

IRAN'S FOREIGN MINISTER SEES NO REASON FOR TALKS

TEHRAN WARNS AGAINST WIDER WAR

TRUMP ASKS ALLIES TO ESCORT SHIPS IN HORMUZ

IRANIAN MISSILES INJURE AT LEAST 8 IN ISRAEL

OIL SQUEEZE A 'SHORT-TERM PAIN,' US OFFICIAL

EGYPT'S FM, QATARI EMIR DISCUSS DE-ESCALATION

POPE DECRIES 'ATROCIOUS VIOLENCE' IN IRAN WAR

IRAN TO HELP PROBE STRIKES ON CIVILIAN AREAS

TEHRAN SAYS ARRESTS 20 'INFORMANTS' OF ISRAEL

ITALY-US AIRBASE IN KUWAIT HIT BY DRONE



A woman takes out a broken glass from a window at her house that was damaged by a strike in Tehran, Iran, on Sunday. — Reuters

IRAN

ON Sunday warned countries against getting involved in its war with the United States and Israel, after President Donald Trump urged world powers to escort oil tankers through the Strait of Hormuz chokepoint in the Gulf.

Tehran also sent a stern message to its Arab neighbours, telling them that the Islamic republic has what its foreign minister called “ample evidence” that US bases on their territories were being used to launch attacks.

“This war will end when we are certain that it will not be repeated and that reparations will be paid,” Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said. “We experienced this last year: Israel attacked, then the United States,” he said, recalling Israel’s 12-day air war in June last year, which briefly drew in US forces for a night of strikes on Iranian nuclear sites. Energy prices have soared across the world since Iran responded to the new US-Israeli campaign by threatening shipping through the Strait of Hormuz, which usually sees passage of 20 per cent of global oil and gas exports to the global market.

Trump responded by urging “China, France, Japan, South Korea, the UK and others” to send ships to escort tankers, while the US military continues to pound drone, boat and missile launch sites in Iran on the north shore.

ESCALATION

But the countries he listed have given only guarded responses, and Araghchi, in a call with French counterpart Jean-Noel Barrot, warned them to “refrain from any action that could lead to escalation and expansion of the conflict”.

The UK defence ministry was non-committal, saying “we are currently discussing with our allies and partners a range of options to ensure the security of shipping in the region”.

Britain’s minister for energy security, Ed Miliband, said the “plan now has to be to de-escalate the conflict... We are talking to our allies. There are different ways in which we can make maritime shipping possible.” South Korea said it was monitoring Trump’s remarks on social media, while the policy chief of Japan’s ruling party, Takayuki Kobayashi, said the bar for sending Japanese navy ships to the region under existing laws was “extremely high”.

SEA PASSAGE

Global oil prices have surged by 40 per cent as Iran has choked off the vital sea passage and attacked energy and shipping industry targets in its Gulf neighbours. The strikes were in retaliation for the US and Israeli air campaign that killed its supreme leader, triggering a war across the Middle East. SEE ALSO P6 AND 7

Austria’s glaciers in record retreat amid climate crisis

VIENNA: Austria’s glaciers endured another year of severe decline during the 2024-2025 measurement period, with 94 of the 96 monitored ice masses experiencing significant shrinkage while only two remained stable — a compelling testament to the accelerating impact of climate change across the Alpine arc.

According to the Austrian Alpine Association’s latest annual assessment, the average glacier retreat across the nation reached approximately 20.3 metres. The report identifies the principal cause as a convergence of adverse climatic factors: a comparatively warm winter with meager snowfall, followed by an intensely hot early summer.

June temperatures soared approximately 5 degrees above seasonal norms, while annual averages climbed 2 degrees above the long-term baseline, all accompanied by a sharp 24.5 per cent reduction in precipitation.

The findings reveal that numerous Austrian glaciers have entered a phase of structural decomposition, characterised by extensive fracturing, recession of ice masses, collapse of glacier tongues and expanding rock exposures. These transformations are fundamentally redrawing the Alpine landscape, offering stark visual evidence of climate change’s direct and accelerating influence.

The report documents particularly dramatic losses: the Alpenz Ferner glacier in Tyrol receded an alarming 114.3 metres, the Schlatenkees glacier in Salzburg contracted by approximately 103.9 metres and the Krimmler Kees retreated by some 90.3 metres. Even the Pasterze Glacier — Austria’s largest, flowing from the slopes of Mount Grossglockner, the nation’s highest peak — saw its tongue withdraw 54 metres, with experts warning that continued melting may cleave the glacier into two separate entities within the coming years. — Agencies



Numerous Austrian glaciers have entered a phase of structural decomposition.

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SHORT TAKES

TAWI ATIR ROAD COMPLETED



SALALAH: The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MoTCIT) recently completed the maintenance of a road linking Tawi Atir, Wadi Rakah and Jabjat in the wilayats of Taqah and Mirbat in the Governorate of Dhofar. The project cost more than RO 1.8 million. The project included the widening of the road by 8 metres, constructing dual box culverts at different locations and installing side protection structures, traffic guides and road markings. — ONA

26

RAMADHAN
1447 AH
MONDAY
MAR 16, 2026

PRAYER TIMINGS

FAJR
05:00 AM

DHUHR
12:21 PM

ASR
03:45 PM

MAGHRIB
06:21 PM

ISHA
07:31 PM

1 2 3 4 5

6 7 8 9 10

11 12 13 14 15

16 17 18 19 20

21 22 23 24 25

26

omanobserver.com

Ensuring operational continuity in emergencies

THE AUTHORITY for Public Services Regulation (APSR) on Sunday issued a regulation on the risk management and operational continuity in the electricity and water sectors, and another regulation on risk management and operation continuity in the water and wastewater sector. The new regulations aim to enhance preparedness for dealing with emergencies and ensure the continuity of vital services.

The regulations mandate that licensees in the electricity and water sectors, and the water and wastewater sectors, prepare an integrated risk management and operation continuity system to ensure an uninterrupted provision of services in emergency cases. The system must be prepared and submitted to the APSR for approval within a period not exceeding six months from the effective date of the regulations or from the date of obtaining the licence.

The regulations define risks as any event, circumstance, or internal or external threat that may negatively affect the continuity or quality of service provision, including natural disasters, cyber threats, operational failures and supply chain disruptions.



The regulations mandate that licensees in the electricity and water sectors prepare an integrated risk management continuity system to ensure an uninterrupted provision of services in emergency cases.

The regulations require the licensees to implement several essential risk management procedures, most notably: conducting regular assessments of potential risks to operational processes; maintaining an up-to-date risk register; submitting an annual summary to the APSR outlining potential risks and mechanisms to mitigate them; developing, testing and regularly updating a risk management plan, including procedures for handling service interruptions; and participating in joint emergency drills and exercises in coordination with relevant entities.

The regulations also stipulate the necessity to devise a comprehensive operational continuity plan to ensure the continuity of minimum services

during emergencies or disruptions, providing backup systems and contingency measures, conducting periodic tests of these plans and reporting the results to the APSR. The regulations require the licensees to provide the necessary technical and administrative resources for risk management and operational continuity, in addition to submitting an annual report to the APSR demonstrating compliance with the regulations. The report must include risk assessment reports, emergency response drills and updates to operational continuity plans.

As per the regulations, it is mandatory for the licensee to provide the APSR with all information, data and documents related to the implementation of their provisions, to fully cooperate with periodic audits conducted by the APSR or its designated representative, and to implement directives based on the results of these audits within the specified timeframes.

The regulations give the APSR the power to impose administrative fines of up to RO 500,000 which can be doubled for repeat offenses within two years. A daily fine of up to RO 2,500 may also be imposed for continuous violations, with a maximum total fine of 50,000.

جهاز الضرائب
Tax Authority

Announcement

The Tax Authority would inform taxpayers who are subject to Income Tax, and their fiscal year ends on **December 31, 2025**, to file their tax returns and pay their tax dues as follows:

- Establishments which are subject to (3%) of income tax shall file their tax returns no later than **March 30, 2026**.
- Taxpayers paying (15%) of income tax should file their tax returns no later than **April 30, 2026**.

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

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

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taxoman

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MOCSY LAUNCHES DIGITAL INNOVATION AWARD FOR LIBRARIES



The competition aims to strengthen the role of libraries and community cultural centres

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth (MoCSY) has launched the Excellence Competition for Libraries and Private Cultural Centres 2026 under the theme 'Digital Innovation Award for Libraries and Private Cultural Centres.' The launch coincided with the celebration of Arab Library Day, observed annually on March 10. The competition invites private libraries and cultural centres to present innovative digital ideas that could enhance library services and improve user experience through modern technologies. The initiative focuses on proposals that offer an integrated vision for the future of digital transformation in the cultural sector.

Participants are encouraged to submit creative ideas or initiatives aimed at developing services, activities, or communication methods with users, as well as digital solutions that can be applied within the environment of libraries and cultural centres. The competition aims to encourage innovative thinking in digital transformation, promote creative approaches to cultural services and activities and strengthen the role of libraries and community cultural centres as active partners in advancing cultural digital development.

Participation is open to private libraries and cultural centres registered with the ministry and holding valid licences. Entries will be evaluated based on the clarity of the idea, its applicability and the expected cultural and societal impact. — ONA

Agenda for the Annual General Meeting of the Pearl Real Estate Investment Fund

The Fund Management Body of the Fund is pleased to invite the unitholders to attend the Annual Ordinary General Meeting which will be held at 10:00 pm on Monday 30th of March 2026, via the electronic platform for general meetings which may be accessed through Muscat Clearing and Depository's website (www.mcd.gov.om). In the event that the quorum to convene the Annual Ordinary General Meeting is not complete, the second general meeting will be convened at 10:00 pm on 31st of March 2026, to discuss and consider the following agenda:

- 1) To consider and approve the Fund Management Body's report for the financial year ended on 31 December 2025 (as per the attached).
- 2) To consider and approve the auditor's report on the financial statements of the Fund for the financial year ended on 31 December 2025 (as per the attached annexure).
- 3) To consider and approve the proposed distribution of cash dividends to the unitholders registered on the date of the Annual Ordinary General Meeting of an amount of 5.78 baizas per unit for the financial year ended on 31 December 2025.
- 4) To ratify the sitting fees paid to the Fund Management Body for the financial year ended on 31 December 2025 and determine the sitting fees for the Fund Management Body for the financial year ending on 31 December 2026 (as per the attached annexure).
- 5) To consider and approve the proposed distribution of remuneration of an amount of OMR 30,000 to the Fund Management Body for the financial year ended on 31 December 2025 (as per the attached annexure).
- 6) To notify the general assembly of the related party transactions entered into by the Fund during the financial year ended on 31 December 2025 (as per the attached annexure).
- 7) To appoint the external auditor for the financial year ending on 31 December 2026 and to determine its remuneration (as per the attached annexure).

Pursuant to the Fund's Articles of Association and the Rules for Attending General Meetings and Voting via Electronic Systems issued by the Financial Services Authority, we would like to bring your attention to the following:

- 1) Juristic persons shall have the exclusive right to appoint a natural person to attend the Annual Ordinary General Meeting and vote on their behalf via electronic means, provided that this natural person has an investor number in Muscat Clearing and Depository Company.
- 2) Voting on any of the items on the agenda shall commence no more than three days before the date of the general meeting and until the voting process ends on the day of the meeting. If a unitholder's balance is increased or decreased, the voting process will be cancelled, and the unitholder must cast his vote again on the day of the general meeting.

To prevent delay in starting the meeting, unitholders are requested to attend the meeting at least half an hour before the scheduled meeting time.

For any clarification regarding the matters mentioned in the above agenda, please contact Mr. Alsalt Moosa Al Nabhani by telephone 21011788 or email Alsalt.alnabhani@sib.om



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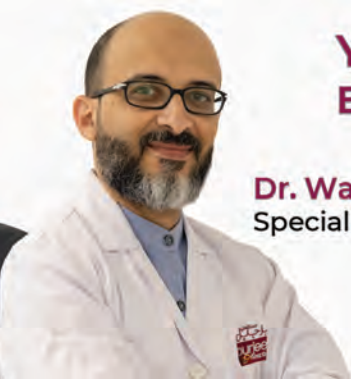
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MOH 42194/2025

Training centre opens at Al Sumood Camp

GEN Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani, Minister of the Royal Office, opened on Sunday the Advanced Training Centre at Al Sumood Camp of the Sultan's Special Force (SSF). This comes on the occasion of the annual day of the Sultan's Special Force, which falls on March 15th every year.

During the opening, the Minister of the Royal Office was briefed on the centre's facilities and the roles and tasks assigned to it. He also witnessed the execution of a practical demonstration that included several field exercises within the centre's areas of expertise.

The Minister of the Royal Office pinned the Excellent Service and Royal Commendation medals



A practical demonstration was held as part of the camp



Gen Sultan al Numani opened the Advanced Training Centre at Al Sumood Camp

on several senior officers, commissioned officers, and non-commissioned officers of the Sultan's Special Force, in appreciation of their dedication and sincerity in performing their national duty.

On this occasion, Maj Gen Musallam bin Mohammed Jaaboub, Commander of the Sultan's Special Force (SSF), pinned

the Special Service Medal and the Long Service and Good Conduct Medal on several commissioned and non-commissioned officers of the force. He also honoured a number of distinguished personnel in appreciation of their efforts and contributions in performing their tasks and duties with utmost efficiency. — ONA



وزارة الإعلام
Ministry of Information



ELECTRONIC BIDDING ANNOUNCEMENT

The Ministry of Information shall be electronically bidding vehicles through on Mazad Oman (www.mazad.om) in accordance with the following statement:

Statement	Place of Inspection	Date and Timing of Inspection	Date of Electronic Bidding
Vehicles	Madinat Al Ilam	Monday 6/4/2026 Tuesday 7/4/2026 Between 8:00 am & 1:00 pm	From Wednesday 8/4/2026 To Thursday 9/4/2026

- You may acquaint yourself with the terms and sign up through www.mazad.om
- For further details, you may reach us through info@mazad.om



الوطنية للتمويل
national finance

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Postal Code 112, Sultanate of Oman
Tel: 24470000
info@nationalfinance.co.om
nationalfinance.co.om

Directors' Report



On behalf of the Board of Directors, we are pleased to present to you the results of the Company for the year ended December 31, 2025.

The year 2025 marked a period of gradual stabilization in the global economic environment, following several years of heightened volatility. While geopolitical developments and tighter monetary conditions continued to influence global markets, inflationary pressures moderated over the course of the year, and signs of improving economic confidence emerged, particularly in the second half. These developments supported a more constructive outlook for business activity and investment.

Within this context, the Sultanate of Oman demonstrated solid economic resilience, underpinned by sound fiscal management, improved inflation control, and steady domestic growth. The operating environment remained supportive, providing a stable foundation for your Company's performance. The Board is encouraged by the Company's ability to adapt effectively to evolving market conditions, supported by successful execution of transformation initiatives, strong governance, disciplined risk management, and the continued dedication of our employees.

During the year, the Company further strengthened its position as the market leader in the leasing sector in Oman, supported by a well-diversified national footprint of 24 branches and a comprehensive product offering across Retail, Corporate, and SME segments. Business performance in 2025 reflected steady growth, improved operational efficiency, and continued focus on asset quality and customer experience.

