 64 saw him in the clubhouse on 19-under for the tournament.

That proved too much for the chasing field that included Jake Knapp, who shot an opening round 59 and had led after each of the first three rounds.

A triple bogey from Knapp on the 11th hole wrecked his dream of a wire-to-wire triumph as Highsmith snaffled the \$1.7 million prize and earned a place in the Masters and the elite signature events.

"Obviously winning was the last thing on my mind. I was just trying to go out there and execute just shot after shot, and I was

able to do that really well," said Highsmith.

"I had kind of a feeling coming down the stretch, I was playing really good and had made no mistakes. I was like, maybe I would have a chance and started to get a little ahead of myself. But incredible to come out on top. I mean, it was so tough out there and I played the best round of my life for sure," he said.

A pivotal birdie on the 17th hole gave Highsmith a two-shot cushion heading to the par-5 18th, where a steady par sealed the deal and a bogey-free round. Highsmith's mother was present to watch his round but had planned to leave at the turn to catch a flight home before her son's performance forced her to change plans and stay to the end.

"I played great on the front and then I saw her on like the 12th hole, I was like, yeah, she cancelled her flight and I'm really glad that she was able to stay. She's been so incredible throughout my whole golf life. So I'm so thankful for her," he added.

Jacob Bridgeman who shot 64 and JJ Spaun

who carded 66 finished tied for second place, two shots behind Highsmith.

Knapp was left to rue his treble bogey on the 11th hole, where he drove his second shot to the edge of the greenside water and his attempt to blast the ball out, from bad footing, back-fired as it spun off the banking and into the water.

"It's just one of those shots you just have to end up hitting a little bit harder than I did," said Knapp of his decision not to take a drop.

"Honestly, I think I played super solid. I mis-hit the one shot on 11 and that was kind of the only thing I'd really take back. It would have been nice to make some more putts, but the pins were more challenging today," he said.

"Just bummed about 11. It was really the only bad swing of the day," he said.

Knapp finished tied for sixth on 15-under for the week, four behind Highsmith.

Max McGreevy (67) and Ben Griffin (69) tied for fourth place at 16 under. — AFP

Cavs rally past Blazers for 10th straight win, Celtics hold off Nuggets

LOS ANGELES: The Cleveland Cavaliers erased an 18-point deficit to beat the Portland Trail Blazers 133-129 in an NBA overtime thriller and boost their league-best record with a 10th straight victory on Sunday, as Boston defeated Denver in a clash of the past two champions.

De'Andre Hunter, getting a starting nod as Cavs star Donovan Mitchell rested, scored 18 of his game-high 32 points in the fourth quarter and overtime as Cleveland poured it on late to grab their 50th win of the season against 10 defeats.

"Made open shots, tried to get to the rim and get fouled," Hunter said of his late-game heroics, which saw him give Cleveland the lead for good with a three-pointer that put them up 131-129 with 30.8 seconds remaining in overtime.

Hunter, acquired from Atlanta at the trade deadline, then came up with a steal and grabbed a rebound when Portland's Deni Avdija missed a three-pointer. Finally Hunter drilled a pair of free-throws to seal the win.



Portland Trail Blazers' Toumani Camara (33) and Deni Avdija (8) go for a loose ball against Cleveland Cavaliers' Max Strus (1) at Rocket Arena. — Imagin Images

"He carried us in every way," Cavaliers coach Kenny Atkinson said. "No way we get this win without him."

Avdija led Portland with 30

points and added 12 rebounds and 10 assists for his first career triple-double. Anfernee Simons scored 27 points for the Blazers, who led most of the first half in pursuit of a fifth

straight victory.

After Cleveland edged ahead 42-39 on Darius Garland's jump shot, Portland closed the first half on a 15-0 scoring run that sent them into the locker room leading 54-42.

The Cavs pulled level at 101-101 with 5:43 left in the fourth quarter, and they traded the lead three more times before Simons made a pair of free-throws that tied it at 119-119 to send it to overtime.

CELTICS HANG ON

In Boston, the Celtics let a big lead get away before holding off the Nuggets 110-103.

Jaylen Brown scored 22 points and handed out eight assists to lead the reigning champion Celtics, who led by as many as 20 points in the third quarter only for Denver to pull within three points in the waning minutes. Jamal Murray scored 13 of his 26 points in the fourth quarter to key the comeback, his driving layup off a rebound of a Brown miss pulling the Nuggets within 102-99 with 1:15 remaining. NBA Most

valuable Player Nikola Jokic scored 20 points with 14 rebounds and nine assists for the 2023 champion Nuggets, but the Celtics came up with the shots when they needed them to snap a two-game skid.

The Los Angeles Lakers led all the way in a 108-102 victory over the Los Angeles Clippers, their sixth straight victory pushing them a hair ahead of the Nuggets for second place in the Western Conference.

Luka Doncic scored 29 points and Lakers superstar LeBron James, the league's all-time leading scorer and the first to reach 40,000 regular-season points, scored 17 and is one point shy of becoming the first to score 50,000 points in the regular-season and playoffs combined.

Jalen Williams scored a career-high 41 points to fuel Western Conference leaders Oklahoma City in a 146-132 victory over the San Antonio Spurs.

Rookie Stephon Castle scored 32 points to lead the Spurs, who led at halftime but couldn't keep pace after the break. — AFP

SPORTS

OMAN CRICKET LEAGUE



School champions ISM U16B with their trophy.

ISM-B U16, OCA U16 CLAIM SCHOOL, ACADEMY TITLES

MUSCAT: Oman Cricket (OC) concluded the Under-16 School & Academies League Season 2024-25, in which, ISM-B U16 (Indian School Muscat) claimed the title while ISWK U16 (Indian School Wadi Kabir) bagged runners-up position in the Schools League while OCA U16 (Oman Cricket Academy) won the title and MCCC Yellow U13 (Muscat Cricket Coaching Centre) finished runners-up in the Academies League.

The tournament witnessed 13 teams in the School League who were grouped in two groups, with the top two of each group playing semifinals, then finals. While the academies witnessed participation from seven teams in a round-robin format to adjudge the podium finishes. The OCA U16 remained unbeaten throughout the Academies tournament to claim champions winning six out of six games.

In the prize distribution, Alkesh Joshi, OC Treasurer, Kiran Asher, OC Board Member, and Duleep Mendis, OC Chief Development Officer, handed the accolades. For the Schools League, Devin Sethmina was adjudged Best Batter, Samrudh Shankar was adjudged Best Bowler and Aryan Joshi was adjudged Best All-Rounder while for Academies League, Shravan Sharat Kurup was adjudged Best Batter, Vihaan Chauhan was adjudged Best Bowler and Ayush Shetty was adjudged Best All-Rounder.

Speaking on the successful tournament, Alkesh Joshi said: “Youth cricket is the foundation of our cricketing future in Oman. Their participation in structured leagues not only hones their skills, but also instils discipline, teamwork and a winning mindset for them to transition into representing Oman at U16 and U19 levels.”



Champions ISWK Women pose with the trophy.

ISWK WOMEN EMERGE WOMEN’S LEAGUE 2024-25 CHAMPIONS

MUSCAT: Indian School Wadi Kabir (ISWK) Women beat ISC MKW (Indian Social Club – Mangalorean Konkani Wing) in the final to clinch the Oman Cricket’s 2024-25 Women’s League title.

Building on the momentum from previous seasons, the 2024-25 Women’s League saw an unprecedented number of teams for the second consecutive season. The league featured eight teams, divided into two groups, competing with zeal and sportsmanship. The teams included ISC MKW, ISWK Women, Muscat Women, OCA Women, Pakistan Women, Women’s Cricket Sohar, SLSM Women and Team Ghubra. The semifinals were played between ISWK Women and Pakistan Women while ISC MKW faced Women’s Cricket Sohar. Both ISWK Women and ISC MKW were unbeaten before the final, ISWK Women claiming the title unbeaten.

In the finale, ISWK Women scored 146 for 2 in their 20 overs, courtesy Jayadhanya Gunasekar’s 69 of 63 and Disha Kumar’s run-a-ball 43. ISC MKW managed to close in but couldn’t finish well as Suhaani Dadhwal scored 62 of 52 but got out in the 16th over. ISC MKW ended up on 136 falling short by 10 runs.

