

OMAN CALLS FOR HALT TO MILITARY OPERATIONS

HIS MAJESTY AND LEADERS DISCUSS WAR OVER PHONE



The Royal Navy of Oman (RNO) responded to a report after a Maltese-flagged cargo ship came under shelling by two missiles near the Strait of Hormuz. The ship's 24-strong crew was rescued and provided with necessary medical care. They are all in good health. — **ONA**

HIS MAJESTY SULTAN HAITHAM BIN TARIK on Wednesday received telephone calls from President Shavkat Mirziyoyev of the Republic of Uzbekistan, President Samia Suluhu Hassan of the United Republic of Tanzania, and President Guy Parmelin of the Swiss Confederation. The telephonic conversations dealt with exchanging views regarding the developments of the ongoing war in the region and the repercussions it imposes on the security and stability of nations and their peoples. The leaders emphasised the necessity of addressing this crisis with wisdom and foresight through a ceasefire, de-escalation, and a return to dialogue and political and diplomatic solutions. Presenting the Sultanate of Oman's perspective on current events and developments, and emphasising the necessity of halting military operations as a top priority for restoring security and stability in the region, were

REPORT DRONE SIGHTINGS

Security authorities have urged citizens and residents to immediately report any sightings of drones or similar objects observed in the airspace or near vital facilities. The authorities emphasise the importance of community cooperation in such cases to enhance public security and safety. Please report directly via the WhatsApp number (77720078), specifying the location and attaching a photo if possible, to facilitate a quick response and necessary actions.

among the key points discussed by Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, during his meeting in Muscat with the ambassadors of the European Union member states accredited to the Sultanate of Oman. Sayyid Badr also met with the ambassadors of the member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) to the Sultanate of Oman on Wednesday. The meeting addressed

diplomatic efforts related to the US-Israeli war against the Islamic Republic of Iran and its serious repercussions for the region, and the need to end the war and contain the resulting escalation and its impact on regional security and stability. **ATTACK ON TÜRKIYE** In another development, Türkiye said that Nato air defences destroyed a ballistic missile fired from Iran as it headed into

Turkish airspace on Wednesday, marking the first time the alliance member has been drawn into the expanding Middle East conflict. Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi told his Qatari counterpart Shaikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman al Thani that Iranian missile attacks were directed at US interests and not at Qatar. Qatar's top diplomat "categorically rejected" that claim and called for an immediate halt to Iran's attacks, the Qatari foreign ministry said. Shaikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman al Thani said his country would confront any aggression with its "right to self-defence," stressing that Doha has always been inclined towards dialogue and diplomacy conducted in good faith. Iran's official IRNA news agency said that US-Israeli strikes have killed more than 1,000 people nationwide since Saturday. **SEE ALSO P5, P6&7**

RNO RESCUES
CREW OF SHIP HIT
BY MISSILES IN
HORMUZ STRAIT

IRAN SAYS
STRIKES TARGETED
US, NOT QATAR

TRAFFIC THROUGH
STRAIT OF HORMUZ
DOWN 90%

87 KILLED AFTER
US SINKS IRANIAN
WARSHIP

CHINA TO SEND
SPECIAL ENVOY
TO MEDIATE

NATO CONDEMNS
IRAN'S TARGETING
OF TÜRKIYE

'MILITARY FORCE
ALONE' WON'T
RESOLVE CONFLICTS

GAS GIANT
QATARENERGY
THROTTLES
LNG SUPPLY

NATIONS WEIGH
REPATRIATIONS AS
FLIGHTS HIT

Iran war breaks UN Charter, strike on school shocking

GENEVA: An independent United Nations probe investigating rights violations in Iran condemned on Wednesday attacks by Israel and the United States on Iran as well as Tehran's retaliatory strikes across the region, saying they violated the UN Charter. The United Nations Charter bans the use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state. "These attacks, which were

followed by Iran's retaliatory strikes across the region, run counter to the UN Charter," the UN Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Iran said in a statement. It also expressed deep shock over a strike that hit the Shajareh Tayyebah girls' school in Minab in southern Iran on Saturday, the first day of the US and Israeli attacks. Most of the victims appear to have been schoolgirls aged seven to 12, it said.