As we look ahead to 2026, the Company enters the year with positive momentum and a robust platform for sustainable growth. We anticipate continued improvement in credit demand and expect moderate and well-balanced lending growth, supported by prudent underwriting standards and alignment with the Company's defined risk appetite.

Ongoing investment in systems, processes, and people positions the Company well to capitalize on emerging opportunities while maintaining a strong risk discipline.

The FY 2026 Oman budget represents the first year of the Eleventh Five-Year Development Plan (2026-2030) and is focusses on achieving the Oman Vision 2040 development objectives. The budget considers the recent global economic and geopolitical environment resulting in high inflation rates and growing global debt risks. The important pillars of Budget 2026 are improving the business environment and expanding the participation of the private sector in the economic development, with a target of 3.7% economic growth, largely fueled by maintaining safe and sustainable levels of public spending, continuing to raise non-oil revenue contributions, and giving priority to projects with a social dimension such as education, health and social housing projects. These initiatives by the Government are expected to achieve better financial efficiency and foster economic growth in 2026 and beyond.

We remain optimistic about the economic outlook and confident in the Company's ability to sustain its market leadership, deliver long-term value to shareholders, and continue providing customers with high quality financial solutions and service excellence.

During the year 2025, your Company focused on writing good quality business with improved margins. The Profit before tax was at **18.20 million** (14.25 million in 2024) while net investment in lease was at **652.72 million** (578.87 million in 2024), an increase of 12.76% over the previous year. Profit after tax was **15.21 million** as compared to **12.11 million** in 2024, an increase of 25.56% over the previous year. The strong results are also testament to the ongoing focus of our strategic actions which we set out back at the beginning of the year.

Your Company is in full compliance with the provisioning norms prescribed by the International Financial Reporting Standards. Your Company also prudently holds an additional overlay considering the external environment and developments in the region.

Digital transformation remained a key focus area during 2025. The Company's digital platforms continue to play an increasingly important role in supporting core business activities and enhancing customer engagement. Ongoing investments were made to improve accessibility, efficiency, and service quality across both physical and Digital Channels, contributing to a more seamless and consistent customer experience.

Progress under the Company's digitization and transformation program has supported operational efficiency, enhanced controls, and reinforced the Company's leadership position within the financial services sector. These initiatives also position the Company well to respond proactively to emerging opportunities and evolving customer needs.

The Company's dividend distribution aims to provide shareholders with a sustainable and reasonable return while maintaining a strong capital base to support future growth. Based on the Company's performance during the year and its capital position, the Board of Directors recommends a dividend distribution of 15.0% in cash and 7% in stock. This dividend will be paid on the shares outstanding on the record date.

Your Company complies with all the requirements of the code of corporate governance, as specified by the Financial Services Authority (FSA). A detailed report on corporate governance is set out along with a certificate from the Statutory Auditors in compliance with FSA regulations.

Throughout 2025, sustainability continued to be embedded within the Company's business approach and long-term strategy, in alignment with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040. The Company remained focused on advancing responsible growth by balancing commercial objectives with environmental stewardship, social contribution, and sound governance practices.

During the year, National Finance progressed the implementation of its sustainability priorities, with particular emphasis on reducing environmental impact, supporting talent and youth development, promoting financial inclusion, and offering products and services that contribute positively to the wider economy.

National Finance continued its partnerships with key entities to support initiatives that contribute to empowering youth, SME growth, community wellbeing, an environmental sustainability. These collaborations reflect the Company's commitment to creating meaningful social impact and supporting national development priorities through targeted and responsible engagement.

Your Company remains firmly committed to the development of national talent. As at 31 December 2025, Omani Nationals represented 92.64% of the workforce, exceeding the national Omanisation target. Ongoing investment in training, development, and career progression continued to support the growth of Omani employees and prepare them to assume broader responsibilities within the organization. The Company remains committed to the continuous development of employees, with ongoing investment in learning, capability building, and staff engagement initiatives aimed at fostering a motivated, high performing workforce aligned with the Company's values and long-term objectives.

Looking ahead, the Board remains confident in the Company's strategic direction and its ability to navigate evolving market conditions. With a strong balance sheet, disciplined risk management, continued investment in digital capabilities, and a clear focus on customer experience and operational excellence, the Company is well positioned to pursue sustainable growth while maintaining resilience and long-term value creation.

We extend our sincere gratitude to all stakeholders, particularly regulators, customers, and business partners for their continued trust and support. We also extend gratitude to the Company's employees for their dedication, professionalism, and commitment, which remain fundamental to the Company's performance and its position as a trusted leader in the sector.

Audited Financial Statements 2025*

Statement Of Profit Or Loss And Other Comprehensive Income For The Year Ended 31 December 2025

	2025 Oman Rial '000	2024 Oman Rial '000
Income		
Income from financing activities	72,258	60,471
Finance cost	(30,843)	(29,084)
Net finance income	41,415	31,387
Other operating income	3,390	2,814
	44,805	34,201
Expenses		
Operating expenses	(15,987)	(14,090)
Depreciation	(1,120)	(848)
Amortisation	(115)	(366)
Net impairment loss on finance leases, working capital finance and factoring receivables	(7,786)	(4,412)
Bad debts written off	(1,594)	(234)
Total expenses	(26,602)	(19,950)
Profit before tax	18,203	14,251
Income tax expense	(2,993)	(2,137)
Profit after tax	15,210	12,114
Other comprehensive income		
<i>Items that will not be reclassified to profit or loss</i>		
Change in fair value of cash flow hedge	(102)	(524)
Other comprehensive (loss) / income	(102)	(524)
Total comprehensive income	15,108	11,590
Basic and diluted earnings per share (Oman Rial)	0.021	0.018

Statement Of Financial Position As At 31 December 2025

	2025 Oman Rial '000	2024 Oman Rial '000
ASSETS		
Cash and cash equivalents	9,261	7,577
Net investment in finance leases	510,714	458,363
Working capital	141,593	120,041
Factoring receivables	413	465
Advances, prepayments and other receivables	6,488	4,600
Asset held for sale	1,500	1,500
Goodwill	5,950	5,950
Intangible assets	188	158
Property, equipment and right-of-use assets	7,571	7,587
Statutory deposit	250	250
Total assets	683,928	606,491
LIABILITIES AND EQUITY		
LIABILITIES		
Creditors and accruals	18,443	12,665
Tax liabilities	3,409	2,518
Bank borrowings	416,078	385,512
Fixed deposits	93,455	58,489
Deferred tax liabilities	1,054	1,032
Provision for employees' end of service benefits	720	674
Total liabilities	533,159	460,888
EQUITY		
Capital and reserves		
Share capital	60,813	57,370
Share premium	5,786	5,786
Revaluation reserve	1,379	1,399
Cash flow hedge reserve	-	102
Impairment reserve	8,670	8,670
Legal reserve	14,220	12,699
Retained earnings	24,901	24,577
Total shareholders' equity attributable to the equity holders of the company	115,769	110,603
Perpetual bonds	35,000	35,000
Total equity	150,769	145,603
Total liabilities and equity	683,928	606,491
Net assets per share (Oman Rial)	0.190	0.193

* Subject to approval by the shareholders in the Annual General Meeting
Note: The complete accounts will be sent by mail to any shareholder who requests the company in either Arabic or English within 7 days of receipt of the request. The full set of financials are available in the website of Muscat Stock Exchange.

Hani Muhammad Al Zubair
Chairman

AbdulAziz Mohammed Al Balushi
Deputy Chairman

Tariq Suleiman Al Farsi
Chief Executive Officer

OMAN

Unicef Oman launches ‘Promise Wall’ for children

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, MARCH 15

Promises carry power. They are made to family, to friends and to oneself — and keeping them reflects who we are.

Now, residents and citizens in Oman are being invited to make a promise that can help a child in crisis survive, heal and grow.

In line with Oman’s national child policy of ensuring a safe, healthy and nurturing childhood, Unicef Oman has launched a unique community initiative at Al Mouj Muscat, encouraging people to pledge their commitment to protecting children.

The campaign, titled ‘Wahd’ (Promise), began last Wednesday and features a large interactive wall where visitors can write personal pledges dedicated to the well-being and rights of children.

This is the first public promise wall of-its-kind in Oman. The whiteboard installation, measuring 5 x 2 metres, will remain at Al Mouj until March 31 and has already attracted hundreds of participants since being set up along the busy walkway.

“The idea goes beyond writing a simple note. It is not only a promise but a commitment that one makes — and a promise that should not be broken,” said Sara al Lamki, Partnerships and Communications Officer at



Unicef Oman.

She explained that the message behind the initiative is simple: to stand with children.

“All children have the right to safety and education, especially in the times we live in today. We want children to grow without being affected by conflicts and to always have the right to security, health and education,” she said.

After March 31, the team plans to move the wall to other public indoor spaces to allow more people to participate in the initiative.

The campaign highlights the urgent needs of children facing humanitarian

crises around the world. Conflict, displacement and economic hardship continue to threaten their lives and futures, making initiatives that raise awareness and support especially important.

Visitors are invited to write short but meaningful promises reflecting their commitment to children’s safety, education and well-being. The campaign also includes a digital version of the wall, allowing people to share their pledges online and expand the reach of the message.

Participants receive a Promise bracelet, which they can wear as a reminder of their pledge or share with loved ones as a symbol of hope for children’s futures.

People are also encouraged to record a short video wearing the bracelet and share it online by tagging @unicef_oman, inspiring others to join the movement and make a lasting difference for children everywhere.

‘EID JOY’ INITIATIVE SUPPORTS CHILDREN BATTLING CANCER

MUSCAT: As part of engaging the community in the spirit of giving and in preparation for Eid Al Fitr, Knowledge Oman collaborated with Techno Plastic to launch the ‘Eid Joy’ initiative to support children battling cancer at the Sultan Qaboos University Hospital. The humanitarian initiative aimed to spread joy among young patients and their families during the Eid season. Volunteers visited three hospital departments and distributed Eid gifts to more than 70 children undergoing treatment, along with their families.



The humanitarian initiative aimed to spread joy among young patients.

المتحدة للتمويل
United Finance

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BOARD OF DIRECTORS' REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2025

Dear Shareholders,

As we close another year of sustained financial growth and strategic achievements, I am privileged to present, on behalf of the Board of Directors, the financial results of United Finance Company SAOG for the year ended 31st December 2025.

Economic Overview:

According to data issued by the national Centre for statistics and Information (NCSI) in December 2025, real GDP growth continued through the end of the third quarter of the year, reaching 2.2%. This growth was driven primarily by higher value added from non-oil activities. Alongside government efforts to entrench sustainability and strengthen the country fiscal position. This positive trajectory was further reflected in the upgrade of Oman sovereign credit rating to investment grade by international agencies. Including Fitch, Standard & Poor's and Moodys, enhancing investor confidence and reinforcing the Sultanate attractiveness as an investment destination. The Central Bank of Oman continued to play a proactive role in promoting financial stability, sustainable growth, and financial inclusion. Resultantly, total credit extended by the banking system increased to OMR 35.01 billion by November 2025, compared to OMR 32.51 billion at December 2024. Regulatory initiatives, including facilitation of partial cheque payment and introduction of direct debit mechanisms, are expected to increase the velocity of money which is expected to further bolster economic activity.

Financial Performance:

Our financial performance for 2025 reflects the strength and resilience of our strategic approach. We have experienced substantial growth in our assets, which have increased to OMR 133,367,293 as of December 2025, compared to OMR 110,603,297 in the previous year, marking a 21% increase.

Our total equity saw a modest rise, demonstrating our commitment to maintaining a strong capital base. The net instalment finance debtors represent our focused growth in our core business areas, with a significant increase of 21% year-over-year. We have prudently managed expenses, which have resulted in an operating income of OMR 4,722,449, an increase of 36% over the previous year. After accounting for taxation and other considerations, our net profit after tax and provisions stands at OMR 2,967,876, reflecting an 43% increase from the prior year.

Looking Ahead:

Looking to the future, our outlook for 2026 is optimistic. The government's initiatives towards economic diversification and the anticipated GDP growth bode well for our operations. We are poised to capitalize on these positive developments, driven by a strategic focus on our core financial services and a commitment to technological innovation.

Strategic Initiatives:

Our strategic initiatives remain in alignment with the national vision, and we have continued to enhance our service offerings, aligning with our new brand promise. The implementation of our advanced core banking system is on track, and we expect this to significantly enhance our service capabilities and operational efficiency.

Human Resources:

Our investment in human capital is reflected in our rigorous training programs and leadership development initiatives. These efforts underscore our commitment to nurturing a workforce that is equipped to meet the challenges of a dynamic financial landscape.

Corporate Governance

The company remains firmly committed to the highest standards of Corporate governance, ethics, and transparency. The Board exercises effective oversight of strategy, risk management, controls, performance, and sustainability for company long term objectives and the creation of sustainable stakeholder's value. The company ensures compliance with high standard of regulations and internal control system.

Dividend:

In recognition of our financial health and in appreciation of our shareholders' continued support, the Board of Directors is pleased to recommend a cash dividend of 5% (5 Baizas per share) of the paid-up capital for the year 2025.

Acknowledgement:

Our heartfelt gratitude goes out to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tank Al Said for his visionary leadership. We also express our sincere thanks to the various regulatory authorities, our bankers, shareholders, and stakeholders for their unwavering support. A special note of appreciation is extended to our management and staff for their dedication and hard work.

In conclusion, the promising economic indicators and our solid financial performance place us in a strong position for continued growth. We look forward with confidence to the year ahead, with the unwavering support of our stakeholders and the grace of Allah.