In the prize distribution, Varun Khimji, Board Advisor – Oman Cricket and Duleep Mendis, Chief Development Officer - Oman Cricket, handed the accolades. Jayadhanya Gunasekar was adjudged Best Batter, Disha Kumar was adjudged Best Bowler and Priyanka Mendonca was adjudged Player of the Tournament.

BARCA THRASH REAL SOCIEDAD TO RECLAIM TOP SPOT

BARCELONA

secured a comfortable 4-0 win over Real Sociedad on Sunday to

move back top of La Liga.

Aritz Elustondo’s early red card gave Hansi Flick’s side a comfortable afternoon with Gerard Martin, Marc Casado, Ronald Araujo and Robert Lewandowski on the scoresheet.

Atletico Madrid beat Athletic Bilbao on Saturday to temporarily knock the Catalans from their perch, while Real Madrid, third, lost at Real Betis.

Flick was able to rotate his side a little ahead of the Champions League last 16 visit to face Benfica on Wednesday and still move one point above Atletico.

“There were a lot of things that helped us a lot today, the red card but also how we played, we were dominant after the red card,” Flick told reporters.

The German coach said before the game Barca would fight hard to win all of the three major competitions they are in, and reiterated it afterwards.

“Today we are happy with the three points and there’s a long way to go in La Liga, the Copa del Rey and the Champions League,” he continued.

“We will fight for every title and when we started the season no-one (expected) this.

“We’re in this situation, that we can fight (for the trophies), and that’s what we want until the end of the season.” Real Sociedad, ninth, threatened in the opening stages but fell foul of Barcelona’s offside trap, with Sergio Gomez’s strike ruled out.

At the other end Barcelona playmaker Pedri Gonzalez came close when he pressed La Real goalkeeper Alex Remiro and deflected his attempted clearance just over and onto the roof of the net.

The game swung Barcelona’s way when Elustondo was sent off in the 17th minute for pulling down Dani Olmo, who was running through on goal.

The hosts took the lead after 25 minutes when Olmo chipped the ball across for Martin to fire home the first goal of his career.

Four minutes later, Barca had their second, with Olmo involved again, this time his wayward shot deflected home by team-mate Casado.

The enterprising Lamine Yamal teed up Pedri but Remiro saved his shot from the edge of the box as Barca dominated.

‘HAPPY TO HELP’

Pedri came close again after the break with an effort from range which bounced back off the crossbar, shortly before Araujo nabbed the third.

Remiro pushed out Lewandowski’s header from corner but Araujo nodded home the rebound.

Lewandowski cleverly converted Barcelona’s fourth, prodding home Araujo’s low drive from distance.

The 36-year-old leads the league with 21 goals in 25 appearances.

“I’m very happy for our performance and it was important to win and go back to being leaders,” Araujo told Movistar.

“I’m happy for the good work we did and going first again.” Since recovering from a bad knee injury, Araujo has been unable to reclaim a regular starting spot in defence.

“I came back from a long-term injury, I’m calm and going step by step, I believe in myself and my characteristics, and I am happy to help,” said Araujo.

“I think it is important to have a competitive team to win titles, not just 11 players but a good bench too.” Barcelona played out the final half an hour without incident, occasionally threatening, with substitute Ferran Torres twice coming close to a fifth.

“The red card, after that the game changed completely, we came here to try and dominate the ball,” said Real Sociedad defender Javi Lopez.

“A sending off changes everything... they also had luck on their goals and that makes it very difficult against one of the best teams



FC Barcelona’s Ronald Araujo celebrates scoring their third goal. — Reuters



FC Barcelona’s Robert Lewandowski celebrates scoring their fourth goal with team-mates. — Reuters

in the world.” Elsewhere Valencia snatched a thrilling 3-3 draw at Osasuna thanks to a remarkable backheel volley by Umar Sadiq. The Nigeria striker netted a brace, the second of those his spectacular finish from Sergi Canos’ cross after 87 minutes to earn

his team an important point in the relegation battle. Valencia are 18th, one point ahead of Alaves who drew 1-1 at Mallorca earlier on Sunday.

Leganes, 16th, beat Getafe 1-0 to move three points clear of the drop zone. — AFP



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Agreement signed to boost aerospace education in Oman

HIBBA AL KINDI
MUSCAT,MARCH 3

UK-BASED

space company Advanced Rocket Technologies (ART) recently signed a pact with the Omani training institute Knowledge Grid Academy (KGA) aimed at boosting aerospace education and training in Oman.

In a statement, ART Chief Operating Officer Mrwan Mohey highlighted the significance of the partnership: “This collaboration with KGA marks a major step forward in our mission to make space education more accessible and practical.

By leveraging ART’s technical knowledge and KGA’s strong educational infrastructure, we are ensuring that students and professionals in Oman and the GCC gain the skills needed to excel in the evolving aerospace industry.

Our combined efforts will help bridge the gap between theoretical learning and hands-on

Officials from Knowledge Grid Academy and Advanced Rocket Technologies sign a partnership agreement to enhance aerospace education and training in Oman.

experience, fostering the next generation of space professionals.”

Per the agreement, ART will provide specialised educational materials, technical content and expert instructors in aerospace sciences, in addition to offering practical training in rocketry and satellite technology.

Meanwhile, KGA will oversee course delivery, which will be available both online and in person.

Furthermore, the partnership will also emphasise industry engagement. Both parties aim to actively collaborate

with universities, government bodies and professional organisations to promote aerospace training and workforce development.

Space education has been identified as a key enabler of the Executive Space Policy, published in 2023, which aims to position Oman as a regional hub for the sector.

Similarly, Oman’s first spaceport, Etlaq, recently unveiled an experimental rocket launching programme with the aim of developing Oman’s space launch culture before full-scale commercial operations begin in 2027.

Turning marble waste into fertiliser: A sustainable innovation for Oman

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, MARCH 3

WITH Oman generating an estimated 5-6 million tonnes of marble waste annually, researchers have unveiled an innovative solution to transform this environmental burden into a valuable agricultural resource. A study presented at Oman Climate Week showcases a breakthrough in synthesising slow-release fertiliser capsules from marble waste, offering a sustainable and efficient approach to waste management.

Led by Balqees bint Nasser al Khayaliyah, Maiyar bint Ahmed al Jahwariyah and supervised by Dr Amal bint Salim al Rahbiyah of the University of Technology and Applied Sciences-Muscat, the research explores the conversion of marble waste into precipitated calcium carbonate (PCC). This high-purity compound has widespread industrial applications, from paper and coatings to food and pharmaceuticals.

However, its potential in agriculture, particularly in fertilisers, stands out for its environmental and economic benefits.

The global calcium carbonate market is expected to grow from 159.51 million tonnes in 2023 to 185.64 million tonnes by 2028, highlighting strong demand for innovative uses of PCC. By tapping into this opportunity, Oman could not only mitigate marble waste pollution but also establish itself as a key player in sustainable calcium carbonate production.

The researchers synthesised calcium carbonate using chemical and hydrothermal treatments.

The research explores the conversion of marble waste into precipitated calcium carbonate. For illustration only.

The chemical method involved extracting calcium chloride from marble waste with hydrochloric acid before converting it into calcium carbonate.

Meanwhile, the hydrothermal process, which applies high temperature and pressure, produced purer and more uniform calcium carbonate crystals. The study found that the optimal conditions for hydrothermal treatment were 220°C with a 3M NaCH solution over four hours, yielding high-purity calcium carbonate suitable for agricultural applications.

The resulting fertiliser capsules provide a slow-release mechanism that prevents nutrient leaching and minimises environmental runoff, improving soil health.

The capsules are made from biodegradable materials, ensuring sustainability while enhancing nutrient uptake and root development. This innovation also reduces the frequency of fertiliser application, making farming more efficient and cost-effective.