People mourn on the day of the funeral of the victims following a strike on a school in Minab. — **Reuters**

Earlier on Wednesday, a separate UN panel of experts said more than 160 children were killed, citing reports. The UN fact-finding probe said the Iranian population was now caught between a large-scale military campaign that may go on for weeks and a government in Tehran which has a long record of human rights abuses. The statement said the killing of dozens of Iranian officials — who

have included Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei — in the US-Israeli air strikes was not an acceptable means to deliver justice under international law. The probe said it was 'appalled' that dozens of Iranian officials have been killed in targeted US-Israeli air strikes. The rules of international law "cannot be varied according to the state taking action", the investigators said. — **Agencies**



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RAMADHAN
1447 AH
THURSDAY
MAR 5, 2026



PRAYER TIMINGS

FAJR
05:10 AM

DHUHR
12:23 PM

ASR
03:45 PM

MAGHRIB
06:16 PM

ISHA
07:26 PM

omanobserver.com

SHORTTAKES

State Council discusses several topics, proposals

MUSCAT: The Office of the State Council discussed the Legal Committee’s opinion regarding the proposed draft of the “Internal Regulations of the State Council” during its third meeting of the third regular session of the 8th term.

Chaired by Shaikh Abdulmalik bin Abdullah al Khalili, Chairman of the State Council, the Office also reviewed reports submitted by the members of the Council regarding their participation in regional and international meetings and forums.

This was in addition to reviewing a follow-up report on the implementation of issued decisions and a report monitoring the Council’s activities during the previous period.

The meeting concluded by determining the agenda items for the seventh session of the third regular session of the eighth term. — ONA



The project occupies a total area of 15,201 square metres. — ONA

40% of Wadi Al Maawil Park development completed

WADI AL MAAWIL: Forty per cent of a project to develop the Wilayat of Wadi Al Maawil Park was completed recently. The park is in pursuance of efforts aimed at enhancing public facilities and improving the infrastructure of recreational and service facilities in the wilayat.

The project occupies a total area of 15,201 square metres. It comprises 3,508 square metres of interlock walkways, 700 square metres of epoxy walkways, service buildings, prayer halls and a 242-square metre theatre.

The project includes flower beds, a 6,135-square-metre green turf, seating areas, fountains and playgrounds.

The Wadi Al Maawil Park development is a vital municipal project that aims to enhance the quality of life and establish a suitable environment for social and recreational activities in line with local development trends in the governorate. — ONA

URGENT NEED FOR 200 BLOOD DONORS DAILY

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, MARCH 4

Approximately 200 blood donors are needed daily to meet the demand.

The Ministry of Health has issued a plea to the public to donate blood due to a severe shortage in blood unit stock.

“We urgently call upon you to donate blood,” stated the ministry.

According to the appeal, more than 200 donors are needed each day to ensure a continuous supply of blood units for various medical cases. The ministry has urged everyone to take the initiative and donate at specific locations.

For fasting donors, the timing is from 7.00 pm to 11.30 pm at the Central



The ministry has urged everyone to take the initiative and donate at specific locations.

Blood Bank in Bausher daily and Al Seeb Blood Donation Centre from Sunday to Thursday. For non-fasting donors, the days to donate are Sunday to Thursday, from 8 am to 12.30 pm, at Central Blood Bank in Bausher.

CMYF BLOOD CAMP ON FRIDAY
Chiru Mega Youth Force (CMYF), a voluntary organisation, is organising a blood camp on Friday at the Central Blood Bank in Bausher.

CMYF founder-president Ramdas Chandaka called upon all humanitarians to participate in this noble cause of saving others’ lives. “I call upon people to turn up in big numbers. The campaign will help boost blood stock,” he said.

Rain expected due to passing of trough

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
MUSCAT, MARCH 4

ISOLATED rain is expected in Musandam and parts of the Al Hajar Mountains. The current weather is due to the passing of a trough.

Speaking to the Observer, weather forecasters at the Oman Met Office said there would be a chance of light, isolated rain in the coastal areas of Muscat, Al Batinah North, Al Batinah South, and Dhofar governorates.

“There is a trough passing through, but it is not an ideal trough. There is also a chance for rain over the Al Hajar Mountains on Thursday,” noted the weather forecasters.

Advection of clouds was forecast by the Oman Met Office over Musandam, Al Batinah North, Al Batinah South, Muscat, the western Al Hajar Mountains, and parts of the Arabian Sea, with isolated rain and mainly clear skies expected over the rest of the governorates.

The Met Office has also warned



The current weather is due to the passing of a trough.

The Met Office has also warned that there is a chance of dust rising over deserts and open areas of Al Wusta, Dhofar, Al Sharqiyah South, Al Dhahirah and Al Buraimi governorates.

There are also chances for low clouds and fog patches over parts of the Sea of Oman coasts, Al Sharqiyah North, Al Sharqiyah South, Al Dakhiliyah, Al Buraimi, Al Dhahirah, Al Wusta and Dhofar governorates.

Winds are southeasterly to easterly, light to moderate, over most of the governorates and fresh over Al Wusta and Dhofar governorates and coastal areas of Musandam and the Sea of Oman.

The sea condition is moderate along the Sea of Oman and Musandam coasts with a maximum wave height of 2.0 metres, while it is expected to be slight to moderate along the Arabian Sea coasts with a maximum wave height of 1.5 metres.