Warm regards,

Abdulla Salim Rashid AL -Khayari
Chairman of the Board

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION
AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2025

	2025 OMR	2024* OMR
ASSETS		
Cash and cash equivalents	1,786,866	1,238,572
Deposit with the Central Bank of Oman	250,000	250,000
Investment securities	831,356	831,356
Instalment finance debtors – net	126,744,297	104,810,518
Other assets	816,479	618,860
Property, vehicles, equipment and right-of-use assets	2,427,085	2,342,781
Assets held for sale	511,210	511,210
TOTAL ASSETS	133,367,293	110,603,297
EQUITY		
Share capital	35,612,729	35,612,729
Legal reserve	5,936,085	5,639,297
Special reserve	2,534,886	2,368,989
Impairment reserve	369,944	1,307,187
Investment revaluation reserve	235,625	235,625
Retained earnings	5,721,411	4,796,797
Total equity	50,410,680	49,960,624
Liabilities		
Creditors and other payables	7,982,147	5,618,096
Corporate deposits	15,385,928	8,053,950
Borrowings	42,837,000	46,566,137
Current tax liabilities	533,867	379,832
Unsecured non-convertible bonds	14,916,345	-
Unsecured non-convertible dividend bonds	1,276,668	-
Deferred tax liabilities	24,658	24,658
Total liabilities	82,956,613	60,642,673
TOTAL EQUITY AND LIABILITIES	133,367,293	110,603,297
NET ASSETS PER SHARE	0.142	0.140

STATEMENT OF PROFIT OR LOSS AND OTHER
COMPREHENSIVE INCOME
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2025

	2025 OMR	2024 OMR
Interest income on instalment finance debtors	11,342,305	9,677,059
Interest expense	(3,853,660)	(3,218,310)
Net instalment finance income	7,488,645	6,458,749
Fee commission and other income	1,918,632	1,392,755
Net operating income	9,407,277	7,851,504
Operating expenses	(4,469,473)	(4,221,570)
Depreciation	(215,355)	(146,256)
Allowance for expected credit losses	(1,230,830)	(1,035,136)
Profit before tax	3,491,619	2,448,542
Income tax expense	(523,743)	(367,281)
PROFIT FOR THE YEAR	2,967,876	2,081,261
Other comprehensive income		
Other comprehensive income that will not be reclassified to the income statement		
Revaluation gains on equity instruments at fair value through other comprehensive income – net of tax	-	74,984
TOTAL PROFIT AND OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE YEAR	2,967,876	2,156,245
Basic and diluted earnings per share	0.008	0.006

The complete accounts will be sent by mail to any shareholder who requests them, in either Arabic or English within 7 days of the receipt of such request addressed to:
Chief Executive Officer, United Finance Co. SAOG
P O Box 3652, PC 112, Ruwi, Sultanate of Oman.
Tel: 24577300 Fax 24561557
E-mail: ufc@ufcoman.com, Website: www.ufcoman.com

وزارة الإعلام
Ministry of Information

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

The Internal Tender Committee in Ministry of Information announces its Tender for the following work:

Tender No.	Tender Name	Class & Grade	Last Date For Collection	Submission Date	Purchase Fees (R.O.)
1/2026 (78/2026) at E-Tendering	GENERAL CLEANING SERVICES FOR MINISTRY OF INFORMATION PROPERTIES FOR THE PERIOD FROM 01.07.2026 TO 30.06.2028	Excellent Frst	31/3/2026	27/4/2026	25/-

1. All specialized companies in the field of the tender shown above and are registered with the Tender Board to the degree indicated above, may obtain tender documents, against non-refundable fees, from the website through the following link: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>

2. Companies and institutions are exempted from providing a temporary insurance of 1% when submitting their bid, provided that they sign a document committing themselves to the submitted bid for a period determined when the bidding strategy is approved in accordance with the document attached to the Isnad platform. As for international companies that do not have a headquarters in the Sultanate of Oman, they are required to provide temporary insurance of 1%.

(For more information, please see the original circular issued by the Tender Board on the Isnaad platform.)

Note that the last date for accepting bids as mentioned above is before 10:00 am. Any bid received after the time and date mentioned in the submission date will be rejected automatically.

You are requested to provide 2 hard copies for your offer after the submission in Projects Department at Ministry of Information.

3. The Ministry has the right to:
1) Add or Cancell some works in the tender if necessary.
2) Cancellation of the tender without giving reasons.

For clarifications you may contact via:
Telephone : 24943785, 24943177, Email: (Moi.Tenders@omaninfo.om)

AL BATINAH SOUTH SEES 7.4% RISE

AL RUSTAQ: The number of commercial registers in Al Batinah South Governorate rose by 7.4 per cent to 3,396 during 2025, compared to 3,163 registers in 2024, bringing the total number of cumulative commercial registers to 28,669 by the end of 2025. Tarik bin Nasser al Harrasi, Director of the Department of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion in Al Batinah South Governorate, said that, during 2025, the Wilayat of Barka topped the list of new commercial registers (2,490), followed by the Wilayat of Al Rustaq (377), the Wilayat of Al Musannah (320), the Wilayat of Nakhal (95), the Wilayat of Wadi Al Maawil (63) and the Wilayat of Al Awabi (51).

Al Harrasi pointed out that the rise in number of commercial registers reflects the diversity of economic activities in the wilayats of the governorate. — ONA

Recall

TOYOTA VELOZ

RECALL DATE: 16/03/2026

Brand of Commodity	Year of Production*	#Number of Affected Commodities
Toyota Veloz	2022-2025	641

*Not all vehicles in this production period, are affected.
#Subject to revision, based on the information received from the manufacturer, from time to time.

Recall consequence

Due to improper programming of the ERI-ECU, information about estimated engine torque transmitted to CVT during high engine load, is less than the actual engine torque. This results in reduced CVT belt clamping force unable to withstand the input torque and belt slippage. Furthermore, dust generated from the belt slippage enters the CVT of passages, leading to abnormal oil pressure, causing hunting (Engine RPM fluctuation while driving).

Recall Action

Reprogram the ECM for issue related to the CVT.
This Customer Satisfaction Campaign is set to expire on 30/09/2028.

To check the serial number of the affected items, please visit the Recall and Warnings website by scanning the QR code.

الهيئة العامة للغذاء والدواء
Saudi Vigilance

Contact details: Toll free - 80073000
Working days Sunday - Thursday
Working time 8:00 - 17:00 hrs.

www.80073000.sa

Consumer Protection Authority
80079009 - 80079997
مركز حماية المستهلك ٨٠٠٧٩٠٠٩ - ٨٠٠٧٩٩٩٧

البريد: 03-093-SQP

التاريخ : ١٦ آذار ٢٠٢٦

الإصدار : 04

TRUMP WARNS OF MORE STRIKES ON IRAN 'S KHARG ISLAND

THE WAR SHOWS NO SIGN OF ENDING, TO LINGER STRAIN ON OIL MARKETS

US PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP threatened further strikes on Iran's Kharg Island oil export hub and urged allies to deploy warships to secure the Strait of Hormuz, an artery for global energy supplies, as Tehran vowed to intensify its response. With the US-Israeli war on Iran in its third week, Trump said US strikes had "totally demolished" much of the island and warned of more, telling NBC News on Saturday. "We may hit it a few more times just for fun." The remarks marked a sharp escalation from Trump, who had previously said the US was targeting only military sites on Kharg, and dealt a blow to diplomatic efforts. His administration has brushed aside attempts by Middle Eastern allies to open talks, three sources said, as the conflict grows.

NO SIGN OF ENDING

The war showed no sign of ending, and the strain on oil markets, with Iran essentially shutting down the vital Strait of Hormuz, looked set to linger.

Trump said Tehran appeared ready to make a deal to end the conflict but that "the terms aren't good enough yet." Tehran's capacity to choke off traffic through the Strait of Hormuz - the gateway for a fifth of the world's oil - has vaulted from a long-standing danger to an urgent flashpoint, confronting the US and its allies with a crisis that could upend the global economy.

Energy prices have spiked as the war triggers the biggest-ever disruption in oil supply, rattling markets and governments alike. "The Countries of the World that receive Oil through the Hormuz Strait must take care of that passage, and we will help - A LOT!" Trump wrote in a social media post on Saturday. "The US will also coordinate with those Countries so that everything goes quickly, smoothly, and well."

ATTACK ON ENERGY FACILITIES

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi said Iran would respond to any attack on its energy facilities. Iran's Revolutionary Guards said on Sunday they had carried out missile and drone strikes on targets in Israel and three US bases in the region, calling the attacks the first round of retaliation for workers killed in Iran's industrial areas. The Israeli military said it was intercepting incoming launches.

Saudi Arabia intercepted and destroyed 10 drones in Riyadh and the east, the defence ministry said. Iran's Revolutionary Guards said they had no connection to the attack, semi-official Pars news agency reported. Oil-loading operations have resumed at the global ship-refuelling hub of Fujairah in the United Arab Emirates, after a drone attack and fire on Saturday, a Fujairah-based industry source said. On Saturday, Washington warned US citizens to leave Iraq.

The war that Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu launched on February 28 has killed more than 2,000 people, mostly in Iran, according to reports from governments and state media. At least 15 were killed when an air strike hit a refrigerator and heater factory in the central Iranian city of Isfahan, the semi-official Pars news agency said on Saturday.

WARSHIPS TO THE STRAIT OF HORMUZ

Russia is supplying Iran with Shahed drones to use against the US and Israel, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky told CNN. Shahed drones have been linked to other



attacks on countries in the region, although their manufacturers are not always clear.

Trump, in a post on his Truth Social platform, urged China, France, Japan, South Korea, Britain and others to send warships to the Strait of Hormuz. None of those countries gave any immediate indication they would do so.

Takayuki Kobayashi, Japan's ruling

party policy chief, declined to rule out the possibility, but told public broadcaster NHK that "the (legal) threshold is very high." Japan interprets its pacifist postwar constitution to mean it can deploy its military if the nation's survival is threatened, but the government would have to invoke a 2015 security law that has not been used.

France is seeking to assemble a coalition to secure the strait once the security situation stabilises, while Britain is discussing a range of options with allies to ensure the security of shipping, officials have said. Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei, who replaced his slain father, has said the Strait of Hormuz should remain closed. — Reuters



A US Air Force Boeing KC-135 aircraft flies over Tel Aviv. — AFP

US military identifies six soldiers killed in Iraq

WASHINGTON: The Pentagon released the identities of six US crew members killed during the crash of a refuelling aircraft in western Iraq earlier this week, which authorities said was not caused by "hostile fire." The KC-135 aerial refuelling aircraft crashed in western Iraq on Thursday, bringing the number of US troops killed in operations against Iran to at least 13. A second aircraft involved in the operation landed safely.

The Pentagon said the six members killed in the crash were: John Klinner, 33, of Auburn, Alabama; Ariana Savino, 31, of Covington, Washington; Ashley Pruitt, 34, of Bardstown, Kentucky; Seth Koval, 38, of Mooresville, Indiana; Curtis Angst, 30, of Wilmington, Ohio; and Tyler Simmons, 28, of Columbus, Ohio. The first three were members of the US Air Force, while the latter three were stationed with the US Air National Guard.

The crash remains under investigation, Pentagon officials said, but US Central Command previously stated that "the loss of the aircraft was not due to hostile fire or friendly fire." The Resistance in Iraq, which is a loose alliance of Iran-backed Iraqi factions, claimed to have downed a KC-135. They also said they had targeted another plane that escaped. Since the start of the Middle East war, the alliance has been claiming daily attacks on US interests in Iraq and across the region. The KC-135 crash is at least the fourth US military aircraft lost during the war, after three F-15s were shot down by friendly fire over Kuwait. — AFP

South Korea 'closely monitoring' call to send warships to Hormuz



South Korean nationals wave the national flags, at Seoul Air Base. — AFP

SEOUL: South Korea said on Sunday it was paying close attention to US President Donald Trump's call for Seoul and other countries to send warships to help protect oil supplies passing through the Strait of Hormuz. Since US-Israeli forces launched a war against Iran on February 28, Tehran has responded with attacks and threats that have nearly halted shipping in the strait, through which one-fifth of global oil supplies normally passes.

After earlier vowing that the US Navy would begin escorting tankers through the waterway, Trump said

on social media on Saturday that "Many Countries" would also send warships to keep it open, naming South Korea and Japan among others. But after a senior Japanese official said on Sunday that Tokyo maintained a high threshold for such a move, Seoul also refrained from making any explicit commitments. "We are closely monitoring President Trump's remarks on social media and will carefully consider the matter in close consultation with the United States," a South Korean presidential official said. — AFP

Pope decries 'atrocious violence', urges ceasefire

VATICAN CITY: Pope Leo made an impassioned plea on Sunday for an immediate ceasefire in the expanding Iran war, lamenting "atrocious violence" that he said had killed thousands of non-combatants and caused suffering across the region. As the US-Israeli war on Iran enters its third week, the first US pope warned that violence would not bring the justice, stability and peace that the peoples of the region long for.

"For two weeks, the peoples of the Middle East have been suffering the atrocious violence of war," the pope said at his weekly Angelus prayer in St Peter's Square. "In the name of Christians in the Middle East and of all women and

men of good will, I appeal to those responsible for this conflict: Cease fire!" Pope Leo said. "Thousands of innocent people have been killed, and many more have been forced to leave their homes. I renew my closeness to all those who have lost their loved ones in the attacks," he said.

Leo added that the situation in Lebanon — ravaged by a war between Israel and the Lebanese group Hezbollah — was also a cause of "great concern".

"I hope for paths of dialogue that can support the country's authorities in implementing lasting solutions to the serious crisis currently underway, for the common good of all the Lebanese people," the pope said.

— Reuters



Pope Leo XIV leads the Angelus prayer from a window of the Apostolic Palace, at the Vatican. — Reuters

Israel approves emergency military funding

TEL AVIV: Israel has approved an \$827-million emergency budget allocation for military purchases, Israeli media reported on Sunday, as the war with Iran entered its third week. The 2.6-billion-shekel package was approved over the weekend by cabinet ministers during a telephone meeting, the daily Haaretz reported. It will be used for "security purchases" and to address "urgent needs", it said, without providing further details.

A finance ministry document circulated to all ministers and approved by several media outlets, including Channel 12, said that "given the intensity of the fighting" the additional budget allocation

was necessary. "An urgent and immediate need has arisen to provide an operational response, including the acquisition of munitions, the procurement of advanced weapons systems and the replenishment of critical combat stocks," the document said. The document added that the move constituted "an exceptional emergency decision intended solely to address needs arising from the conduct of the fighting". The funds will be drawn from the state budget, totalling \$222 billion and approved by the government on March 12, and expected to be adopted by the Knesset by March 31, according to the reports. — AFP



A firefighter extinguishes a blaze following a projectile impact, in southern Tel Aviv. — AFP

1

IRAN WARNS COUNTRIES NOT TO ACT

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi urged other countries to refrain from any action that could widen the scope of the war with Israel and the United States.

2

UK CALLS FOR DE-ESCALATION

A British minister said it was essential to calm the situation in the Middle East. The "plan now has to be to de-escalate the conflict", Energy Security Minister Ed Miliband said.

3

IRAN ARRESTS SUSPECTS LINKED TO ISRAEL

Iranian authorities have arrested at least 20 people in the country's northwest province of West Azerbaijan on suspicion of cooperating with Israel.

4

STRIKES KILL AT LEAST FOUR IN LEBANON

Overnight strikes in southern Lebanon killed at least four people, as Israel said it was pressing its campaign.

5

ISRAEL LAUNCHES 'WIDE-SCALE' STRIKES

Israel's military said it began a broad wave of strikes on western Iran, more than two weeks into the US-Israeli war against the Islamic republic.

6

IRAQ WARNS OF PRISON AT RISK

Iraq warned that drone attacks near Baghdad airport threatened the security of the nearby prison housing IS group suspects

7

ZELENSKY FEARS LOSING US SUPPORT

Ukraine does not want to lose US support for its struggle against Russia as a result of Washington's war with Iran.

8

IRAN GUARDS THREATEN ISRAELI PRIME MINISTER

Iran's Revolutionary Guards vowed on Sunday to "pursue and kill" Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

9

PENTAGON IDENTIFIES SOLDIERS KILLED

The Pentagon released the identities of six US crew members killed during the crash of a refuelling aircraft in western Iraq.

10

SOUTH KOREA EVACUATES MORE THAN 200

South Korea is evacuating 204 of its citizens and seven other nationals from the Middle East using a military aircraft.