CHAIRMAN'S REPORT



Dear Shareholders,
The Board of Directors is pleased to welcome the Shareholders to the eighth Annual General Meeting of Abraj Energy Services SAOG - (Abraj) and to present the Annual Report for the financial year ended 31st December 2024.
Abraj had, sustainably, performed well throughout the year 2024, with good steady results from the Drilling and workover services and a remarkable contribution from Well Services. Abraj has successfully managed to grow outside Oman by commencing the WJO project on schedule for the provision of drilling rigs in Kuwait, reflecting its commitment to operational efficiency and project execution excellence. This achievement not only strengthens Abraj's foothold in the regional market but also enhances its reputation as a reliable and capable service provider. With a solid track record and a growing presence, Abraj is well-positioned to sustain its current growth trajectory and explore further expansion opportunities in the industry."
Abraj is focused on providing services around Oil and Gas Wells, during and post wells construction. From building a wider service portfolio, Abraj now focuses on strategic top-tier services coupled with strong operational efficiency to realize maximum financial returns and sustainable growth. Abraj continues to benefit from the strength of long-term contracts in generating sufficient cash flow for growth.
Abraj Energy Services SAOG Performance: HSE:
Abraj had a very good HSE Performance in the year 2024. Abraj did not had any LTI in 2024 and as a result LTIF remained zero against the threshold of 0.25, whereas TRCF by end of the year was 0.19 against the threshold of 1.0. RTAF remain 0.08 against the threshold of 0.20. Management site audits were completed successfully as per plan in 2024. Also, level 1 contractor audit completed as per set plan in 2024.
Medical fitness to work compliance achieved 99% by the end of 2024.
All Abraj units (Rigs, Workover and Well Services) achieved LTI free year in 2024 however below units LTI free years are among the top:
• Rig 207 completed 13 years LTI free in 2024.
• Rig 202 completed 12 years LTI free in 2024.
• Hoist 2 completed 12 years LTI free in 2024.
• Muscat warehouse achieved 11 years LTI free in 2024.
• Rig 209 and Rig 303 achieved 10 years LTI free in 2024.
• Rig 204, Rig 210, Hoist 1 & Rig 304 achieved 8 years LTI free in 2024.
• Rigs 105, 201 and Muscat workshop achieved 7 years LTI free in 2024.
• Rigs 208, PDO Cementing, OQ Cementing and Adam yard completed 6 years LTI free
To enhance employee and stakeholder engagement, the HSE department conducted a series of dedicated HSE forums and workshops, including:
• CCTV Workshops & Engagements with Supervisors.
• HSE Forums with Business Partners, Drivers and Journey Managers.
In 2024, Abraj HSE team participation and recognition in key industry events highlighted our leadership in safety innovation:
• Achieved the Gold Award for CCTV Support Center and the Silver Award for HSE Management System at the ASSP GCC HSE Forum.
• Won the PDO HSE Contractor Award for Personal Safety & Health Projects with the CCTV initiative.
• Recognized at the OPAL Knowledge Exchange Forum for sharing best practices in contractor management.
• Presented the "Abraj CCTV Support Center" at the IADC Middle East Conference.
Additionally, Abraj dominated the Top 10 positions among 79 Global Shell rigs and proudly secured First place in HSE performance.
Drilling & Workover:
In 2024, Abraj achieved a significant milestone by commencing its first international project in Kuwait (WJO), deploying two rigs in February and July respectively. This expansion has increased Abraj's fleet to 27 drilling rigs, achieving an very good 86% utilization for drilling rigs and 100% utilization for workover rigs. With a 29% market share in drilling rigs, Abraj has solidified its position as the leader and national champion of Oman's oilfield services sector
Well Services:
• All WS units closed the year with an excellent record of LTI free operations
• Achieved >98% operational efficiency across all WS units resulting high client satisfaction
• Improved overall asset utilization, specifically enhancing fracturing asset efficiency despite the delayed start of the project
• Successfully passed the comprehensive Operational Readiness Audit by PDO for the second fracturing fleet, facilitating a smooth launch of the Gas Frac campaign—a key milestone for competing in the next major Frac tender.
• Secured a major cementing tender with PDO and made strong progress in technical validation and scope allocation, positively impacting financial performance.
• Successfully renewed API Q2 certification.
• Successful participation in technical papers at international forums (IADC) under well integrity and digitalization categories
• Made notable progress in collaboration discussion with Sonatrach, which promises future regional expansion opportunities for well services.
• Made significant progress in Omanizing key technical roles and developing Omani fresh graduates through an extensive training and development program, preparing them for key positions within Well Services. This initiative received positive feedback from customers
Acknowledgements:
The Board of Directors expresses their sincere and deep gratitude to the vision and wise great leadership of the country's leader for maintaining sustainable growth and prosperity of the Omani Economy. Abraj Board also wishes to place on record its thanks and gratitude to the Ministry of Oil & Gas, Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Ministry of Manpower, and Capital Markets Authority for their guidance and support. Abraj Board also would like to appreciate and thank you for the valuable support and guidance from the Shareholders, Bankers, and Suppliers. The Board thanks the Management team and all Abraj employees for their dedication and commitment to meeting challenging situations.

Ayad Al Balushi
Chairman of the Company

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION
AS OF 31 DECEMBER

	2024 RO'000	2023 RO'000
ASSETS		
Non-current assets		
Property and equipment	201,173	191,405
Right-of-use assets	4,081	5,502
Intangible assets	173	231
Deferred tax assets	403	426
Capex advances	982	4,546
Total non-current assets	206,812	202,110
Current assets		
Trade receivables	40,135	39,448
Advances, prepayments, and other receivables	2,816	2,937
Deferred expenses	93	119
Inventories	28,416	23,786
Cash and cash equivalents	5,473	8,071
Total current assets	76,933	74,361
Total assets	283,745	276,471
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES		
Capital and reserves		
Share capital	77,020	77,020
Legal reserve	12,405	10,718
Retained earnings	56,895	58,040
Total equity	146,320	145,778
Non-current liabilities		
Term loans – non-current portion	74,017	72,060
Deferred income - non-current portion	1,058	1,094
Deferred tax liabilities	3,641	4,407
Employees' end of services benefits	2,398	2,218
Lease liabilities – non-current portion	3,178	3,565
Total non-current liabilities	84,292	83,344
Current liabilities		
Term loans - current portion	16,801	13,232
Lease liabilities – current	1,012	2,212
Trade payables	16,459	17,891
Other payables	14,453	10,578
Deferred income - current portion	660	762
Income tax payable	3,748	2,674
Total current liabilities	53,133	47,349
Total liabilities	137,425	130,693
Total equity and liabilities	283,745	276,471

STATEMENT OF PROFIT OR LOSS AND
OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME
FOR YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER

	2024 RO'000	2023 RO'000
Revenue	151,646	144,346
Cost of sales	(113,666)	(111,430)
Gross profit	37,980	32,916
General and administrative expenses	(8,532)	(7,410)
Other expenses	(1,730)	(736)
Other income	659	10
Impairment (charge) / reversal of fixed assets	(2,706)	757
Expected credit loss (charge) / reversal on trade receivables	(16)	140
Operating profit	25,655	25,677
Finance costs	(5,966)	(6,323)
Finance income	270	142
Net Finance costs	(5,696)	(6,181)
Profit before tax	19,959	19,496
Income tax expense	(3,089)	(2,935)
Profit for the year	16,870	16,561
Other comprehensive income for the year	-	-
Total comprehensive income for the year	16,870	16,561
Earnings per share		
Basic and diluted earnings per share-OMR	0.022	0.022

Note:
The complete accounts will be sent by mail to any shareholder in Arabic or English as requested, within 7 days of receipt of the request.

ADVERTORIALS

ADVANCED MOBILITY



Experience the ES, one of the top-selling sedans in the Lexus lineup.

UNWRAP THE BLESSINGS OF RAMADHAN WITH LEXUS

MUSCAT: This Ramadhan, Lexus Oman presents an exciting opportunity for you to own the remarkable Lexus ES with a deal specially tailored for new Lexus owners. With the 'Unwrap the Blessing of Ramadhan Campaign,' buy a brand-new Lexus from the ES range, which includes the gasoline-powered ES250, ES350, or the Hybrid ES300h.

Get service coverage for up to years 3 years/30,000 km, along with the first-year free registration. You'll also be eligible to enter the raffle draw to win the latest iPhone 16 Pro Max. The Lexus campaign runs until April 24 2025, across all Saud Bahwan Automotive showrooms in Oman.

Experience the ES, one of the top-selling sedans in the Lexus lineup. The ES is the perfect everyday companion, offering luxurious interiors and an exhilarating city-life experience. Indulge in sublime comfort, spaciousness and advanced intelligent safety technologies.

Uncompromised on luxury, each trim features a powerful engine variant: The ES250 consists of a 2.5L engine that produces 204 hp, the larger ES350 features a 3.5L V6 engine delivering 298 hp and the eco-friendly hybrid ES300h comes with a 2.5L engine and a dual-motor setup.

All trims are paired with a Direct Shift 8-Speed Automatic Transmission and front-wheel-drive dynamics. The exceptional power of the ES300h combines cutting-edge engineering with fuel-efficient output, saving fuel on braking or decelerating.