MoC signed to monitor drinking water quality

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, represented by the Food Safety and Quality Centre, signed a Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) with the Nama Water Services Company to strengthen cooperation frameworks and exchange expertise in areas of mutual interest, contributing to the monitoring of drinking water quality in the Sultanate of Oman.

The memorandum seeks to enhance scientific research in the water sector, monitor potential pollutants and develop innovative solutions to elevate water quality. It further aims to support scientific activities and raise community awareness, stemming from the commitment of both entities to support national efforts directed



The memorandum seeks to enhance scientific research in the water sector. — ONA

at achieving sustainable development and enhancing the quality of life.

The memorandum was signed on behalf of the Food Safety and Quality Centre by Dr Intisar hint Salem al Ghareebi, Acting Director-General of the Centre, and on behalf of the company by Ahmed bin Rashid al Khamisi, Head of the Business Assurance and Excellence Unit.

The signing reflects the commitment of both parties to enhancing institutional integration and unifying efforts to support the drinking water quality monitoring system, consolidate the foundations of sustainable cooperation and contribute to the development of the water sector in the Sultanate of Oman in accordance with best practices. — ONA

SHORT TAKES



CPA stated that it is closely monitoring market conditions through field inspection teams.

CPA WARNS AGAINST UNAPPROVED GOODS PRICE HIKES

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, MARCH 4

In response to the evolving developments witnessed across the region and their potential economic implications on markets and consumer behaviour, the Consumer Protection Authority (CPA) has warned against sudden price increases of goods or services without prior official approval from the competent authorities.

In a recent advisory, CPA emphasised that exploiting exceptional circumstances to impose unjustified price hikes is a clear violation of the Consumer Protection Law and its executive regulations. Violators will face legal accountability. CPA stated that it is closely monitoring market conditions across all governorates through field inspection teams.

These teams are responsible for tracking price movements and ensuring compliance with approved pricing structures. Any adjustments to the prices of essential commodities or services must follow established legal procedures and receive prior authorisation before implementation. Supporting documentation must be available for review by inspectors upon request.

The advisory comes at a time when local markets are experiencing increased activity in food supplies, daily consumer goods and various service sectors. The Authority noted that some may be tempted to seek quick gains at the expense of consumers. However, CPA made it clear that penalties stipulated by law, including financial fines, temporary closure of establishments and referral to the Public Prosecution, will be enforced against violators in serious cases.

Communication channels remain available around the clock for consumers to submit complaints or reports via the toll-free hotline 80077997, through the CPA's electronic application, or by visiting its branches across the Sultanate of Oman.

CPA also called on small and medium enterprises to act responsibly and avoid reacting to rumors or unverified expectations that may prompt premature price increases in anticipation of potential future costs. It noted that any legitimate changes in import or production expenses can be reviewed through official channels to ensure a fair balance between the interests of businesses and the rights of consumers.

Furthermore, the CPA stressed the importance of clearly displaying prices on all goods offered for sale, enabling consumers to make informed purchasing decisions. Failure to display prices or manipulating them at the point of sale constitutes a violation subject to legal action. Transparency in commercial transactions, it stated, is a fundamental pillar in protecting the market from disorder or exploitation.

SAYYID BADR REVIEWS EFFORTS TO END US-ISRAELI WAR AGAINST IRAN WITH ASEAN AMBASSADORS



MUSCAT: Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, met with the ambassadors of the member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) to the Sultanate of Oman on Wednesday.

The meeting addressed diplomatic efforts related to the US-Israeli war against the Islamic Republic of Iran and its serious repercussions for the region, and the need to end the war and contain the resulting escalation and its impact.

The meeting was attended by Shaikh Abdulaziz bin Abdullah al Hinai, Ambassador-at-Large at the Foreign Ministry, and Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali al Harthy, Under-Secretary of the Foreign Ministry for Political Affairs. — ONA

Regional crisis weighs on veg, fruit supply in Oman

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, MARCH 4

PRICES OF fruits and vegetables, which are in high demand during the holy month of Ramadhan, have risen in the retail market, straining the pre-planned budgets of many commoners. This is due to the current geopolitical situation that has disrupted imports from various countries.

The current scenario of limited availability of most fruits and vegetables in the local market has already led to price increases and raised concerns among the people that prices will continue to rise, impacting their wallets.

A wide range of fruits and vegetables, including lime, banana, garlic, ginger, carrot, grapes, watermelon, sweet melon, tomato, capsicum, and cabbage, among others, are either in short supply or unavailable in many stores at the moment.

Bananas from Ecuador, previously priced at baisas 500 in Oman, are now being sold for baisas 900 in the local market. Other affected items include watermelon and bananas, to name a few.