OPINION

Social cohesion strengthens communities amid strife



SANDHYA RAO MEHTA

The writer is an Associate Professor, Sultan Qaboos University

SANDHYA RAO MEHTA

AS THE war in the Middle East enters its second week with little sign of quick resolution, larger questions of how to cope with such period of strife are being asked across the region. As legacy and social media are pointing out, the strength of a nation's social cohesion will ultimately point to positive outcomes. According to much research into conflict resolution, there are three significant elements to social cohesion, namely trust, cooperation and identity. Using a holistic approach that binds all these three elements has often ensured the presence of strong communities that are able to withstand temporary challenges. Times of crisis, whether caused by war, economic hardship or natural disasters, test societies in profound ways. Yet history repeatedly shows that communities that emerge stronger are those that hold together. Such holding is best when it is not imposed, but emerges from within the community. Social cohesion is not just a moral ideal but a practical necessity. The example of Oman and neighbouring

countries in reflecting such cohesion is clearly resulting in positive outcomes. Multiple social media posts showcase cooperation, dedication to a shared cause, and belief in the community and the nation. This may run counter to assumptions that conflict results in social divisions. If anything, the present conflict has only created a more cohesive and purposeful society. This is not just an idealistic version of real events. If anything, it is a practical reality. When people feel connected to one another, they are more likely to cooperate and help each other. Communities create support systems, and this shared sense of responsibility can make the difference between uncertainty and resilience. An important reason why social cohesion matters so much during times of strain is that it strengthens trust. When people trust one another and their institutions, they tend to follow guidance and participate in collective efforts, knowing that the state is looking after its interests. Trust reduces uncertainty and without it, misinformation could spread easily. A society undergoing a period of strife requires

Education and media play an important role in sharing narratives that emphasise common values, shared challenges, and collective achievements

cooperation. Again, research suggests that such cooperation is important horizontally, among individuals and groups, but this also leads to vertical cooperation of the people with state officials. Equally important and interesting is the view that a socially cohesive society accepts distinctions without allowing it to disturb an overall collective identity. This is represented in multiple digital and print content across the Arabian Gulf where individuals, nationals and expatriates, are asserting and showcasing a shared identity and a common cause. Solidarity, rather than division, is what is driving societies in this part of the world today. Education and media play an important role in sharing narratives that emphasise common values, shared challenges, and collective achievements. When public conversation highlights cooperation in a time of conflict, it becomes easier for communities to rally together. In that sense, social cohesion is not only a sign of a healthy society; it is also the foundation of its resilience. It is a lesson that communities across our region are effectively showcasing.

KHARG ISLAND IN TRUMP’S CROSSHAIRS

SUSANNAH WALDEN

Kharg Island, targeted in US air strikes on Saturday, is a scrubby stretch of land in the Gulf that handles almost all of Iran’s crude exports. Announcing the strikes, US President Donald Trump described Kharg as a ‘crown jewel’ for Iran and maintained that every military target on the island had been ‘totally obliterated’. The island, located around 30 kilometres off the Iranian mainland, is a hub for roughly 90 per cent of Iran’s crude exports, according to a JP Morgan note released earlier this month. Analysts had warned an attack could have major repercussions for the now fortnight-long conflict between the US and Israel and Iran, which began with air strikes that killed supreme leader Ali Khamenei on February 28.

Iranian strikes have all but halted maritime traffic in the Strait of Hormuz — through which a fifth of global crude oil and liquefied natural gas normally pass — and have also impacted oil infrastructure in other Gulf states. Trump wrote on Truth Social that for “reasons of decency, I have chosen NOT to wipe out the Oil Infrastructure on the Island.” But he warned: “However, should Iran, or anyone else, do anything to interfere with the Free and Safe Passage of Ships through the Strait of Hormuz, I will immediately reconsider this decision.” Ehsan Jahaniyan, deputy governor of Iran’s southern Bushehr province, quoted by the IRNA news agency, said oil companies “at this export terminal are continuing as normal” and there were no casualties. Kharg underwent key developments during Iran’s oil expansion in the 1960s and 1970s, with much of the country’s coast too shallow for supertankers. Iran has looked to diversify its export capabilities by opening the Jask terminal outside the Strait of Hormuz chokepoint in the Sea of Oman in 2021, but Kharg remains ‘a critical vulnerability’ for Iran, JP Morgan said. “It is a cornerstone of Iran’s economy and a major source of revenue for the Iranian Revolutionary Guards,” JP Morgan added, referring to Iran’s well-resourced ideological army which has major economic interests. There had also been speculation among observers that were US ground forces to look to deploy inside Iran then Kharg would be an obvious first staging post. Trump has given no indication that such a move could be forthcoming.

— AFP

War sparks mixed reactions for Iranian-American lawmaker

WHEN REP Yassamin Ansari of Arizona, the only Iranian American Democrat in Congress, learned in the early hours of February 28 that the United States was dropping bombs on Tehran, her first call was to her parents. They had fled Iran decades ago. So she felt a rush of hope, but also unease, when she learned that the opening salvo of the US-Israeli assault had killed the supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Ansari, 33, is a progressive Democrat who was sworn in last year, making her only the second Iranian American in Congress, after Rep Stephanie Bice, R-Okla, elected in 2020, whose father was born in Iran.

Ansari’s party is fiercely opposed to a war President Donald Trump started without congressional authorisation. But in a recent interview with *The New York Times*, she described conflicted feelings about the operation. She said that her family had discussed for decades when Iranians might finally topple the government and that they wondered if that moment had arrived. But she was also deeply concerned about Trump’s unilateral move to start a war that she calls “illegal” and worried that he might eventually align himself with a new leader who would continue to oppress the Iranian people while acquiescing to the American president’s demands. This interview has been edited and condensed for clarity. Q: What was your initial reaction when the US and Israel launched a joint attack that killed the supreme leader? A: I felt a wide mix of emotions as the daughter of Iranian immigrants who fled this regime and somebody who grew up hearing all of the devastating stories about how



An apartment building damaged in a missile strike in Tehran. — TNYT



MEGAN MINEIRO

The writer is a Times Congressional reporter

the regime treats its people. You know, my own grandfather was imprisoned by the regime. It is undoubtedly a moment of celebration when the supreme leader is killed, and Iranians overwhelmingly, whether inside the country or outside, are thrilled. As a congresswoman who is elected to represent my district in Phoenix and make sure that the US government is making decisions that are in the best interest of Americans, I was terrified that Donald Trump decided to engage in an illegal war without having made any case to the American public about why it is in our national security interests and if there is an imminent national security threat to the United States, and without coming to Congress for authorisation. So the feelings are widespread because of those very competing dynamics. Q: What have you heard from constituents in the opening days of the war?

A: Most of the calls have been very anti-war, very anti-the US engaging in potentially another long, endless war in the Middle East. The message I continue to try to put out is that multiple things can be true at one time. This is a very nuanced issue, and it can be true that it is illegal and potentially reckless for the region and the United States. But it can also be true that Iranians are desperate for regime change and were not able to do it without help. Q: What are you hearing from family members in the region? A: I have a lot of extended family who are older. My mom’s aunt, who’s 90 years old, lives in Tehran, and they have not been able to get a hold of her. The regime tends to shut down the internet whenever there’s any sort of threat from the outside. So that is really devastating. Q: What is your response to Trump saying he should be involved in selecting the next leader of Iran? A: This has been a concern of mine all along, and when I say that I don’t think that Donald Trump cares about the future of the Iranian people, this is why I say that. If what were to happen in Venezuela happens in Iran, ultimately, Iranians will recognise that, you know, this may not be in their best interest. The current regime in Iran — it’s not just one person, right? The supreme leader is a figurehead. And there are many people within the military ranks who are potentially even more hard line than the supreme leader was. A concern I have heard from the diaspora, who hear it also from their family, is the idea of Trump potentially cutting a deal with somebody like that who would probably be more loyal to the US but could still be just as brutal and just as corrupt and just as authoritarian to their own people.

— The New York Times

Ramadhan and the digital detox we all need



ABDULAZIZ
AL JAHDHAMI

The writer is author,
translator and
communications
professional

IN AN age where screens rarely dim and notifications never stop; silence has become a luxury. Our mornings begin with glowing devices, our days go through emails and endless scrolling, and our nights often end under artificial light. Connectivity has delivered convenience and opportunity, but it has also blurred the boundaries between presence and distraction.

Each year, Ramadhan offers something increasingly rare; an opportunity to pause. While it is primarily known as a month of fasting from food and drink, Ramadhan also presents a deeper invitation to fast from excess, noise, and digital overload.

Modern life runs on constant motivation. Social media feeds refresh endlessly as news cycles accelerate by the minute, messages demand immediate responses and the average person checks their phone dozens – sometimes hundreds – of times a day. Over time, this continuous engagement distract attention, shortens patience, and disturb the quality of real-world interaction.

However, Ramadhan gently challenges this pattern. At its core, fasting is an exercise in discipline. It trains the body to endure discomfort with intention. The same discipline that allows someone to step away from food and drink can also empower them to step away from excessive screen time. The principle is alike: self-control in pursuit of something higher. During Ramadhan, the daily rhythm naturally shifts. Early mornings begin with quiet reflection, evenings are centred around shared meals and prayer,

mosques fill and families gather. These sacred aspects of connection often highlight what digital distraction has reduced – eye contact, conversation, and presence.

Choosing to reduce screen time during Ramadhan is not about rejecting technology. It is about reclaiming balance. When devices are set aside, even briefly, the attention deepens. A conversation over Iftar becomes more meaningful, a moment of prayer becomes more focused and time with children becomes less interrupted. Hence, silence regains its value. There is also a psychological benefit. Constant exposure to online lives can fuel comparison and anxiety and news overload can heighten stress. Ramadhan’s emphasis on gratitude and satisfaction stands in contrast to the culture of constant comparison. By limiting digital consumption, individuals create space for reflection rather than reaction.

Spiritual focus thrives in stillness. Scrolling competes with meditation and notifications disrupt mindfulness. Therefore, a digital detox, even partial, aligns with Ramadhan’s purpose to strengthen self-awareness and deepen intention. Just as fasting trains the body to detach from physical dependency, reducing digital noise trains the mind to detach from constant external support.

Families, too, can use this month as a reset by establishing device-free Iftars, limiting social media after evening prayers, and replacing screen time with reading, conversation, or community service. These small changes can reshape habits beyond

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the month itself. Workplaces may also benefit from embracing healthier digital practices during Ramadhan by encouraging focused communication instead of constant messaging, respecting boundaries outside working hours, and prioritising meaningful collaboration over digital confusion. In doing so, organisations reinforce the same lesson Ramadhan teaches; productivity improves when distractions decrease.

The true power of Ramadhan lies in its ability to reorganise priorities. It reminds individuals that not every notification requires attention, not every trend demands participation, and not every moment must be documented. Presence is more valuable than performance, and reflection is more nourishing than reaction.

When Eid arrives, routines gradually resume as emails accumulate, schedules accelerate. Yet those who embrace a digital reset during Ramadhan often carry forward a new awareness – a recognition that control over technology is possible!

Ramadhan is not simply a fast from food; It is a fast from excess in all forms. In a hyper-connected world, perhaps the most needed fast is from the screens that quietly consume our time and attention.

By stepping back from the digital rush, even for a month, we rediscover something timeless: clarity, connection, and the quiet strength that comes from being fully present. And in that presence, we remember that the most meaningful connections are not measured in likes, but in moments.

AI FAKES ABOUT IRAN-US WAR SWIRL ON X

ANUJ CHOPRA AND SUMIT DUBEY

AI-created videos circulating on Elon Musk’s X depict American soldiers captured by Iran, an Israeli city in ruins, and US embassies ablaze - a surge of lifelike deepfakes despite a policy crackdown to curb wartime disinformation.

The Middle East war has unleashed an avalanche of AI-generated visuals, dwarfing anything seen in previous conflicts and often leaving social media users unable to distinguish fabrication from reality, researchers say.

In a bid to protect “authentic information” during conflicts, X announced last week that it would suspend creators from its revenue sharing programme for 90 days if they post AI-generated war videos without disclosing they were artificially made. Subsequent violations will result in permanent suspension, X’s head of product Nikita Bier warned in a post.

The new policy is a notable pivot for a platform heavily criticised for becoming a haven of disinformation since Musk completed his \$44 billion acquisition of the site in October 2022.

It also won praise from senior State Department official Sarah Rogers, who called it a “great complement” to X’s Community Notes - a crowd-sourced verification system - that results in “less reach (thus monetisation)” for inaccurate content.

But disinformation researchers remain sceptical. “The feeds I monitor are still flooded with AI-generated content about the war,” Joe Bodnar of the Institute for Strategic Dialogue said.

“It doesn’t seem like creators have been dissuaded from pushing misleading AI-generated images and videos about the conflict,” he said.

Bodnar pointed to a post from a premier “blue check” X account – which is eligible for monetisation – that shared an AI clip depicting an Iranian “nuclear-capable” strike on Israel.

The post garnered more views than Bier’s message about cracking down on AI content.

X did not respond when asked how many accounts it had demonetised since Bier’s announcement. AFP’s global network of fact-checkers – from Brazil to India – identified a stream of AI fakes about the Middle East war, many from X’s premium accounts with blue checkmarks that can be purchased.

They include AI videos depicting a tearful American soldier inside a bombed-out embassy, captured US troops on their knees beside flags, and a destroyed US navy fleet.

The flood of AI-fabricated visuals – mixed with authentic imagery from the Middle East – continues to grow faster than professional fact-checkers can debunk them.

Grok, X’s own AI chatbot, appeared to make the problem worse, wrongly telling users seeking fact-checks that numerous AI visuals from the war were real. — AFP

Environment, another casualty of Mideast war

FROM THE jet fuel used in bombing raids to acrid smoke from burning oil depots, the conflict in the Middle East is inflicting a significant toll on nature and the climate.

AFP interviewed experts about the environmental cost of war that often goes under the radar.

US and Israeli aircraft use a considerable amount of fuel reaching the region and flying sorties over Iran, said Benjamin Neimark at the Queen Mary University of London.

Deploying stealth bombers and fighter jets around the clock adds a significant amount of planet-warming greenhouse gas emissions into the atmosphere.

“The US Navy also has a significant fleet which will be operating remotely for some time,” Neimark said.

“That is a significant number of US troops that need to be fed, housed, and working around the clock. These floating cities all need energy.”

This is provided in part by polluting diesel generators, even if most larger aircraft carriers are nuclear powered, an energy source that produces far less emissions than fossil fuels.

But many experts take into account everything from the manufacture of weapons and explosives to post-war reconstruction efforts when estimating the total environmental impact of conflict.

According to one study published in the peer-reviewed journal One Earth, the Gaza conflict generated some 33 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent - an amount comparable to 7.6 million gasoline-powered cars, or the annual emissions of a small country like Jordan.

And by one estimate, the war in Ukraine has caused more than 300 million tonnes of additional emissions - equivalent to France’s annual output.

This estimate, by the Initiative on GHG Accounting of War, takes into account military operations and



Women members of Iran’s Red Crescent society stand near smoke plumes from an ongoing fire following an overnight airstrike on the Shahrin oil refinery in northwestern Tehran. — AFP



JULIEN MIVIELLE

The writer is
Energy
Correspondent
at AFP

reconstruction efforts, forest fires, and longer flight routes.

This conflict is playing out on the Strait of Hormuz, a crucial artery for the passage of oil and gas supplies to global markets dependent on energy from the Gulf.

Ships transporting these highly flammable fuels through the narrow waterway - along with the region’s oil and gas refineries and storage facilities - were “all a target” in this war, said Neimark.

“Clearly this conflict is different,” he said.

“We have already seen a significant amount of refineries targeted. These toxic flames are deadly and have a severe climate cost.”