The Lexus ES300h, with its dual-motor setup and hybrid capabilities, is both powerful and fuel-efficient. With the advanced hybrid technologies, the ES offers an impressive 24.1 km/L mileage, saving fuel and delivering peace of mind.

Step into the era of advanced mobility and experience the luxury, innovation and cutting-edge features of Lexus vehicles. The avant-garde interior features a 3-spoke leather and wood-finished steering wheel, a wireless charging tray, head-up display, 7-inch multi-information display, tri-zone air conditioning with driver, passenger, and rear side wooden trims with ambient lighting, and inner handle illumination.

It also includes an interactive 12.3-inch touchscreen display, a 17-speaker Mark Levinson Audio System and a rear camera monitor with a panoramic view of the road to make reversing easier. Feel welcomed by the 8-way power-adjustable front seats with cushion length adjustments and memory settings for the driver seat.

Lexus has introduced a comprehensive set of safety features to keep your mind at ease and make your journey more pleasurable. The sedan is equipped with advanced technologies such as blind spot monitor, rear cross-traffic alert, all-speed adaptive cruise control, lane tracing assist, pre-crash assist, SRS airbag and adaptive high-beam system.

MALABAR GOLD & DIAMONDS TO DONATE OVER 250,000 IFTAR MEALS FOR RAMADHAN

MUSCAT: Reinforcing its dedication to social responsibility, Malabar Gold & Diamonds, the 6th largest jewellery retailer globally has announced the community welfare activities the brand will be carrying out for the month of Ramadhan.

These efforts will be carried out alongside the company's year-round ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance) programmes across its 13 global markets.

Partnering with embassies, government bodies, NGOs and like-minded organisations, Malabar Gold & Diamonds will extend essential food support to families and individuals in need throughout Ramadhan, ensuring that the spirit of generosity reaches those who need it the most.



Over 250,000 Iftar meals will be distributed as part of this year's Ramadhan food distribution drive across the UAE, KSA, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, Kuwait, Malaysia, Singapore, the USA, the UK, Canada & Australia. In Oman, Iftar meals will be distributed amongst labourers

in Muscat, Barka, Nizwa, Suhar & Salalah.

"The Hunger Free World project has been one of Malabar Group's most important initiatives since our inception in 1993. Spanning 85 locations globally, our efforts to eradicate hunger are further boosted during the holy month of Ramadhan," commented M P Ahmed, Chairman of Malabar Group.

"Ramadhan is a time of compassion, generosity and reflection, making it the ideal occasion to strengthen our commitment to fighting hunger. By expanding our food distribution efforts during this sacred month, we aim to embody the true spirit of Ramadhan and ensure that no one goes without a meal."

MG Motor Oman launches the all-new MG HS

MG Motor Oman has announced the launch of the all-new MG HS, an exceptional mid-size SUV that redefines style, performance and technology in the sector.

Building on the success of the first-generation MG HS, which was voted Middle East Car of the Year by a panel of industry experts in 2020, the all-new model is now available across Oman in all of the brand's show-rooms located across Oman. The MG HS brings a bold new vision to the segment, building further on its international success.

The all-new MG HS, with its sporty design and advanced features, it is perfect for younger buyers seeking passion, drive and control in their everyday adventures.

The all-new MG HS is designed to stand out in the competitive



The MG HS brings a bold new vision to the segment, building further on its international success.

mid-size SUV segment, offering a perfect balance of style, performance and technology. Its five-star Euro NCAP safety rating highlights MG's commitment to safety, with the Level 2 Advanced Driver Assistance Systems (ADAS)

providing added convenience and protection. Safety is further enhanced with features such as Intelligent Cruise Control, Automated Emergency Braking, Lane Departure Warning, Lane Keep Assist, Forward Collision

Warning and Blind Spot Information System.

The vehicle includes a 360-degree HD camera, front and rear parking sensors and up to six airbags, ensuring maximum occupant security.

Under the bonnet, the MG HS offers two powerful and efficient engine options. Drivers can choose between a 1.5T powerplant, delivering 173 hp with a 7-speed dual-clutch transmission, or the 2.0T engine, producing 231 hp with a 9-speed automatic transmission.

These engines, coupled with superior handling dynamics and enhanced NVH (Noise, Vibration and Harshness) levels, make every drive smooth, responsive and exhilarating. The sporty three-spoke squaricle steering wheel adds a touch of dynamism, ensuring an engaging driving experience that matches the SUV's bold character.

Sohar International & Sohar Islamic win ‘IPO Deal of the Year 2024’ award

MUSCAT: Reaffirming its leadership in capital markets, Sohar International — Oman's best bank — along with its Islamic window, Sohar Islamic, has been honoured with the prestigious 'IPO Deal of the Year 2024' award at the Islamic Finance News (IFN) Awards.

The recognition highlights the bank's instrumental role in managing the region's largest initial public offering (IPO), which raised a record RO 1.657 billion, and was oversubscribed nearly three times, as well as Sohar Islamic's contribution as one of the designated collecting banks.

The award ceremony took place at



Address Sky View, Dubai, with Fahad al Zedjali, Executive Vice President & Head of Islamic Banking and Dr Al Mutasim al Mutairi, Vice President & Head of Investment Islamic Banking,

representing Sohar International. This accolade reinforces Sohar International's position as a market leader, recognised for its strategic expertise and excellence in executing complex capital market transactions.

With a commitment to driving capital market growth, the bank continues to introduce comprehensive financial solutions that unlock new investment opportunities, support economic diversification and contribute to Oman's long-term prosperity.

Abdulwahid al Murshidi, Chief Executive Officer of Sohar International, stated, "Sohar International remains steadfast in

its commitment to shaping Oman's financial landscape through the execution of transformative deals that elevate the nation's economic trajectory.

The success of Oman's largest Initial Public Offering (IPO) — a landmark transaction that garnered significant investor confidence — underscores our expertise in structuring, managing and delivering complex capital market solutions with precision and agility. Our role in this monumental transaction aligns with the national agenda of economic diversification, expanding investment opportunities, and unlocking avenues for sustained growth."

Bank Muscat celebrates success of EAGLEs programme

MUSCAT: Bank Muscat, the leading financial service provider in the Sultanate of Oman and the winner of the Best Place To Work Award 2024, recently celebrated the graduation of the first batch of the EAGLEs programme, aimed at providing employees a unique platform to engage with the Bank's leadership and hone their skills.

Launched last year, 70 employees from different branches covering all regions across the Sultanate of Oman, participated in various projects designed to help them gain new skills and experiences; and use them wisely to enhance customer experience.

During the ceremony, the Bank also announced the launch of the second edition of EAGLEs



During the ceremony, the Bank also announced the launch of the second edition of EAGLEs scheduled during Q2 2025.

scheduled during the second quarter of 2025. To ensure ongoing development of employees, the new batch is specifically designed to allow more employees to develop their capabilities, improve their performance, enhance creativity and enable them to

develop their leadership skills.

During his opening speech, Ahmed Faqir al Bulushi, Deputy CEO — Banking, Bank Muscat, said: "The launch of EAGLEs programme serves as a suitable platform for communication, fostering values of Engagement,

Alignment, Growth, Learning and Evolvment.

This programme is designed to contribute in achieving the Bank's vision "To Serve You Better, Everyday" by fostering a strong institutional culture that supports the values of creativity and collaboration; and encourages each one of us to pursue very high customer service standards in serving our valued customers. Investing in such programmes is a key element for the success of any organisation.

They serve as effective platforms enabling participants to share ideas, embrace transparency and learn from one another. I would like to thank all participants for their contributions and wish them all the best in their careers."

Abdulnasir al Raisi, General Manager — Personal Banking, Bank Muscat, said: "Supporting employees is one of the fundamental pillars that Bank Muscat is committed to upholding and providing an environment that fosters growth and development is a collective responsibility.

Investing in training programmes not only enhances our individual opportunities but also contributes to building a strong and sustainable economy. Teamwork is a cornerstone upon which we build our vision and values. By sharing knowledge and ideas, we harness collective strength, empowering ourselves to overcome obstacles and achieve our common goals."