The oil wells set ablaze in Kuwait in the 1990s during the first Gulf War took months to extinguish and released an estimated 130 to 400 million tonnes of CO2 equivalent.

Since erupting on February 28, the conflict has sent oil prices soaring and focused fresh attention on the global transition to cleaner, more climate-friendly forms of energy.

Andreas Rudinger, from the Institute for Sustainable

Development and International Relations, said the economic knock-on effects of the war had put policy makers “under pressure to reduce the burden on prices over climate action”.

Brussels has faced pressure to relax its emissions trading rules in response to surging energy prices, while other governments have taken steps to help motorists fill up at the pump.

But there’s also a “glass half-full perspective”, said Rudinger.

“From a purely economic standpoint... rising fossil fuel prices make decarbonisation and electrification solutions more attractive,” he said.

He pointed to the rise in popularity of heat pumps in the aftermath of Russia’s war on Ukraine, which caused energy prices in Europe to rise sharply. In general, the increase in energy costs stemming from the war in the Middle East should temper demand in what economists call price elasticity.

Apart from climate concerns, strikes on energy infrastructure, oil tankers and military targets pollute the surrounding air and water and spread highly toxic chemicals far and wide, experts say.

In Tehran, attacks on fuel depots last weekend plunged the capital into darkness as poisonous black clouds rose from burning oil facilities.

Mathilde Jourde, from the Institute for International and Strategic Relations (IRIS), said targeting nuclear, military and energy sites had “extremely polluting” consequences for air, water and soil.

“We’re just scratching the surface but can already see that there are hundreds of damaged facilities in Iran and neighbouring countries that pose pollution risks to people and the environment,” Doug Weir, director of the Conflict and Environment Observatory (CEOS), said.

“We have particular concerns around damaged oil infrastructure, military facilities and the sensitive marine environment of the Arabian Gulf.”

SPORTS



Group photo of HH Sayyid Azzan with members of the Board of Directors, members of the General Assembly and other representative

OOC HOLDS ORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY MEETING FOR 2026

WALEED AL JAHWARI
MUSCAT, MARCH 15

HIS HIGHNESS Sayyid Azzan bin Qais al Said, Chairman of the Oman Olympic Committee (OOC), chaired the Ordinary General Assembly Meeting of the Oman Olympic Committee on Sunday in Muscat, in the presence of members of the Board of Directors, members of the General Assembly and a representative from the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth.

The meeting reviewed the committee's key developments during the past period. In his address, the Chairman said that 2025 represented an important transitional phase in the committee's journey as it witnessed the election of the current Board of Directors.

Sayyid Azzan explained that the meeting was convened to review and approve the annual report for 2025 and the proposed budget for 2026. Also noted that the committee has been working on reorganising its priorities for the coming period, focusing on sports with Olympic potential and on developing young athletes through Olympic Solidarity programmes, in coordination with the Ministry of Culture, Sports and



HH Sayyid Azzan bin Qais al Said, Chairman of the Oman Olympic Committee

Youth.

In addition to highlighting the ongoing efforts to develop technical and administrative personnel through specialised programmes organised by the Oman Olympic Academy, emphasising that investing in human resources remains essential for sustainable

sports development.

During the meeting, members reviewed and approved the minutes of the previous General Assembly meeting held on March 23, 2025, as well as the annual administrative report for 2025, which outlined the committee's major activities and participations

at the local, regional and international levels.

The report highlighted Oman's participation in a number of major sporting events, including the Asian Youth Games in Bahrain and the Islamic Solidarity Games in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Also reviewed Oman's successful

hosting of the Third GCC Beach Games, which witnessed strong organisational success and wide public attendance, with Omani teams topping the overall medal standings with 45 medals of various colours.

The report also referred to the inauguration of the Oman Olympic Museum, the implementation of Olympic Solidarity programmes supporting athletes and coaches, and several community initiatives aimed at promoting sports awareness and encouraging a healthy and active lifestyle.

Members also reviewed and approved the final financial accounts for the year ending in 2025, and endorsed the appointment of an auditor for the financial year 2026. The General Assembly further approved the formation of the Sports Disputes and Arbitration Committee, which will handle sports-related disputes in accordance with approved regulations.

The meeting concluded with a review of the committee's proposed budget for the current year, alongside discussions on financial allocations for future programmes aimed at strengthening the Olympic movement and the continued development of Omani sport.

Seeb defeat Salalah, Al Amerat edge past Nizwa in Youth Basketball League

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, MARCH 15

Seeb Club secured an important 84-75 win over Salalah Club in the Oman U-18 Youth Basketball League for the 2025-2026 sports season, while Al Amerat Club snatched a thrilling 48-46 victory over Nizwa Club in the two matches held at the secondary hall of Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher.

Following the two results, Seeb moved to 9 points, level with Al Amerat, while both Nizwa and Salalah now have 10 points.

In the first match, Seeb produced a strong performance to overcome Salalah 84-75 in a game marked by excitement and close competition until the closing stages.

Seeb's standout players included Azd al Bahlani, Abdulrahman al Maamari, Azzan al Ajmi and Malik Mohammed, while Salalah saw notable displays from Mishaal Kafkaf, Muhab al Hanbmasi and



Seeb player rises for a shot as Oman Club defenders attempt to close him down.

Qaisar al Balushi.

The game began evenly, with Seeb ending the first quarter ahead 17-15.

They then strengthened their advantage in the second quarter by scoring 25 points against Salalah's 19 to take a 42-34 lead into halftime.

In the third quarter, Salalah managed to reduce the gap after scoring 17 points against Seeb's 14, leaving Seeb still in front 56-51.

In the fourth quarter, however, Seeb regained their attacking rhythm and added 28 points compared to Salalah's 24 to seal the contest 84-75.

The match was officiated by Thani al Khalasi as first referee, Taha al Amri as second referee and Hussein al Maimari as third referee, while the scorers' table included Rayan al Dhabouni, Mahmood al Ajmi and Hafez Oulad Ahmed.

In the second match, Al Amerat claimed a valuable two-point win over Nizwa, 48-46, in a balanced contest that remained open until

the final minutes.

Noah Brink and Mazin al Owaisi starred for Al Amerat, while Younis al Shraiqi, Nasser Ambusaidi and Adam al Hinai stood out for Nizwa.

Al Amerat made a strong start and ended the first quarter leading 13-6.

Nizwa then cut the deficit in the second quarter, which ended with Al Amerat still ahead 23-18. The third quarter remained closely contested and finished 35-32 in favour of Al Amerat.

Although Nizwa held a slight edge in the fourth quarter, scoring 14 points to Al Amerat's 13, the earlier advantage proved enough for Al Amerat to clinch the game 48-46.

The second game was officiated by Mazin al Hilali as first referee, Ali al Suleimani as second referee and Al Mahdi al Alawi as third referee, while the scorers' table featured Rayan al Dhabouni, Mahmood al Ajmi and Fatima al Harthy.

MEDVEDEV OUSTS ALCARAZ

TO SET UP
INDIAN
WELLS FINAL
AGAINST
SINNER

CARLOS ALCARAZ’S bid for a third straight Indian Wells title was brought to a halt on Saturday by Daniil Medvedev, who swept past the world number one 6-3 7-6(3) to set up a final against Jannik Sinner after the Italian brushed aside Alexander Zverev 6-2 6-4.

Medvedev, who ended Alcaraz’s 16-match winning streak to start the season, won six points in a row in the tiebreak before serving an ace to close out the match.

The Russian played smartly to break Alcaraz early and take a 3-1 lead, never relinquishing his advantage to claim the opening set.

The second set was a far more dramatic affair as Alcaraz stepped up a gear to break Medvedev and surge to a 3-1 lead, only for the 30-year-old Russian to dig deep and level at 3-3, taking advantage of the Spaniard’s unforced errors.

The pair traded blows to reach the tiebreak, where a ruthless Medvedev sealed his place in the final.

“Playing someone like Carlos, you play many times, you lose many times,” he said. “He’s an amazing player with amazing shots, defence, attack, return, everything. So, you need to be at your best.”

Earlier in the day, Sinner dismissed fourth seeded Zverev to reach his first Indian Wells final, the world number two firing eight aces and committing just 13 unforced errors, eight fewer than his opponent, while winning seven of his eight net points. Zverev showed early promise, grabbing a foothold in the opening set, but Sinner broke twice to close it out before breaking again at 4-3 in the second to seal the match. The 24-year old has not dropped a set throughout the tournament, a run of dominance that underlines his growing supremacy on hard courts.

“It’s a great achievement. The first time here in the final, it means a lot to me,” Sinner said.

“The third time that I’ve played the semis here ... It was a great performance from my side. Sascha didn’t play very well today. I broke him a couple of times in the first set, which gave me confidence to continue, and I served very well at important moments.”

Sinner is now seeking to complete the set of all six hard-court Masters 1000 titles having already won the events in Toronto in 2023, Miami, Cincinnati and Shanghai in 2024 and Paris last year. — Reuters



Daniil Medvedev (RUS) hits a shot in his semifinal match defeating Carlos Alcaraz (ESP) in the BNP Paribas Open at the Indian Wells Tennis Garden.
— **Imagn Images**

SPORTS

Young Kimi Antonelli triumphs as McLaren crashes out in Shanghai

AN EMOTIONAL Kimi Antonelli won a grand prix for the first time on Sunday in China ahead of Mercedes teammate George Russell and Lewis Hamilton, who made his maiden podium for Ferrari.

The 19-year old Antonelli converted being the youngest pole-sitter in Formula One history into victory after both McLarens dramatically failed to start the Shanghai race.

Antonelli briefly lost the lead at the start but once he got back in front he controlled the pace to cruise home to the chequered flag by more than five seconds from Russell. Charles Leclerc was fourth in the second Ferrari.

“I’m speechless, I’m about to cry to be honest,” said Antonelli as he choked back tears.

“Thank you to the team for helping me to achieve this dream.”

It was an almost flawless drive from the youngster, apart from one heart-fluttering moment when he locked up at the hairpin on his penultimate lap. But he recovered to avoid nothing more damaging than a



Winner Mercedes' Italian driver Kimi Antonelli celebrates on the podium. — AFP

small excursion off track.

“I really wanted to bring Italy back to the top and we did today. Even if I gave myself a little bit of a heart attack towards the end a flat spot,” Antonelli added.

Early championship leader Russell was full of praise for his young teammate after the dominant Mercedes team

secured a one-two for the second race running.

“A huge congratulations to Kimi because it’s always very special to win your first race,” said Russell, whose lead has been cut to four points by Antonelli.

The Italian replaced Hamilton at Mercedes and the seven-time world champion said he could not be more pleased for the teenager and his old team.

“I’m so so happy for you buddy, and I’m so honoured to be able to share this moment with him,” said Hamilton.

“He took my seat obviously, at this great team. So big congratulations to Mercedes.

“They’re really pulling ahead at the moment. We’ve got a lot of work to do to try and keep up.”

Hamilton, got a great start and had taken the lead by the time the teams emerged from the first complex of turns.

Leclerc also launched brilliantly and managed to get past Russell, who started second on the grid. The top four swapped places multiple times before a safety car on lap 11 brought them all into the pits.

Once the dust settled

and they went racing again, Antonelli led from Hamilton, with Leclerc third and Russell fourth.

By lap 29 Russell had got past both Ferraris and up to second and set off trying to catch his young Italian teammate, who was by now more than seven seconds up the road.

Four-time world champion Max Verstappen continued Red Bull’s poor start to the new season when he was told to retire his car on lap 46.

Oliver Bearman was fifth in the Haas, followed home by Pierre Gasly (Alpine) and Liam Lawson (RB). Rounding out the top-10 points scorers were Isack Hadjar (Red Bull), Carlos Sainz (Williams) and Franco Colapinto (Alpine).

Current world champion Lando Norris and Oscar Piastri both failed to start because of separate issues that left McLaren without a car in the race. Norris had an electrical problem that prevented him getting to the grid.

Piastri did get round to the grid but was pushed back into the garage a few minutes later with a different problem. — AFP



Mercedes' Andrea Kimi Antonelli celebrates after winning the Chinese Grand Prix in front of second placed Mercedes' George Russell. — Reuters

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BUSINESS

‘Green corridor’ to fasten diverted cargo shipments

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, MARCH 15

THE Directorate-General of Customs in the Sultanate of Oman and Dubai Customs have activated a temporary “green corridor” to facilitate the movement of diverted cargo shipments between Dubai and Omani ports via land routes, a move aimed at sustaining trade flows and easing pressure on regional supply chains.

The initiative, announced on Saturday under Dubai Customs Notice No 04/2026, reflects close coordination between the two customs authorities and is intended to ensure the smooth handling of shipments that have been redirected to Omani ports under exceptional circumstances.

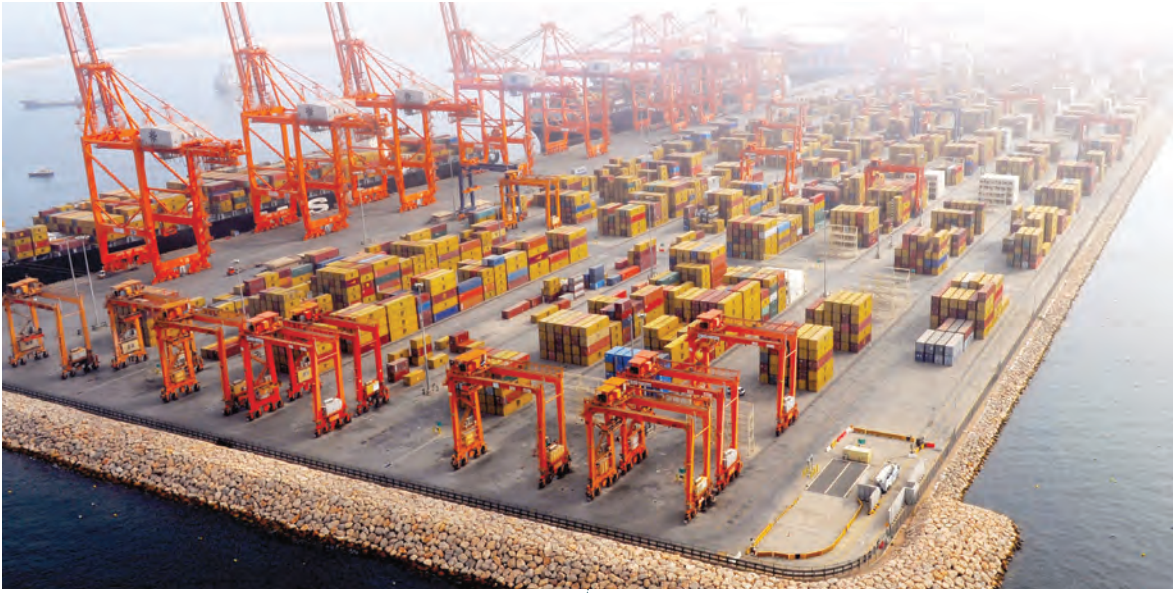
The measure highlights the strong operational cooperation between the UAE and the Sultanate of Oman in maintaining the continuity of regional trade.

Under the arrangement, containers originally destined for Jebel Ali Port but arriving instead at Omani ports will be allowed to move quickly to Dubai through bonded land transport after completing simplified customs procedures in Oman.

The mechanism is designed to reduce delays and provide a streamlined channel for logistics operators handling diverted cargo. The temporary facilitation applies to most categories of goods, with the exception of specific items listed in an annex accompanying the customs notice.

It covers shipments arriving at Omani ports from other parts of the world that were initially intended for Dubai but had to be redirected due to current exceptional conditions affecting shipping routes and logistics operations.

Once processed by Omani customs authorities, the containers will be



The measure highlights the strong operational cooperation between the UAE and the Sultanate of Oman in maintaining the continuity of regional trade.

transported directly by bonded trucks to Jebel Ali Port.

This approach allows cargo to continue its journey to Dubai with minimal disruption while maintaining regulatory oversight and customs compliance.

The framework also extends to certain air cargo shipments originally destined for Dubai airports but redirected through Oman. These shipments may also be transferred onward through the green corridor under simplified procedures agreed upon by both sides.

Officials said the measure aims to enhance the fluidity of trade and strengthen supply chain resilience during a period of regional logistical challenges.

By introducing faster processing and coordinated customs procedures, the two sides seek to minimise bottlenecks and provide greater certainty for businesses and logistics providers.

The initiative underscores the strategic role played by the Sultanate of Oman’s ports in supporting regional supply chains, particularly during times when maritime routes or port operations elsewhere face disruptions. Omani ports have increasingly served as alternative gateways for cargo moving across the Gulf and wider Middle East.

SHORT TAKES



Prices of miscellaneous goods also rose by 4.3%.

IMPORT PRICES CLIMB SHARPLY IN OMAN

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman’s general import price index rose by 14.8 per cent in the fourth quarter of 2025 compared with the same period of 2024, according to data released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information.

The increase was driven largely by higher costs in several key import categories.

The machinery and transport equipment group recorded the sharpest rise at 39.4 per cent, followed by chemicals and related materials, which grew by 9.6 per cent, and vegetable and animal oils, fats and waxes, which increased by 9.3 per cent.

Prices of miscellaneous manufactured goods also rose by 4.3 per cent, while the beverages and tobacco category posted a 3.3-per cent increase.

In contrast, several commodity groups recorded declines during the same period. The mineral fuels, lubricants and related materials group fell by 8.6 per cent, while manufactured goods classified chiefly by material declined by 4.9 per cent. Prices of inedible raw materials, excluding fuels, slipped slightly by 0.2 per cent, while the food and live animals group remained broadly stable. — ONA

Prolonged regional war could push world into stagflation, analyst warns

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, MARCH 15

A prolonged war in the region could push the global economy into stagflation if the conflict lasts more than a year, Omani economic analyst Hamza bin Hussein al Lawati said in an interview with Oman TV.

Al Lawati said the scale of the economic fallout would depend on how long the conflict lasts, with outcomes ranging from a short-lived inflation shock to a deeper period of weak growth and rising prices.

If the war is contained within four to seven weeks, he said, the world would likely face temporary inflation that could ease once trade, shipping and business activity return to normal. In that scenario, the impact on global economic growth would remain limited, at less than 1 per cent.

But if the conflict lasts between three and seven months, the consequences could become far more severe, with rising food prices, disruption to gas exports and complications in oil shipments likely to trigger broader inflationary



HAMZA BIN
HUSSEIN AL
LAWATI

pressure across the global economy.

“If the war continues for more than a year, the world will enter stagflation,” Al Lawati said, referring to the damaging combination of high inflation and weak economic growth.

He noted that the global economy was already under strain before the latest escalation, still absorbing the effects of earlier trade disruptions and instability in key maritime corridors, including the Red Sea.

Al Lawati pointed to a sharp drop in vessel traffic through the Strait of Hormuz, one of the world’s most critical energy and trade chokepoints, highlighting the growing pressure on shipping and supply chains.

The wider risk is significant because the

Strait of Hormuz is a major route for global oil and gas flows, meaning any prolonged disruption could affect energy markets, transport costs and industrial supply chains worldwide.

For Gulf economies, any extended disruption in regional shipping lanes would carry implications beyond hydrocarbon exports, potentially affecting freight costs, food imports and broader business confidence at a time when many economies in the region are accelerating diversification and investment plans.

Al Lawati said the economic impact would extend beyond energy markets to sectors such as fertilisers, agriculture and manufacturing, all of which rely heavily on stable energy supplies and global trade routes.

He added that repeated geopolitical shocks are accelerating a broader structural shift in the global economy away from the traditional model of globalisation and towards localised industries, stronger regional partnerships and greater economic self-reliance.

LEO Development Hosts Elite Investors and Business Leaders at an Exclusive VIP Suhoor at St. Regis Muscat



Hosted by Mr. Viktor Serenkov and graced by the presence of His Excellency Faisal bin Abdullah Al Rawas, government officials, international partners of the company, as well as leading Omani and international businessmen, LEO Development held an exclusive VIP Suhoor in celebration of the Holy Month of Ramadan.

The gathering reflected LEO Development’s vision of creating meaningful experiences that extend beyond real estate development, reinforcing the company’s commitment to building strong relationships with investors and partners.

Guests enjoyed a refined Suhoor experience within an elegant Ramadan ambiance, complemented by sophisticated arrangements



and design details that reflect the brand’s commitment to excellence, innovation, and contemporary luxury.

The evening also served as a platform for networking and dialogue among investors and business leaders, strengthening connections and encouraging new opportunities for collaboration.

Guests were also introduced to LEO Development’s forward-looking vision, including insights into the upcoming VISTAL project—an ultra-luxury waterfront development set to redefine contemporary coastal living in Muscat, combining refined architecture, premium lifestyle experiences, and breathtaking sea views.

The evening concluded in a warm and sophisticated Ramadan atmosphere, leaving guests with a lasting impression of LEO Development’s signature approach to hospitality, vision, and long-term partnerships.

ADVERTORIALS

SHORTTAKES



The campaign applies to the MY2026 MG line-up.

MG MOTOR OMAN UNVEILS RAMADHAN CAMPAIGN WITH OWNERSHIP REWARDS

MUSCAT: MG Motor Oman, under the umbrella of MHD ACERE, has unveiled its highly attractive Ramadhan campaign designed specifically for retail customers looking for the smartest value in the market.

With a carefully designed package of rewards, long-term ownership benefits and exclusive gifts, MG’s Ramadhan Scheme ensures that customers enjoy far more than just a new vehicle; they gain complete peace of mind and exceptional value from day one.

Valid from February 12 to April 12, 2026, the campaign applies to the MY2026 MG line-up, making it one of the most comprehensive retail offers available during the Holy Month. The scheme has been thoughtfully structured to reduce ownership costs, enhance everyday convenience and reward customers immediately upon purchase.

A VALUE PACKAGE DESIGNED FOR CUSTOMERS

Under the Ramadhan Scheme, customers purchasing a new MG will benefit from a range of rewards that make ownership easier and more rewarding.

Buyers will receive complimentary first-year insurance, valid in Oman and the UAE (excluding MG T60), ensuring immediate protection and peace of mind from the moment they drive away.

To further enhance the value proposition, customers will also receive free service coverage of up to 200,000 km through a Scratch & Win coupon, with a minimum assured 60,000 km service package, helping significantly reduce maintenance costs.

Adding another exciting benefit, customers can also win free fuel of up to 1,000 litres of Mogas 95, with a guaranteed minimum of 100 litres, making every journey even more rewarding this Ramadhan.

LONG-TERM PEACE OF MIND BUILT IN

MG’s Ramadhan campaign also delivers exceptional long-term ownership assurance. Customers will enjoy a 7-Year Unlimited Kilometre Warranty, including a 6-year / 200,000 km manufacturer warranty along with an additional 1-year unlimited kilometre warranty provided by a local insurer.

The package is further complemented by 6 years of complimentary roadside assistance through AAA, ensuring support and reliability wherever the road leads.

Together, these benefits reflect MG’s commitment to providing customers with one of the most comprehensive ownership experiences in the segment.

NBO LAUNCHES RAMADHAN AND EID CARD CAMPAIGN

MUSCAT: The National Bank of Oman (NBO) has launched a Ramadhan campaign offering customers cashback rewards and exclusive discounts on everyday spending categories. Running during the last week of Ramadhan, Eid Al Fitr, and beyond, the campaign encourages the use of NBO Credit Cards, Debit Cards and Badeel Prepaid Cards through various offers across dining, fuel, lifestyle and e-commerce.

Maha al Raisi, Assistant General Manager & Head of Products at the National Bank of Oman,



commented on the campaign, “Ramadhan sees a natural rise in consumer activity across dining, retail and more, making it the perfect moment to offer our customers something meaningful. These cashback rewards and discounts, delivered through

partnerships with leading service providers, are a direct reflection of NBO’s commitment to making everyday banking more rewarding, particularly during moments that are valuable to our customers.”

As part of the promotion, customers can also benefit from up to 75% discount on talabat food orders with their credit cards and 25% cashback on fuel spends at Oman Oil service stations, both available throughout the campaign period from March 15-22, 2026.

Arrizo 8 with exclusive Ramadhan benefits

THE Arrizo 8 continues to elevate the standards of the automotive landscape in Oman, reinforcing its position as a flagship sedan that masterfully combines luxury, cutting-edge technology and superior performance.

As a vehicle designed to redefine the driving experience for the most discerning car enthusiasts, the Arrizo 8 stands as a testament to modern engineering and sophisticated design.

This season, the driving experience is further enhanced by an exclusive suite of Ramadhan benefits available until April 11, 2026, making it the perfect time for drivers to transition into a world of premium automotive excellence.

Performance is at the heart of the Arrizo 8 experience, which is why it remains available in two distinct engine variants to cater to diverse driving needs: the efficient 1.6-litre and the robust 2.0-litre powerhouse.

Both variants are equipped with cutting-edge Turbocharged Direct Injection (TDI) technology, a feature that ensures optimal fuel economy without ever compromising on the exhilarating power drivers expect.

To ensure this performance remains uninterrupted, Chery is offering an industry-



The Arrizo 8 stands as a testament to modern engineering and sophisticated design.

leading 10-year engine warranty and a 6-year manufacturer warranty, providing owners with unparalleled peace of mind across every kilometre travelled in the Sultanate of Oman.

The aesthetic appeal of the Arrizo 8 is a deliberate statement of sophistication, characterised by a bold grille, sleek LED auto headlights and a sharp, aerodynamic design that exudes modernity. This elegance transitions seamlessly into the interior, where a premium cabin features Dual 12-inch screens and customisable multi-colour ambient lighting.

To complement this luxurious environment, the current Ramadhan offer includes Free Registration and a Complimentary Service Package for 3 years, ensuring that the initial journey with your new flagship sedan is as smooth and worry-free as the car itself.

In terms of innovation, the Arrizo 8 is loaded with an array of Advanced Driver Assistance Systems (ADAS) that maintain a 5-star ANCAP safety rating. These safety features are now paired with seasonal rewards that add significant value to every purchase.

BankDhofar launches Neo Corporate Internet Banking

MUSCAT: BankDhofar has announced the launch of Neo Corporate Internet Banking (Neo CIB), a next-generation digital banking platform that significantly expands the range of services available to corporate, SME, institutional and government customers.

The new platform represents a major milestone in the bank’s digital transformation journey, offering a unified, intelligent and highly automated banking experience designed to meet the evolving needs of modern businesses. Neo CIB has been developed to move beyond conventional Internet banking by bringing together payments, collections, salary processing, reporting and system integrations within a single



digital environment. By eliminating fragmented workflows and manual processes, the platform

enables businesses to manage their financial operations with greater speed, transparency and control.

K Mallikarjuna, Chief Wholesale Banking Officer at BankDhofar, said: “Neo CIB is a major step forward in our commitment to deliver practical, intelligent and future-ready digital solutions for Oman’s business community. We designed this platform to simplify complex financial operations, enhance governance and give our customers real-time visibility and control. With Neo CIB, BankDhofar is creating a more connected and efficient banking ecosystem for corporates, SMEs, institutions and government entities.”

Malabar Group chairman conferred with Business Bhushan Award 2026

MUSCAT: M P Ahammad, Chairman, Malabar Group, has been honoured with the prestigious Business Bhushan Award at the Lokmat Maharashtra of the Year Awards 2026, in recognition of his visionary leadership and pivotal role in transforming the global jewellery retail landscape and society at large.

Held at the iconic Gateway of India, the awards ceremony brought together leading policymakers, industry leaders, and prominent personalities from business and entertainment.

The event was attended by the Chief Minister, Sri Devendra Fadnis, and Deputy Chief Minister, Sri Eknath Shinde of Maharashtra, alongside Asher O, MD-India Operations, Malabar Gold & Diamonds, other ministers,



Ahammad’s recognition highlights his remarkable entrepreneurial journey.

bureaucrats and distinguished figures from across sectors.

The awards celebrate individuals whose vision, leadership and achievements have significantly shaped industries while contributing meaningfully to society.

Ahammad’s recognition highlights his remarkable entrepreneurial journey and the role he has played in building Malabar Gold & Diamonds to become the 5th largest global jewellery retailer and the largest jewellery retailer of Indian origin.

Expressing his gratitude on receiving the honour, M P Ahammad, Chairman, Malabar Group, said, “I am deeply honoured to receive the Business Bhushan award at the Lokmat Maharashtra of the Year Awards.

This recognition reflects the

collective dedication of the entire Malabar family and the trust our customers have placed in us over the years.

Our journey is founded on the principle of collective growth of all our stakeholders guided by responsibility, integrity and a commitment to creating lasting value for society while continuing to pursue excellence in everything we do.”

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SHORTTAKES



The Majd programme is designed to maximise the economic value generated by the energy and minerals sector.

MAJD AWARD
LAUNCHED TO BOOST
LOCAL CONTENT

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Energy and Minerals has launched the second edition of the “Majd” Award for Local Content, an initiative aimed at strengthening domestic participation across the energy and minerals sectors.

The award forms part of the wider Majd programme, which seeks to encourage companies and institutions to introduce initiatives that support the national economy and enhance the competitiveness of strategic sectors, in line with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040.

Through the initiative, the ministry aims to reinforce the local content ecosystem, empower national companies and local supply chains, and encourage innovation, industrial investment and human capital development in Oman.

The Majd programme is designed to maximise the economic value generated by the energy and minerals sector by promoting the participation of Omani talent, encouraging the use of locally manufactured products and services, and supporting domestic investments in industrial assets and projects.

The second edition of the award features four main categories: Best Omani Startup of 2026, Best Human Capital Development Initiative in the Energy and Minerals Sector, Best Local Content Programme for Large Companies, and Best Local Manufacturer in the Energy and Minerals Sector.

These categories aim to highlight initiatives that strengthen national capabilities, empower local suppliers and promote innovation and domestic manufacturing, while supporting the development of resilient national supply chains in key sectors.

The ministry has invited companies and institutions operating in the energy and minerals sector to submit applications for the award. Submissions will remain open until April 9, 2026, with winners scheduled to be announced during Oman Sustainability Week.

FSA approves regulation for actuarial services firms

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, MARCH 15

To enhance the readiness of the regulatory framework governing supporting services for the insurance sector in the Sultanate of Oman, Dr Khamis bin Saif al Jabri, Minister of Economy, issued a decision approving the Regulation for Actuarial Services Firms.