BUSINESS

STRATEGIC MOVE

NAMA WATER SERVICES APPOINTS NEW CHIEF COMMERCIAL OFFICER



ENGINEER ISSAM MUNIR AL ISMAILI

Chief Commercial Officer, Nama Water Services

MUSCAT: Nama Water Services has appointed Engineer Issam Munir al Ismaili as Chief Commercial Officer. This strategic move aims to bolster the company's commercial performance, expand its reach within an increasingly competitive market and improve customer experience. This appointment reflects the company's

commitment to recruiting top Omani talents in key operational areas. The company fosters a stimulating, forward-thinking work environment, embodying its slogan "Stepping Ahead". This approach supports the company's continuous innovation, development and sustainability vision.

With over 18 years of experience, Issam al Ismaili is a seasoned leader in business strategy, digital transformation and high-impact initiatives. His career spans diverse sectors and prestigious organisations both within and outside of Oman, including Awasr Company, Onsor Company, Ooredoo Oman, the Digital Cooperation Organisation (KSA) and Du (UAE).

These roles have honed his strategic planning, market expansion and customer relationship management skills. His expertise in business and technology positions him to play a key role in Nama Water Services' commercial and technological advancement. He will collaborate with the existing team to drive an ambitious, forward-looking vision focused on innovation and performance enhancement.

Qais Saud al Zakwani, CEO of Nama Water Services, said: "The appointment of Issam al Ismaili as Chief Commercial Officer represents a significant step that reflects the commitment to strengthening the competencies of our commercial team to enhance performance further to achieve the highest levels of customer satisfaction.

We are confident that his extensive experience, through leading the commercial team, will contribute to driving the company's growth and help in the continuous development of our services to keep pace with market aspirations by excelling in service delivery and ensuring its continuous improvement, in addition to technological development and anticipating the future in a way that meets the needs of the modern era, within the stimulating work environment that Nama Water Services is characterised by."

Engineer Issam al Ismaili expressed his gratitude for the confidence shown in him by Nama Water Services management. He emphasised that this trust inspires him to work diligently and contribute to the company's vision of becoming a leader in the water sector.

Al Ismaili is honoured to work alongside the dedicated team at Nama Water Services. He looks forward to contributing to the continued success of this leading company, which has earned a distinguished reputation for its water and wastewater services, both locally and regionally.

He added "I look forward, through teamwork, to effectively contribute to the developmental movement that Nama Water Services is witnessing in all its sectors, especially with regard to customer experience, the commercial and technical aspects."

OPAZ BOARD GRANTS NEW INCENTIVES TO INVESTORS

MUSCAT: The Board of Directors of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) held its first meeting of 2025, chaired by Shaikh Dr Ali bin Masoud al Sunaidy, to review key investment incentives and regulatory updates. In a bid to attract new investors, the Board approved rental discounts for projects in Ibri, Sur and Mahas Industrial Cities. Further incentives, including rent reductions and exemptions for the initial years, were granted to projects in Al Mudhaibi, Al

Suwaiq, and Madha Industrial Cities, which are still under development. To boost real estate investment in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm, the Board endorsed amendments to real estate development regulations, streamlining procedures for developers and property owners. Additionally, the meeting discussed plans to upgrade Al Wadi Al Kabir's industrial area, managed by Madayn, focusing on infrastructure improvements and regulatory enhancements in coordination with

Muscat Municipality. The Board also reviewed the ongoing restructuring of Oman Investment and Development Holding Company and its subsidiaries, aligning with the Oman Investment Authority's broader strategy. With a focus on enhancing Oman's investment landscape, the Board reiterated its commitment to strengthening special economic zones, free zones, and industrial cities, ensuring they remain competitive and attractive to businesses.

Uzbek-Oman JV's assets grow to \$280 million

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, MARCH 3

REFLECTING

a strong uptick in bilateral and investment ties between the two countries, Uzbek-Oman Investment Company (UzOman) — a joint investment fund set up by the sovereign wealth funds of Oman and Uzbekistan — has seen its assets under management (AUM) grow to an impressive \$280 million in value during 2024.

Established in 2010 as a joint venture between Oman Investment Authority (OIA), with a 75 per cent stake and the Uzbekistan Fund for Reconstruction and Development (with a 25 per cent stake), UzOman has emerged as one of the leading investment companies in the Central Asian nation. Set up with a committed capital of \$500 million, the UzOman currently has a paid-up capital of \$200 million with over \$280 million in AUM.

Dividend and Net Asset Value (NAV) for the year were also surpassed, reflecting the JV's



UzOman has boosted its investments in Uzbekistan's logistics sector.

"robust financial performance and resilience in a dynamic market environment", UzOman stated in its newly published 2024 Annual Report.

Commenting on the JV's performance in 2024, Shukhrat Vafaev, Chairman of the Board, said: "This year marked a significant chapter in our journey as we continued to strengthen our portfolio and expand into new industries, unlocking new opportunities for sustainable growth and collaboration."

Omar Bahram, CEO, noted that the Fund's significant performance in 2024 came against a backdrop

of high-level visits from Oman, including the President of Oman Investment Authority, the Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, and the CEOs of Asyad Group and Sohar International.

"These visits serve to strengthen the partnership between Oman and Uzbekistan, reinforcing UzOman's role as a key facilitator of bilateral investment and economic collaboration," he stated.

UzOman's investments are distributed across a portfolio of strategic and high-growth sectors, notably Shopping Malls (43%),

Business Centres (19%), Logistics Terminals (18%), Financial Assets (12%), Hospitality & Education (4%), and Industrial Assets (4%).

Key transactions of the year included the sale of UzOman shares in Metall Konstruksiyalari (BMK), the country's largest galvanising plant. The Fund also became a shareholder in the Highway Logistics Centre, the country's premier dry port for truck logistics. It also expanded its real estate portfolio by acquiring a premier business centre within the Business Park Complex.

In other investments during the year, UzOman acquired stakes in the American University of Technology in Tashkent and Encore Ramada by Wyndham Hotel.

Sharing its outlook for 2025, the Fund added: "Looking ahead, UzOman is focused on driving sustainable growth while creating long-term value for its stakeholders. The company plans to expand its portfolio by identifying emerging market opportunities, leveraging strategic partnerships and investing in innovative technologies to strengthen competitive advantages."

Oman allocates RO 46 million in treasury bills

MUSCAT: The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) has allocated RO 46 million in government treasury bills this week, offering short-term investment instruments to commercial banks.

The 28-day bills were allocated RO 4 million, with an average price of RO 99.705 per RO 100, reflecting an average discount rate of 3.84554% and an average yield of 3.85691%.

Meanwhile, the 91-day bills received an allocation of RO 3 million, priced at RO 98.970 per RO 100, with a discount rate of 4.13132% and a yield of 4.17431%.

The largest share was assigned to the 182-day bills, which amounted to RO 36 million, with an average price of RO 97.842 per RO 100. The average discount rate stood at 4.32713%,



According to the CBO, the repo rate for these treasury bills has been set at 5.00%.

while the yield reached 4.42256%. Additionally, the 364-day bills received RO 3 million in allocations, priced at RO 95.917 per RO 100, with an average discount rate of

4.09455% and a yield of 4.26887%. According to the CBO, the repurchase (repo) rate for these treasury bills has been set at 5.00%, while the discount rate for treasury bill facilities stands at 5.50%. Issued by the Ministry of Finance and managed by the CBO, treasury bills serve as a secure short-term investment option for licensed commercial banks. These financial instruments offer high liquidity, as they can be discounted with the CBO or used in inter-bank repo transactions. Additionally, they play a critical role in setting short-term interest rate benchmarks for Oman's financial market while providing the government with a flexible tool for short-term funding. — ONA

IGC launches Oman's first gas spot sale of 2025

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, MARCH 3

INTEGRATED Gas Company (IGC), the sole aggregator and supplier of natural gas in the Sultanate of Oman, has invited bids for its first spot sale of natural gas for the current year. A Request for Proposals (RFP) issued by the wholly state-owned energy firm on Sunday seeks offers for the supply of 175,000 MMBTUs (million British Thermal Units) per day of natural gas for a period of one to two years.

The announcement builds on landmark initiatives by IGC to maximise revenue generation for the Omani government through gas marketing activities encompassing spot sales and short-term gas supply auctions. Both initiatives are



Last year, IGC successfully added gas marketing activities to its central mandate as the sole shipper of Omani natural gas.

also aimed at providing large industrial customers with greater flexibility and efficiency in their purchase and consumption of natural gas.

Interested customers have until March 30, 2025 to submit applications in response to the RFP. "All interested parties are welcome to participate in this auction. Don't miss out on this opportunity to secure a valuable contract with IGC," the firm note in a post.