Through this regulation, the FSA establishes a clear professional framework for practising this specialised activity and reinforces standards of quality and efficiency in the provision of actuarial services to insurance and Takaful insurance companies.

The decision also grants a one-year grace period for existing

actuarial firms to regularise their status in accordance with the provisions of the regulation, ensuring an orderly transition towards the full implementation of the new regulatory framework.

Actuarial services firms are considered one of the fundamental pillars for enhancing the efficiency of the insurance sector and ensuring sound technical and financial practices.

The tasks of approved firms include preparing periodic actuarial reports, assessing risks, calculating technical provisions, studying pricing policies, and analysing the financial position and future obligations of insurance companies.

These highly specialised



Actuarial services firms are considered one of the fundamental pillars for enhancing the efficiency of the insurance sector.

technical functions constitute a key foundation for sound insurance decision-making.

The issuance of the regulation is based on the provisions of the Executive Regulation of the

Oman secures RO 762m
in global real estate deals

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, MARCH 15

OMAN CONCLUDED its participation at MIPIM 2026 in Cannes by signing 17 international investment and development agreements worth over RO 762 million, signalling strong global confidence in the Sultanate’s urban development initiatives.

The agreements, facilitated by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning (MoHUP) and various partners at the Omani pavilion, highlight Oman’s rising profile on the international real estate map.

Among the key deals was a memorandum of understanding with Türkiye’s Artas Holding for the Al Khuwair Downtown project, with investments exceeding RO 150 million.

Another agreement with OGCC Global targets strategic collaboration for the same development, aimed at transforming the area into a modern urban and economic hub in Muscat.

In Sultan Haitham City, Oman signed an agreement with Saudi Arabia’s Retal Development to develop neighbourhoods 3, 15, and 17, covering more than 1.39 million square metres with a combined investment exceeding RO 320 million.

Meanwhile, the Al Thuraya City project will see Vogue Homes Portugal invest over RO 25 million, while a high-end residential development led by Avant Garde Properties, F&M International, Metrogramma, and The One Atelier will bring in RO 50 million for premium urban living spaces.

Agricultural sustainability was also addressed, with GOC investing in one million olive trees in Dhofar under a usufruct system, valued at RO 15 million. The Ministry further signed agreements for smart urban planning initiatives, including



The agreements were facilitated by MoHUP at MIPIM 2026 in Cannes

Oman signs 17 international driving urban, residential, healthcare, and sustainable projects and strengthening its global real estate presence

advanced 3D digital modelling to improve project design and implementation, with investments exceeding RO 408,000.

Healthcare development agreements included a partnership between Al Daham Real Estate and Kubba for hospital and stem-cell treatment facilities (RO 11.5 million), and a collaboration between Al Abrar Real Estate Group and Vienna Hospital & University to operate Ibn Al Haitham Hospital in Sultan Haitham City, with investments over RO 40 million.

Several agreements also focused on architectural consultancy and design collaborations, involving global firms such as Chapman Taylor Architects, 3DTouch Studio, HAWK & IMPACT Communication, and Atelier Entropic SL, as well as

partnerships with luxury brands including Pagani, Armani, and Elie Saab for branded residential projects.

Oman’s Greater Structure Plan and Al Khuwair Downtown masterplan were also welcomed into the Global Business Districts Innovation Club, becoming the first Middle Eastern members of the network.

Jamal bin Nasser al Hadi, Media Adviser to the Minister of Housing and Urban Planning, said the agreements reflect growing international interest in Oman’s urban projects. He noted that the Future Cities Programme provides a clear vision and platform for strategic partnerships, enhancing investor confidence and promoting sustainable urban growth.

ENERGY RISK

Oil rally intensifies amid Gulf conflict



Oil prices may extend gains when markets reopen on Monday as the US-Israeli war against Iran enters its third week, threatening key export facilities. Iran has halted shipping through the Strait of Hormuz, disrupting a route carrying about a fifth of global oil supply. Brent and WTI have surged more than 40 per cent, while Washington urged allies to deploy naval forces to secure the strategic passage. — Reuters

ENERGY RESERVES

Japan releases oil to ease shock



Japan will begin releasing crude from its strategic reserves on Monday to cushion supply disruptions caused by the US-Israeli war on Iran. Tokyo plans to release a record 80 million barrels — about 45 days of domestic demand — as gasoline prices rise. The move may form part of a broader International Energy Agency effort to release up to 400 million barrels globally to stabilise markets. — Reuters

TRAVEL DISRUPTION

US airlines urge end to shutdown



Chief executives of major US airlines have urged Congress to end a 29-day partial government shutdown that has left 50,000 airport security officers working without pay. Staff shortages at Transportation Security Administration checkpoints have already disrupted travel at several airports. Airlines warned that delays could worsen as the spring break travel period continues across the US. — AFP

OPINION

Beyond Hormuz: Oman’s quiet rise as an energy gateway



DR UMAIR WAQAS

The writer is an Assistant Professor in Supply Chain Management, College of Commerce and Business Administration, Dhofar University, Oman.

FOR decades, the global energy system has been closely tied to one narrow maritime passage: the Strait of Hormuz. Nearly one-fifth of the world’s oil supply, around 20 million barrels per day, passes through this strategic chokepoint every day, connecting the energy-rich Gulf with markets in Asia, Europe, and beyond. Its importance to global trade is undeniable. Yet in an era marked by geopolitical tensions, maritime security concerns, and supply-chain disruptions, reliance on a single corridor carries increasing risks. Against this backdrop, Oman’s geography presents a compelling strategic opportunity. Unlike many of its Gulf neighbours, the Sultanate of Oman enjoys direct access to the Arabian Gulf and the wider Indian Ocean. This allows energy shipments to reach international markets without passing through the Strait of Hormuz. Traditionally, this geographic advantage has been viewed simply as reduced exposure to regional risks. However, a broader strategic perspective suggests something more significant: the country could gradually emerge as a complementary energy corridor for the Gulf, enhancing resilience for both producers and global consumers. The foundations for such a role are already taking shape. At the centre of this transformation lies the Port of Duqm, a rapidly expanding industrial and logistics

hub located outside the Strait of Hormuz. In 2024, Duqm recorded cargo volume growth of 152 per cent across all cargo types, the fastest among the nation’s ports, while also opening a new container terminal with more than 1,000 metres of quay infrastructure. Momentum continued in May 2025, when a consortium committed \$550 million for further expansion. International investors are beginning to take notice. Japan’s NYK Line signed a strategic memorandum of understanding with Duqm in October 2025, highlighting the port’s location outside the Strait of Hormuz as a major geographic advantage. Credit rating agencies such as Moody’s and S&P Global have similarly observed that export facilities at Duqm and Suhar allow shipments to bypass the strait entirely, a logistical capability that gives the Gulf state a distinctive strategic edge. Supporting this infrastructure is the Duqm Special Economic Zone, one of the largest in the Middle East, designed to integrate energy infrastructure, logistics services and manufacturing clusters within a single ecosystem. The Duqm Refinery, one of the region’s most significant downstream energy projects, further strengthens this platform. Together with the Ras Markaz crude storage facility, which can hold up to 10 million barrels of oil, the Duqm complex is steadily positioning itself as a gateway linking Gulf energy producers to global markets. Another important pillar of the nation’s

Against this backdrop, Oman’s geography presents a compelling strategic opportunity. Unlike many of its Gulf neighbours, the Sultanate of Oman enjoys direct access to the Arabian Gulf and the wider Indian Ocean. This allows energy shipments to reach international markets without passing through the Strait of Hormuz.

logistics network is the Port of Salalah. Ranked second in the World Bank and S&P Global Container Port Performance Index in 2023, Salalah has long been recognised as one of the world’s leading transshipment hubs. Its location along major East-West shipping lanes connecting Asia, Africa and Europe gives the country a natural logistical advantage that few others possess. The broader global context reinforces the significance of these developments. Energy markets today increasingly prioritise route diversification. Recent disruptions in major maritime corridors, including tensions affecting shipping in the Red Sea, have reinforced a simple lesson: supply chains built around a single chokepoint are inherently vulnerable. Governments, shipping companies, and energy firms are therefore seeking greater redundancy and flexibility in the routes that move critical resources across global markets. International policy institutions have begun to recognise this shift. Analysts at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace have highlighted the growing importance of alternative energy logistics hubs capable of operating outside politically sensitive waterways. Infrastructure such as Duqm, located along open-ocean trade routes, becomes particularly valuable during periods of geopolitical uncertainty. In this context, the Sultanate of Oman’s geography becomes a strategic asset not only for itself but for the wider Gulf region.

MEXICO HAS A CHANCE TO REAP NEARSHORING BOONS

SEBASTIAN PELLEJERO

Rarely has Mexico been so popular. The country pulled in a record \$41 billion of foreign investment last year, while trade with the United States – despite the havoc of tariffs – reached a fresh high of \$873 billion. Foxconn, the world’s largest electronics maker, has touted plans to expand beyond its already-sizable footprint in Chihuahua. The peso is up 18% since 2024, outmuscling every major global currency. Uncle Sam’s splintering of the world trade order has, in key ways, benefited its close neighbour. Yet, despite it all, economic growth for 2025 came in at 0.8%, the weakest pace since the Covid-19 pandemic. Attractiveness abroad contrasts with weakness at home. Mexico’s finance ministry projects that debt service costs will reach, opens new tab 4.1% of gross domestic product this year. This comes even as belt-tightening led to a 28% year-over-year cut in investment in physical infrastructure. The tumult of Washington’s protectionist turn might offer cover for a policy shift. Mexican trade officials will meet with US and Canadian counterparts next week to review the USMCA, the free-trade agreement that tenuously binds the economies of North America. Trump administration officials have made clear that they will seek new concessions, while the threat of scrapping the treaty altogether looms. Disentangling the continent would be no mean feat. Roughly 30 cents of every dollar spent in the US on Mexican goods starts its life on the American side of the border. Components, materials, and intellectual property cross south before returning north in finished form. Benefits flow between partners, and shutting off this trade would reduce them. There is a reason that, as the White House has ramped up hostilities with China, Mexico has become the top US trading partner. Still, despite that momentum, policymakers could probably use an opportunity for serious changes. After all, a significant share of the income generated by Mexico’s export boom accrues to overseas shareholders, because so many of the factories lining its border are owned and financed from abroad. Improvements to the labour force, whether through up-skilling or otherwise, are blunted by the fact that over half of workers are in what the statistics agency INEGI dubs informal occupations. The extent of this unregulated “shadow economy” means that gains accrue to a narrow slice of formal manufacturing workers in a handful of industrial cities. — Reuters

Global shock waves: The widening impact of war

THE escalating confrontations between the US, Israel and Iran have triggered a severe shock to the global energy supplies. The war has disrupted key trade routes, such as the Strait of Hormuz, which on a normal day handles roughly 130 ships, but ships are now advised not to use it. Along with the closure of the Strait, the OPEC+ production cuts have driven oil prices to soar and financial markets to plummet. After the US-Israel strikes on Iran, significant parts of the Middle East airspace were closed or restricted. According to Al Jazeera, 37,000 flights were cancelled and over 4 million passengers were affected in what a BBC interview described as the largest aviation disruption since the Covid-19 pandemic. UK airports alone saw roughly 42 flight cancellations and 146 delays in a single day. Dubai International Airport has been the world’s busiest international airport for a decade, handling 95.2 million passengers in 2025. It connects 272-291 destinations in more than 100 countries and is served by 100 international airlines. It has steadily grown into the world’s most connected network. The current war underscores how central the Middle East has become in upholding equilibrium in energy (oil & gas) supply and the aviation system. The Middle East region is home to many countries, such as Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Iraq, Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain, Oman and Iran (Sanctioned and constrained), which remain the region’s largest oil exporters. The region shipped 15 million barrels per day in 2023. According to the study, in 2022, the Gulf region exported 22 million barrels of oil per day and in 2024, it accounted for approximately 80% of crude oil and 20% of refined products. Almost 1/3 of the world’s oil is produced in the Middle East and 1/5 of global oil consumption moves through the Strait of Hormuz.



A drone view shows oil tankers loading crude oil at the Basra Oil Terminal in Iraqi territorial waters, off the coast of Basra, Iraq. Image for illustration only. — Reuters

Gulf’s major oil and gas exporters are led by Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Kuwait, Iraq, Qatar and Oman, which ship most of their crude and LNG to Asian buyers such as China, India, Japan, South Korea and other Asian economies, with smaller but still important flows to Europe and, to a lesser extent, North America. Iran, constrained by sanctions, sells discounted barrels largely to China via indirect routes. At the same time, Bahrain and the UAE also play significant roles in the trade of refined products and petrochemicals to Asia, Europe and regional markets. Overall, Asia absorbs the bulk of Gulf energy exports, Europe relies on them as a key diversification source and China has emerged as the single most important customer for Middle Eastern oil. South Asian countries such as the Philippines, Thailand, Malaysia, Brunei and Vietnam import 60 to 80 per cent of their crude oil. The state of flux created by the war and the heightened threat of strikes has halted tanker traffic through the Strait of Hormuz. This strait is a crucial maritime chokepoint for roughly 20% of global oil and gas flows. Brent and US crude futures have jumped by around 6-8% in recent sessions amidst concerns about prolonged supply disruptions. OPEC+ (including Saudi Arabia, Russia, Iraq, the UAE, Kuwait, etc.) is already keeping about 3.66 million

barrels per day of supply off the market through coordinated cuts, further tightening supply. Recent tanker strikes have raised insurance costs and freight rates; and rerouting around risky areas has also increased, adding a ‘logistics premium’ to oil and fuel prices. For example, Qatar Energy, one of the world’s largest LNG exporters, temporarily halted production after military attacks on its facilities, leading to a sharp rise in gas prices and further heightening overall energy market anxiety. The Middle East conflict and risks associated with the Strait of Hormuz have a direct impact on India. India’s LPG production accounts for only 40 to 45 per cent of domestic demand; the remaining 60 to 65 per cent is imported. 90 per cent of LPG imports come from the Middle East, mostly from Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Kuwait. LPG is a household necessity. The government has prioritised and rationed LPG for household consumption, hospital care and school services. If the war continues to intensify and disrupt energy and gas supplies, the LPG shortage could escalate, affecting non-domestic consumption, such as restaurants, hotels and certain industries. Pakistan and Bangladesh are also exposed to LPG shortages, as they import 90 per cent and 70 per cent of their LPG from Qatar. As the war in West Asia continues, the spillovers and collateral damage are widening. Rather than debating and discussing how long the war will last, policymakers and national leaders should confront the reality that every additional day of the fighting inflicts physical, financial, economic and psychological harm across the world. The Middle East is now central to global peace and sustainability; and it must be negotiated through the collective efforts of world leaders, not through complacent crisis management from the sidelines.