Last year, IGC successfully added gas marketing activities to its central mandate as the sole shipper of Omani natural gas. In line with this remit, it signed a first-ever spot gas sales contract with Octal, the Salalah-based polyethylene manufacturer, in August 2024. Under the deal, IGC committed to supplying 15,000 standard m3 per day of natural gas for four months.

Also during the same month, IGC announced the first auction of short-term gas supplies. On offer were around 9,000 MMBTU per day (approx 9 million standard

cubic feet/day — mmsfd) of gas to be supplied to one or more successful bidders for a period ranging from one to two years. Interested bidders were required to submit offers that were an improvement upon a minimum price set by IGC. Set up as a state-owned enterprise under the auspices of the Ministry of Finance, IGC represents the government's interests in the management of all allocations, assets, rights and obligations of natural gas purchase, sales, transport, imports and exports, as well as all relevant products. IGC is also tasked with contributing to Oman's fiscal performance by shouldering all expenses related to gas purchase and transport from the State Budget. Part of its remit is to transfer net gas revenue to the treasury as well.

OPINION

Will dependence on AI tools make us lazy?



TARIQ AL BARWANI

The writer is the founder of Knowledge Oman

SINCE last year, almost everyone has become super creative. Everywhere I looked, every place I worked with and for, and every discussion I was involved in, there somehow seemed to be creative individuals popping up from nowhere. Virtually all students at schools, colleges and universities have started writing very insightful essays. Every working professional in organisations started producing wonderful reports in a very short time. Almost all engineers started designing groundbreaking solutions at will. And almost every employee of the organisations I am associated with has started to come up with innovative ideas in an amazingly short period of time whenever requested. Amazing, yeah? No. It's scary. Anything that is gained too easily is rarely valued and anything achieved too quickly is seldom lasting. Watch people who lose weight too fast, only to see them gain back that weight even more. This change is not only here in Oman. This revolutionary change is all over the connected world. Amazing presentations are created on the fly; well-written and structured technical reports for almost every discipline are generated swiftly and impressive solutions to critical problems are suggested by even the least experienced employees. Is there a magic pill/tablet on the market that turns everyone into a superstar (or a genius per se)? No, virtually everyone has

been using the same approach to this new creativity — artificial intelligence (AI)-powered tools. Let's not deny it. AI's revolution is surely making our personal and professional lives easier, faster and more convenient — specifically by automating our daily activities and surely generating creative solutions from different areas of our lives. However, the overdependence on these technologies will seriously impact our lives and the future generations severely. For example, critical thinking will decline, creativity will be reduced, skills will erode and many jobs (especially routine-driven ones) will be replaced; physical activity will reduce, social skills will weaken and lastly, cyberattacks (using AI) will increase. This is bad and serious; and regulating the same is a need of the hour, especially on the ethical issues that may arise due to AI. The impact of the convenience and dependence of AI-powered tools will ultimately turn us to become lazy because of the effort it reduces or the effort it emanates for us to get things done. AI will automate and handle over 50% of many of the work activities by 2030, according to a report published by McKinsey & Company. Furthermore, a survey by Pew Research found that 65% of people rely on AI-driven tools for routine tasks, eg, writing emails to making decisions from the output generated by the AI tools.

Let's not deny it. AI's revolution is surely making our personal and professional lives easier, faster and more convenient — specifically by automating our daily activities and surely generating creative solutions from different areas of our lives.

Proof is in the pudding on the overreliance on AI-powered tools we see today, yet I by no means discourage the use or do not support the benefit that AI tools have brought to the table and our lives as a consequence. Productivity has literally been boosted and improved, complex problems are clearly being resolved and new opportunities are being created, to name a few notable ones. What, however, needs to happen and be encouraged is to have a balance on the usage and reliance in order to ensure essential skills are maintained. One needs to think of what happens if there is no connectivity. What happens if the tools are costly and out of reach? So to answer my question on whether AI-powered tools will make us lazy, the answer is YES, especially to those who over-rely. The ones who would be most impacted are the future generations because they would be born with AI-powered tools being even more powerful, innovative, easier and even embedded into almost every object created and replaced from our lives today. What to do is educate on how best to use and how much not to rely on. Just like any tool, AI can be useful or harmful, depending on how they are used. Having continuous and necessary guidance on the use of this technology will surely help keep healthy individuals in the society. Until we catch up next week, always ask yourself before using an AI tool, is it making me productive, or is it making me lazy?

A CHINESE MORGAN STANLEY IS WORTH AN M&A SHOT

BY HUDSON LOCKETT

IF IMITATION is truly the sincerest form of flattery, one of Wall Street's biggest firms may soon be blushing. Beijing is planning to merge China International Capital Corp with broker China Galaxy Securities. The two denied it, but the tie-up — the latest attempt to consolidate the overcrowded industry — would have more logic than previous state-led deals. It would also mean CICC following the path of its co-founder, Morgan Stanley. The US bank, now run by Ted Pick, created CICC in 1995 as a joint venture with China Construction Bank. That was two years before the US financial institution agreed to join forces with brokerage Dean Witter, Discover. The earnings diversification and access to a broader pool of investing clients — enhanced over the years by acquiring Citi's brokerage business and E*Trade — is one reason why Morgan Stanley trades at a premium to arch-rival Goldman Sachs. A CICC-China Galaxy combo would create China's third-largest brokerage with \$190 billion in assets and could expect to emulate some of those business benefits. That makes it a different proposition to last year's merger of Guotai Junan Securities and Haitong, which was commonly understood to effectively be a state-mandated bailout. Not that CICC is sitting pretty. In recent years, regulators throttled the flow of listings in China's onshore markets as well as in Hong Kong, kneecapping the firm's bread-and-butter business. Its earnings are likely to have fallen 13 per cent last year, analysts polled by LSEG reckon; China Galaxy's are forecast to rise 28 per cent. The diverging fortunes have flipped the script on how a deal might work. Citi analysts were already touting the tie-up a year ago, favouring CICC to be in charge courtesy of its bigger market capitalisation. That has since fallen to 129 billion yuan (\$17.7 billion), putting 147 billion yuan China Galaxy into the driver's seat, they point out — just as Dean Witter was 28 years ago. A deal would ostensibly be part of China's stated goal to produce two to three globally competitive investment banks and 10 leading institutions in the securities sector by 2035. CICC's pedigree suggests its successor entity would be expected to perform on the world stage against the likes of Goldman and Morgan Stanley. Of course, a single deal will not immediately produce such a champion, especially when Beijing's ambitions lack detail. Independent of that, the standalone benefits of creating a Chinese version of Morgan Stanley makes it worth a shot. — Reuters

The 7 C's framework for economic resilience

AS global economic winds shift with increasing unpredictability, Oman navigates these currents with remarkable steadiness. Examining the sultanate of Oman's economic development reveals a multi-dimensional approach that can be understood through a conceptual lens called the "7 C's Compass" — a framework that illuminates Oman's strategic economic positioning. This analytical perspective highlights how Oman is addressing today's complex challenges: supply chain vulnerabilities, energy market fluctuations and the imperative for sustainable development. For a nation historically anchored in hydrocarbon resources, these challenges are catalysing an impressive evolution aligned with the broader aspirations of Oman Vision 2040. **Connectivity: The Geographic Advantage:** Oman's strategic location at the confluence of major trade routes represents an unparalleled natural asset. The nation has invested substantially in infrastructure that amplifies this advantage — modernising the ports of Duqm, Suhar, and Salalah; enhancing airport facilities; and expanding digital networks that increasingly define global commerce. These investments transform Oman's geographic position from mere location to strategic hub, connecting continents and facilitating trade flows. The recent expansion of digital infrastructure further positions Oman as a nexus in the increasingly important data economy. **Commerce: Diversification Imperative:** The diversification of economic activities stands as a central theme in Oman's development landscape. The country is nurturing multiple promising sectors across both traditional and emerging industries. Oman's rich marine resources have positioned fisheries as a key diversification sector.



At the heart of sustainable development lies human capability.



DR YOUSUF HAMED AL BALUSHI
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The writer is founder and CEO - Smart Investment Gateway, economists, board adviser & business transformation mentor.

With over 3,000 kilometres of coastline and access to both the Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean, the country is investing in modern fishing fleets, processing facilities and aquaculture projects. Agriculture represents another vital diversification vector, with significant investments in modern farming techniques adapted to Oman's climate challenges. The development of greenhouse technologies, precision irrigation systems and desert agriculture projects has expanded production capacity while conserving scarce water resources. **Collaboration: Partnership Synergies:** In the interconnected global economy, collaboration multiplies capabilities. Oman demonstrates this principle through various partnership models — public and private sector cooperation mobilises complementary strengths, while international relationships facilitate valuable knowledge exchange, particularly evident in renewable energy projects and industrial ventures. **Capital: Investment Foundations:** Strategic investment fuels economic transformation. Oman continues enhancing its investment landscape through responsive regulatory approaches and institutional frameworks. Investment activities across the country reflect an increasingly sophisticated approach to capital allocation and development

financing. The financial sector plays a pivotal role in mobilising resources for strategic initiatives. Emerging approaches to investment, including sustainable finance mechanisms, demonstrate an alignment with global best practices in development funding. **Capability: Human Potential:** At the heart of sustainable development lies human capability. Educational initiatives and specialised training programmes aligned with economic priorities help prepare Omanis for leadership in emerging sectors. This human capital focus spans from foundational education to specialised technical training and international learning partnerships. **Culture: Heritage and Innovation:** Oman's development pathway balances forward-looking innovation with rich cultural foundations. Entrepreneurial activity receives support through various programmes designed to nurture new ventures and business models. Simultaneously, Oman's distinctive heritage creates unique value propositions in sectors such as tourism and creative industries. The increasing international recognition of Omani cultural products demonstrates how authentic identity creates competitive advantage in global markets that increasingly value genuine experiences and products with meaningful provenance. **Certainty: Stability and Governance:** Reliable governance creates the essential foundation for sustainable development. Oman has established effective legal frameworks and administrative systems that provide stability for economic activity and investment. Ongoing improvements in government services enhance accessibility and efficiency for businesses and investors. Digital government initiatives contribute to transparency and effectiveness, creating a favorable environment amid regional and global uncertainties.

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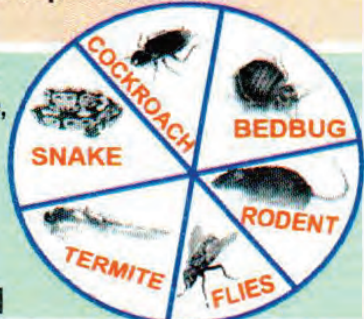
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Does the external use of ointment break the fast?

Indeed, the external use does not affect fasting. Just like bathing during days of Ramadhan is acceptable, in the same context, using external ointments is permissible.



HADITH GUIDE FOR THE FAITHFUL

Sahl b. Sa'd (Allah be pleased with him) reported Allah's Messenger as saying:

In Paradise there is a gate which is called Rayyan through which only the people who fast would enter on the Day on Resurrection. None else would enter along with them. It would be proclaimed: Where are the people who fast that they should be admitted into it? And when the last of them would enter, it would be closed and no one would enter it.

QURAN VERSE OF THE DAY



Say, "O disbelievers. I do not worship what you worship. Nor do you worship what I worship. Nor do I serve what you serve. Nor do you serve what I serve. You have your way, and I have my way.

(al Kafirun)



DUA SUPPLICATION TO ALLAH

O Allah, on this day, grant me wisdom and awareness, keep me away from foolishness and pretension, grant me a share in every blessing You send down, by Your generosity, O the most Generous.

EXPLORING IFTAR AND SUHOOR TRENDS FOR RAMADHAN IN OMAN

BY YERU EBUE

AS THE CRESCENT moon signals the start of Ramadhan, millions of Muslims around the globe prepare to observe a month of fasting, prayer, reflection and community. This sacred period is not only a time for spiritual introspection but also a vibrant occasion that significantly transforms the tourism and hospitality landscape, particularly in regions with a rich Islamic heritage. Hotels, restaurants and local businesses undergo a metamorphosis to cater to the unique needs and preferences of believers, ensuring every iftar and suhoor is an experience to remember. The essence of Ramadhan permeates the air, subtly influencing dining trends and creating a fusion of tradition and modernity, enticing residents and tourists alike to embrace the spirit of this holy month.

When it comes to Ramadhan culinary offerings, the Middle East as a whole boasts an impressive array of iftar and suhoor choices, each reflecting the rich tapestry of cultural influences across the region. The communal experience of breaking fast is honoured through lavish iftar buffets, showcasing a blend of local delicacies, such as dates, lentil soup and fattoush, alongside international cuisine that appeals to diverse palates.

In Oman, the offerings take on a distinctive character that resonates deeply with the local traditions and customs. Restaurants throughout the Sultanate of Oman prepare sumptuous spreads, allowing diners to savour both exquisite flavours and cultural heritage. The dining scene has uniquely adapted to embrace the spirit of Ramadhan, showcasing traditional Omani dishes such as shuwa (slow-cooked lamb) and majboos (spiced rice with meat) alongside a plethora of international options.

THE INFLUENCE OF DIGITAL MEDIA

In an age driven by digital media, creating an Instagram-worthy dining atmosphere has become essential for restaurants looking to attract patrons and create memorable experiences. Oman's dining establishments are adorned with contemporary decorations, blending fairy lights, Ramadhan-themed decor and vibrant Arabian carpets. The use of earthenware and rich Arabic colours introduces an authentic feel, making each dining experience not just a meal but a celebration of tradition brought to life through visual aesthetics.

Moreover, restaurants are increasingly focusing on ensuring their capacities reflect themes of hospitality and welcome, often transforming their spaces into enchanting realms inviting guests to share in the joy of the month.

Dining experiences in Oman can be classified into various tiers, catering to a wide range of preferences and budgets. High-end establishments like the St Regis Muscat, Mandarin Oriental, Shangri-La Muscat and Al Bustan Palace provide luxurious iftar offerings that range from RO 25 to 40. These lavish experiences are characterised by sumptuous buffets featuring both local and international cuisine, providing a delightful challenge for diners who find it hard to choose from the array of tempting options.

Notably, hotels like Sheraton Muscat, the Intercontinental Hotel and JW Marriott are weaving in Omani elements to enhance dining sessions further. Their offerings are steeped in local flavours and Arabic inspirations, presenting diners with an unrivalled experience that captures the essence of Oman's rich culinary heritage. Even mid-range hotels and restaurants are stepping up to the plate, competing not only on price but also on the diversity of offerings, appealing to a broader audience eager to partake in the Ramadhan culinary adventure.

PUSHING FOR VIBRANT

ATMOSPHERE

In addition to the capital, cities like Salalah, Sur and Suhar are also stepping into the spotlight, unveiling restaurants and food outlets that evoke the unique vibe of Ramadhan. Many of these establishments elevate the dining experience by incorporating Arabic music and live performances, enriching the ambiance and making the observance of fasting feel more festive and enjoyable. This immersive approach ensures that patrons leave not just with full stomachs, but also with cherished memories of vibrant communal gatherings.

One of the most notable trends this year is the rise of sustainable dining. Many restaurants are focusing on locally sourced ingredients to create iftar menus that not only promote health but also support local farmers. This sustainable approach is resonating well with consumers who are becoming increasingly aware of their environmental impact.

Fusion cuisine is also making waves as chefs experiment with flavours from different cultures. Traditional Omani dishes are being reimaged with international twists, incorporating ingredients and culinary techniques from Southeast Asia, Europe and the Americas. This trend caters to the diverse palate of residents and visitors alike.

In addition, food trucks and pop-up iftar events are gaining popularity, offering flexibility and a casual dining atmosphere.

As this year's Ramadhan unfolds, the deals and dining experiences have grown even more enticing, leaving it up to diners to decide what they are in the mood for. Whether seeking luxurious indulgence or vibrant local flavours, the choices available reflect the joyous spirit of the month while celebrating the culinary legacy of Oman.

What unique Ramadhan experiences have you encountered this year and which eateries have become your go-to properties for iftar and suhoor?



A foreign perspective on Omani Ramadhan traditions

BY LYN PALMA

AS I GOT used to my new job as a house helper in Oman, I found myself stepping into a world full of tradition and faith. Coming from an Asian background and a different faith, this experience not only challenged how I saw things but also changed my perspective on family, connection and spirituality in a big way.

I can still remember my first morning in the house. The sun hadn't even risen yet, but the place was buzzing with soft voices and gentle movements. It was interesting to see how disciplined the family was as they woke up early for their pre-dawn meal, Suhoor, before starting their day's fast. They followed their schedule perfectly and there was a

kind of quiet respect that filled the air. Everyone had their part to play — there were prayers to say and the day was off to a start.