DR MYTHILI KOLLURU

The writer is an Assistant Professor at the Marketing and Management Department, CBFS

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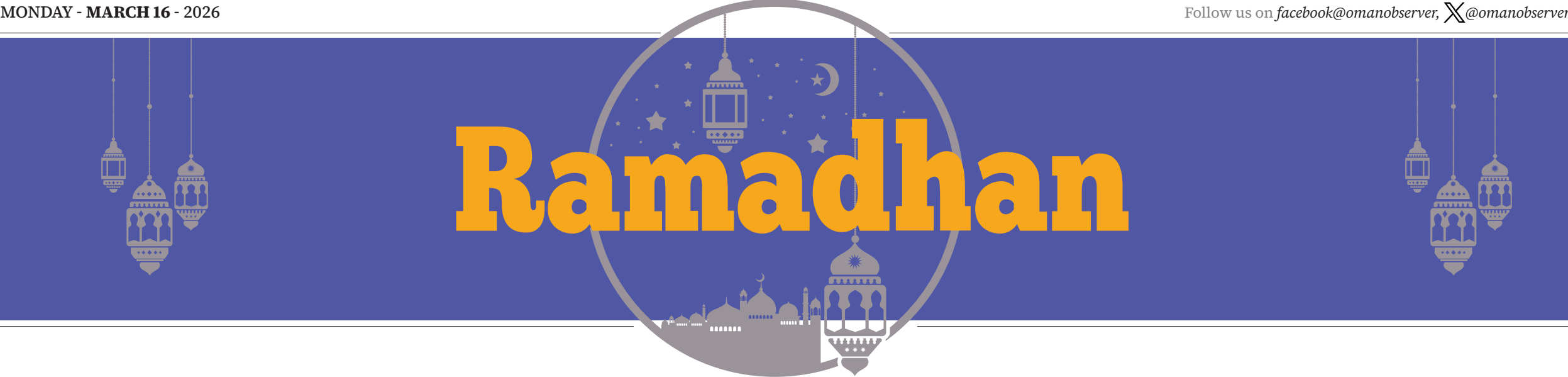
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R E M O T E R A M A D H A N L I F E

FAR FROM HOME, A TEACHER’S QUIET MONTH IN DHALKOUT



BUTHAINA AL RIYAMI

FOR many in Oman, Ramadhan is inseparable from gatherings: families around the Iftar table, neighbours exchanging dishes before sunset and streets that stay lively late into the night. For Ahood, however, this year’s Ramadhan felt very different.

A young geography teacher in her first year working with the Ministry of Education, Ahood spent the holy month far from home in Dhalkout. The distance was more than physical. “It’s not only far,” she says. “It feels almost disconnected because the area is remote and services are very limited.”

Unlike cities where shops and cafés stay open late during Ramadhan, Dhalkout offers few such options. The quiet

surroundings intensified her homesickness. Knowing how difficult it would be, her family welcomed Ramadhan by sending boxes filled with household items and Ramadhan essentials. “They knew the circumstances I live in,” she says. “So they sent me everything I might need.” The gesture helped bridge the distance, even if the emotional longing remained.

To ease the feeling, Ahood and her colleagues tried to recreate a sense of home. They decorated the small apartment they shared with lights and simple Ramadhan decorations. Still, nothing could replace family gatherings. Most evenings, only a few teachers shared Iftar together, sometimes just four people.

“Back home, preparations start early,” she recalls. “We cook together, prepare many dishes and

To ease the feeling, Ahood and her colleagues tried to recreate a sense of home. They decorated the small apartment they shared with lights and simple Ramadhan decorations



everyone waits for the moment of Iftar.” In Dhalkout, meals were much simpler. Some evenings consisted only of dates and laban.

Occasionally, she and her colleagues tried to create their own moments. One memorable escape was taking Iftar to the beach and breaking their fast while watching the sea. “You feel something pleasant for maybe half an hour,” Ahood says, “but then you remember you are still missing the real Ramadhan atmosphere.”

Yet the quiet environment also brought unexpected blessings. With fewer social distractions, she found more time for worship, prayer and reading the Quran. Still, she missed communal traditions, especially attending Taraweeh prayers and the lively evening walks common in her hometown. “In Dhalkout, after 10 pm, everything becomes very quiet,” she explains.

Despite the isolation, local residents showed generosity, sometimes sharing fresh fish and seafood. A colleague living nearby also invited the teachers to her home for iftar, offering a warm sense of family and togetherness.

When Ahood briefly returned home after two weeks, she realised how deeply the distance had affected her. Yet the experience also left lasting memories: breaking fast by the sea, watching the sunrise, spotting crabs along the shore, and sharing quiet cups of tea after night prayers.

For Ahood, her first Ramadhan away from home became more than a challenge. It was a reminder that even in the quietest places, the spirit of the holy month endures.

FATWA

QUESTION & ANSWER

QUESTION

Is ablution (wudhu) required to recite the Quran?

ANSWER

There is a difference of opinion among scholars, but the stronger view is that wudhu (ablution) is required. However, a concession is made for someone who recites the Quran for protection from something feared, in which case it is permissible without wudhu.

QURAN

VERSE OF THE DAY

{ اَللّٰهُ يَنْدُوْا الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ يُعِيْدُهُ ثُمَّ اِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُوْنَ }

It is Allah Who originates the creation and will resurrect it. And then to Him you will all be returned.

[Surat Ar-Rum] — Verse 11

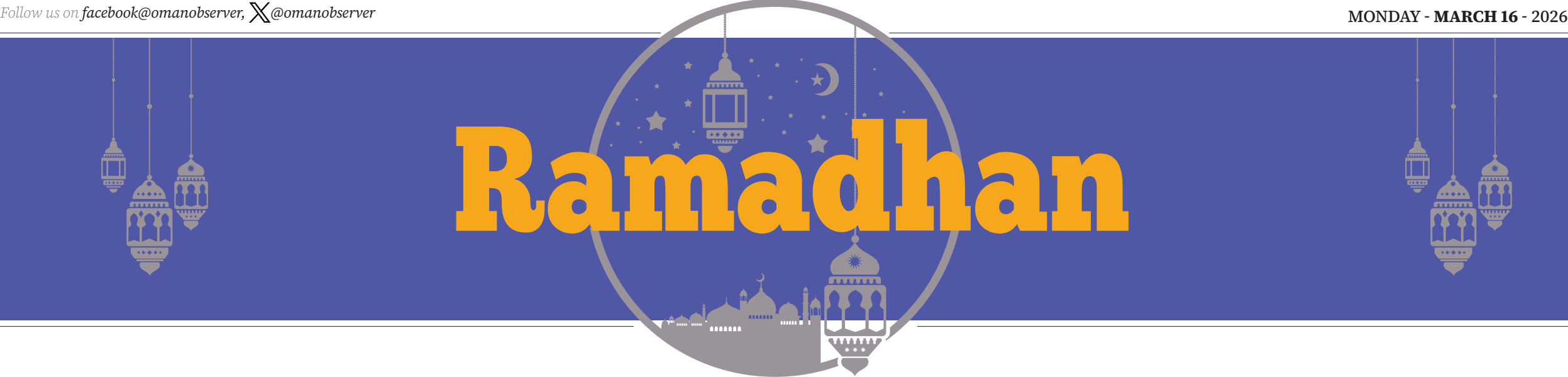
HADITH

A GUIDE FOR THE FAITHFUL

‘Ubaidullah narrated on the authority of the same chain of transmitters that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) made a mention of Ramadhan and said:

The month may consist of twenty-nine days and it may be thus, thus and thus and (he further) said: Calculate it, but he did not say thirty.

[Sahih Bukhari]



R A M A D H A N C H A N T S E R I E S

Sufi Inshad evenings at Royal Opera House Muscat



CHANT performers Mohammed al Wahaibi, Yahya Bihaqi and Ali al Alawi presented a selection of poems and religious chants during the ‘Omani Night,’ which concluded the programme Evenings of Chanting and Praise at the Royal Opera House Muscat.

The concert was part of a series dedicated to spiritual music and religious chanting organised for the Opera House’s 2025–2026 season. Held on March 9 at the House of Musical Arts, the evening celebrated Oman’s deep spiritual heritage. The performers were joined by Al Wifaq Choir and the Awatar Al Takht Ensemble, creating a memorable Ramadan performance inspired by Omani spiritual traditions.

Mohammed al Wahaibi, an Omani Quran reciter and chanter born in 1995 in Qurayat, began his chanting journey in school in 2001. In 2004, he represented Qurayat as its official chanter and won first place. His style has been influenced by Islamic devotional traditions, including Andalusian and Yemeni muwashahat, as well as by renowned reciters such as Abdul Basit Abdul Samad, Mohamed Siddiq al Minshawi, Al Naqshbandi and Mishary al Afasy.

Yahya Bihaqi, originally from Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, grew up in a musically rich environment. His parents composed praise songs in Swahili, helping shape his early musical awareness.



At the age of twenty, he moved to Beirut, where he met composer and oud player Ziad Sahhab, who played an important role in the development of his musical identity.

Ali al Alawi has established a strong presence in Oman’s chanting scene both locally and internationally. He won first place in Oman’s national chanting competition in 2011 and again in 2019, highlighting his distinctive vocal ability.

The evening was further enriched by the participation of Al Wifaq Chanting Group, founded in 2009 and considered one of Oman’s prominent



ensembles in purposeful religious chanting. The group won second place in the sports clubs competition in 2018 and is also known for its volunteer and community initiatives.

The programme featured several well-known religious chants, including Tala’a Al Badru ‘Alayna, Mawlay Salli wa Sallim, Ahlan Ramadhan and Allah Ya Allah. The audience responded enthusiastically, making the concert a fitting conclusion to the Ramadan series. The series began on February 26 with a performance by Egyptian singer Mohamed Tharwat and concluded after three evenings celebrating Arab spiritual musical heritage.

RAMADHAN TWEETS



Widespread participation and overwhelming joy at the Night of Aqaba in Bahla Market, celebrating the middle of Ramadan 🌙.

#ليلة_العقبة #رمضان #سلطنة_عمان #عمان #نزوى

Rate this translation: 🍷 🗨



Qaranqasho in Bahla market



Mosques of Muscat glitter through Ramadhan

PROMINENT OMANI FIGURES

Who is he?
Shaikh Ibrahim bin Said bin Mohsin bin Zahran bin Mohammed bin Ibrahim al Abri

He was a tribal shaikh and religious scholar. He was among the most prominent jurists, scholars and judges in modern Omani history. He held a respected position with the Imams and Sultans of Oman and served as the Grand Mufti of the Sultanate of Oman.

RAMADHAN TRADITION



The temporary markets sell Ramadan-specific dishes, which people can only access during Ramadan because they remain unavailable throughout the rest of the year, reflecting evolving Ramadan traditions around the world.

The Ramadan bazaars in Malaysia create a lively atmosphere which brings out huge crowds for the duration of Ramadhan.

HEALTH TIPS

SMART SUHOOR FOODS

Slow-release carbohydrates make for a strong Suhoor. As the meal which will set you up for the day, Suhoor counts for a lot. Everyone will have their own preferences but if you are looking for ideas, potatoes, sweet potatoes, breads, rice, pasta and oats may be worth the best options.

FEATURES

RUQAYA AL KINDI

FOR many Muslims, Ramadhan arrives each year filled with childhood memories and familiar social traditions. For those who newly embrace Islam, however, the holy month can be a completely different experience.

Maryam, a Spanish revert to Islam living in Hong Kong, experienced Ramadhan for the first time just months after declaring her faith on October 20, 2025. For her, the month became more than a religious obligation; it was an inner journey that reshaped her relationship with Allah.

Despite her enthusiasm, the approach of Ramadhan initially caused anxiety. "I was worried about the water because I used to drink a lot during the day and thought I would be miserable," she said. She was also concerned about waking early for Suhoor, the pre-dawn meal that helps Muslims sustain their fast.

As the days passed, Maryam discovered that fasting transforms more than eating habits. "I've definitely gained discipline," she explained. "Waking up for Suhoor was easier than I thought. During the first week, some days were harder, but I found that Dhikr, reading the Quran and making Du'aa helped me overcome hunger and thirst."

Learning practices that many Muslims grow up with did not discourage her. She believes sincerity matters most, recalling that her first prayer was imperfect but offered with genuine devotion.

Shortly before Ramadhan began, Maryam lost her job. Rather than seeing it negatively, she believes it allowed her to dedicate more time to worship and to her two children. Living in Hong Kong, where Ramadhan does not shape daily life as it does in Muslim countries, could have felt isolating. Yet local Muslim families welcomed her and her children for Iftar meals, including one family who recognised her from her Instagram account @revertmaryam.

Spiritually, the month brought powerful moments. She recalls dreaming of the name Al Ghafur, meaning "The Most Forgiving." Later during Ramadhan, she experienced a profound realisation about Allah's mercy. "I felt that a past sin had been forgiven," she said.

Before embracing Islam, Maryam was a Catholic and experienced a spiritual awakening in 2023 that eventually guided her towards Islam. Ramadhan has also strengthened her connection with the Quran, which she now reads almost daily.

Asked how she would describe Ramadhan to non-Muslims, Maryam's answer is simple: cleansing. "You realise you need less than you thought," she said, "and that forgiveness and spiritual renewal are always possible."



RAMADHAN TRANSFORMS LIFE OF SPANISH REVERT IN HONG KONG



HISTORICALDISCOVERY

LOST PAGE OF LEGENDARY ARCHIMEDES MANUSCRIPT FOUND



It all started off as a joke, a French researcher said. But what the team found was a piece of history - a long-lost page from a legendary manuscript by ancient Greek mathematician Archimedes which had been languishing, forgotten, in the archives of a French museum.

Archimedes, considered one of history's greatest mathematicians and inventors, lived in the third century BC in the city of Syracuse.

Among his many discoveries was the principle of buoyancy, which he struck while stepping out of a bath - famously prompting him to shout "Eureka!"

This treatise and many others of his lasted down through the centuries on a manuscript called a palimpsest, which changed hands many times.

A palimpsest is a handwritten parchment that has had its original text scraped off before being written over, sometimes several times.

Victor Gysembergh, the researcher at France's CNRS research centre who found the missing page of Archimedes's palimpsest, said it was a "treasure trove of lost texts from antiquity".

As well as Archimedes's mathematical breakthroughs, the manuscript contains his "philosophical, literary and religious" writings, Gysembergh enthused.

The palimpsest itself was not written by Archimedes's hand but was instead copied during the 900s AD.

Around two centuries later, the text was erased and re-used as a Christian prayer book.

From Constantinople to Bezos? That was just the beginning of the journey for this unique manuscript, whose fate followed the twists and turns of history.

By the 1800s, it was held by the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem, including inside a library in Constantinople, modern-day Istanbul.

Danish historian Johan Ludvig Heiberg found the palimpsest there - and took photographs of every page in 1906.

However, at some point during World War I, the document vanished without a trace.

It somehow wound up in the private collection of a French family, which eventually put it up for auction in 1998.

It was purchased by an anonymous Western businessman.

Insiders quoted by Germany's Der Spiegel newspaper claimed it was Amazon billionaire Jeff Bezos, although the true identity remains unknown.

But three of the palimpsest's 177 pages had disappeared. This is where Gysembergh comes in.

"I am interested in palimpsests because they are a way to discover lost texts," said the lead author of a study in the German Journal of Papyrology and Epigraphy.

Sometimes Gysembergh searches for palimpsests in the libraries of different cities for fun.

The lost Archimedes's page was discovered "due in part to a joke", he said.

One day, he was chatting with his office colleagues when he mentioned that the old kings of France had kept part of their library in the central French city of Blois.

"Hey, let's see if there's a palimpsest in Blois," he told his colleagues.

"Very unexpected"

Gysembergh was astonished to find a hit on Arca - an online catalogue of digitised manuscripts - in the city's museum of fine art. — AFP