The early mornings were always lively. The father got ready for work, the children rushed through breakfast and the housewife balanced getting everyone prepared with keeping things calm. Each prayer, which happened five times a day, felt like a moment where time stopped. It quickly became clear to me that these rituals weren't just routines; they were an essential part of their lives.

In the kitchen, the atmosphere varied from family to family. In more traditional homes, the women took control, preparing elaborate meals for Iftar, the evening meal to break the fast. I would watch them chopping vegetables, stirring pots and rolling out dough with ease and familiarity. The kitchen filled with the delicious

smell of spices and herbs, and I soon realised how important food was for bringing everyone together.

On the flip side, some younger families opted for convenience. They mixed traditional recipes with modern solutions, often ordering food from local restaurants or having potlucks with relatives. Still, they made sure to keep the spirit of togetherness alive, sitting around the table as a family. I found it interesting to see this balance between respecting their traditions and embracing a more modern approach.

The first week of Ramadhan was particularly special. Families prioritised coming together, with married children returning to their parents' homes, creating a warm atmosphere filled with laughter and shared memories. Even though I wasn't Muslim myself, it was inspiring to witness how important family was during this time. It really struck me that Ramadhan wasn't just an individual obligation; it was a shared journey that strengthened their faith and familial bonds.

As the sun set each evening, the anticipation for Iftar grew. Seeing dates and water on the table served as a simple yet profound reminder of the day's sacrifice. It was in these moments that I began to grasp the deeper meaning behind their practices. The discipline to fast, the patience in waiting for their meal and the joy of gathering around the table all wove together a rich tapestry of resilience and love.

At first, I was unsure about joining them in the fast, but as the days rolled on and I embraced the spirit of Ramadhan, I decided to give it a go. It wasn't just about being hungry or thirsty; it was more about connection — with the family, enjoying communal meals and engaging with a culture that values love and respect. They welcomed my willingness to learn and understand their traditions, which allowed me to become a respected part of their daily lives.

RAMADHAN TRADITIONS AROUND THE WORLD

Time for spiritual renewal and family gathering in Indonesia

In Indonesia, early preparations set the stage for the holy month of fasting and reflection. In Java, the solemn Nyekar ritual beckons families back to cemeteries a week before Ramadhan, where they honour their ancestors by spreading fragrant rose petals on graves, a poignant gesture of remembrance. Meanwhile, the enchanting city of Yogyakarta welcomes Ramadhan with Padusan, a purification ritual that takes place in the serene embrace of natural springs and lakes, symbolising spiritual renewal.

In Aceh, the festivities kick off with Meugang, a heartwarming family gathering centred around a traditional feast of beef, goat, or buffalo, enjoyed just before the fasting begins. These communal celebrations not only foster familial bonds but also reinforce the spirit of sharing and compassion that Ramadhan embodies. As the sun sets, the air fills with the enticing aromas of local delicacies, inviting families to break their fast together.

DAILY HEALTH TIPS TO REMEMBER



BALANCED SUHOOR

Suhoor, the pre-dawn meal during Ramadhan, is essential for providing energy throughout the fasting day. To ensure you are well-nourished, focus on a balanced and nutritious meal. Start with complex carbohydrates such as wholegrain bread, porridge, or brown rice, which release energy slowly, helping to prevent sudden hunger pangs. Incorporate protein sources like eggs, yoghurt, or legumes to promote satiety and support muscle maintenance.

Healthy fats from avocados or nuts contribute to sustained energy levels. Additionally, include fibre-rich fruits and vegetables to aid digestion and prolong feelings of fullness. Hydration is key, so drink plenty of water during suhoor. Avoid processed or sugary foods, as they can lead to energy crashes, ensuring your meal supports both physical well-being and the spiritual focus of Ramadhan.

SIGNIFICANT HISTORICAL EVENTS IN ISLAM



622 CE: The Hijra

The Hijra, or migration, of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and his followers from Mecca to Medina marks the start of the Islamic calendar. Facing persecution in Mecca, this pivotal event ensured the survival of the Muslim community. In Medina, Muhammad established a social order grounded in Islamic principles, becoming both a spiritual and political leader. The migration transformed Islam from a small sect into a unified community, fostering connections among diverse tribes and solidifying the Muslim identity.

FEATURES

Van Gogh
Museum
presents LEGO
bricks version
of Sunflowers



AMSTERDAM’S Van Gogh Museum has joined forces with the Danish toy brick-maker LEGO to create a build-your-own version of Vincent Van Gogh’s “Sunflowers”.

Standing in front of Van Gogh’s 1889 masterpiece, one of the series of sunflower paintings for which the painter is most renowned, museum curator Nienke Bakker said she hoped the LEGO version would help more people to become familiar with his life and work.

“The great thing is that people can actually build it themselves and build up a composition in a way that a painter builds up a composition,” she said.



Comprising 2,615 pieces and complete with adjustable petals, the LEGO “Sunflowers” is smaller than the painting that inspires it, but still takes many hours to build. It is made up of existing brick shapes and colours with the exception of a specially-created brick with Van Gogh’s signature.

Stijn Oom, a designer at the privately-held Danish company, said it had been a challenge to choose the right colours, but that Van Gogh’s distinctive painting style, with visible, bold brush strokes, had lent itself to the LEGO three-dimensional model.

“It was exciting to try and kind of mimic all of the shapes in the painting with existing LEGO elements,” Oom said.

As the new set officially went on sale on Saturday, Dutch fan Rienke Witmer, who got up at five in the morning and put on a dress with sunflower fabric, was first in line at Amsterdam’s LEGO store, with her husband and two children.

“I like LEGO and I like art, so it’s a good combination,” said Witmer. Once she has built her version of “Sunflowers”, she said she planned to give it pride of place in her home.

“I’ll hang it up in the room, so I can look at it every day,” she said. —Reuters



Colourful Angolan
carnival celebrates half
century independence

THEIR SWEAT-STAINED faces lit only by a dim yellow bulb in a neglected corner of the capital Luanda, revellers sway their hips to the sound of a catchy beat on the eve of the annual Angolan carnival.

The members of Groupe Uniao 17 de Setembro rehearse the semba, a playful yet intimate dance that emphasises connection and improvisation — without the sensual pace of its sister style Kizomba.

The name means “a touch of belly buttons” in the Angolan language Kimbundu.

A tourism drawcard, the carnival’s roots lie in Angola’s Portuguese past and offers the oil-rich country a chance to showcase its creativity, culture and music.

The event is usually held ahead of Easter and ushers in the season of Lent.

The parade became an annual tradition in 1978 and attracts dancers and floats from Angola’s different ethnic communities in colourful costumes and makeup.

This year’s edition will dazzle the capital in a three-day extravaganza to celebrate 50 years of independence.

The carnival “represents our identities, our cultural tradition, where each province shows its beauties,” said Domingos Mbolyo, who heads the Amazonas de Prenda, a group from the popular Prenda district of Luanda.

His 350 performers rehearsed for months in hopes of winning the carnival’s grand prize.

This year, they chose to honour “the kingdoms of Angola,” he said.

“Before colonisation and independence, there were the Ndongo and Matamba kingdoms... Queen Nzinga and King Mandume,” he said.

Queen Nzinga Mbande and King Mandume ya Ndemufayo, who ruled in the 1600s and the early 1900s respectively, have both become national symbols of resistance to colonialism.

— **LOW-KEY CELEBRATIONS** —

Saturday’s celebrations opened with a sea of colour and traditional music as children danced in a parade.

Decked out in yellow fedora hats, brown and gold silk tops and matching multi-coloured ruffled skirts, girls stood shoulder to shoulder before the blow of a whistle set off a jig.

At least 15 groups took part in the performances.

Boys holding black umbrellas with their white gloves and wooden walking canes to top the sleek look also joined in



the procession along streets lined with spectators.

Once held nationwide, the carnival performance is now centralised in Luanda, with celebrations subdued due to the country’s financial struggles.

Despite fabulous oil riches, Angola remains one of the poorest countries in the world and is one of the most closed societies on the

African continent.

The festival came back in force in 2023 after a two-year pandemic hiatus.

Like its more famous counterpart in Brazil, the carnival will culminate on Monday, when groups, extravagant floats and marching bands will once again parade in front of a jury, in an event attended by President Joao Lourenco. — AFP