“Some of the affected countries are either the origin countries or the re-export countries, including Iran and the UAE. Supply from these countries has been significantly impacted, and Oman is feeling the domino effect as prices have already



Prices of fruits and vegetables have risen in the retail market.

“Prices have increased for two reasons: lack of availability and panic buying by customers. We are seeing some people panic-buying for no reason

ABDUL VAHEED

increased,” said Abdul Vaheed, MD of Suhol al Fayha, Oman's leading fruits and vegetable supplier and importer.

“Prices have increased for two reasons: lack of availability and panic buying by customers. We are seeing some people panic-buying for no reason,” added Abdul Vaheed.

Due to the current scarcity of fruits and vegetables, Oman has banned the export of local crops to other countries. Anyone found exporting will face legal consequences, according to the Consumer Protection Authority (CPA).

Items have seen significant price increases compared to the past prices.

ITEMS	Before	After
Indian banana	2.100	2.800
Philippine banana	7.900	10.800
Cabbage green	0.600	2.400
Cabbage red	0.900	2.200
Capsicum green	2.700	3.300
Carrot	1.200	2.400
Garlic	1.400	3.000
Ginger	1.400	3.000
Indian grapes black	5.400	6.500
Indian grapes white	4.400	5.500
Lime Vietnam	3.300	6.200
Sweet melon	3.700	3.500
Tomato grade 1	0.800	2.000
Watermelon	0.260	0.300

Bus-flight combo comes to the rescue of stranded passengers

VINOD NAIR
MUSCAT, MARCH 4

The Muscat-based airlines, Oman Air and SalamAir, have launched a unique special bus transfer to allow passengers from the UAE to travel to India via Muscat.

It may be noted that flights out of Dubai and Doha are suspended due to airspace closures in the respective countries.

Since the start of the Israel/US-Iran conflict on February 28, 2026, there have been more than 32,000 flights scheduled to arrive or depart from the Middle East, of

which 19,000 (54.88 per cent) have been cancelled. Qatar Airways flight operations remain temporarily suspended due to the closure of Qatari airspace.

Speaking to the Observer, an official of SalamAir said, “The response has been positive, and we will be talking to increase the current number of buses.”

For Oman Air passengers, the buses will depart at 7 am and 3 pm to reach Muscat at 3 pm and 9 pm, respectively. Buses are available at Al Jubail Bus Station in Sharjah, which offers connectivity to the UAE emirate.



The Muscat-based airlines, Oman Air and SalamAir, have launched a unique special bus transfer to allow passengers from the UAE.

Travellers requiring an Oman visa should complete their application through the appropriate official channels. Travellers are requested to arrive at the bus station at least 30 minutes before departure.

The same bus service is also available for SalamAir passengers.

According to the Indian Embassy in Oman, Indian nationals are allowed to enter Oman by obtaining a visit/tourist visa. Travellers must apply for an e-visa in advance through authorised travel agents and on the Royal Oman Police website.

An on-arrival visa is also available to Indian passport holders who hold a valid visa or residence permit from the USA, UK, Canada, Japan, or Schengen countries.

They can enter for up to 14 days without a pre-arranged visa, provided they have a return ticket, hotel booking and health insurance. Indian citizens residing in GCC countries (Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE) and holding valid resident cards are also eligible for a visa on arrival, provided the passport is valid for at least 6 months before applying for the visa.



THE MONTH THAT CHANGES US

BEYOND THE PHYSICAL ACT OF ABSTAINING FROM FOOD AND DRINK, FASTING CARRIES LESSONS THAT REACH INTO THE DEPTHS OF CHARACTER, FAITH AND HUMAN CONNECTION.



MOHAMED AL BATTASHI

AS the rhythm of daily life shifts and evenings grow softer under the glow of lanterns and quiet prayers, Ramadhan arrives not merely as a month on the calendar, but as a profound experience that reshapes hearts and habits alike. Beyond the physical act of abstaining from food and drink, fasting carries lessons that reach into the depths of character, faith and human connection.

For many, the first days of fasting are a reminder of discipline. Hunger tests patience. Thirst demands endurance. Yet over time, what begins as a physical challenge transforms into something more meaningful, a quiet recalibration of priorities. In the stillness between dawn and sunset, individuals confront themselves: their tempers, their habits, their intentions.

Abdulaziz al Jahdhami, a translator and communications professional, believes the essence of fasting lies in compassion.

“Ramadhan is the month of mercy, forgiveness and kindness,” he says. “Fasting teaches people to remain soft, compassionate and respectful toward others. It makes one more supportive, whether within the family, at work or in society overall.”

According to Al Jahdhami, the experience of hunger has a subtle but powerful impact. When a person feels even a fraction of discomfort, it nurtures empathy. It becomes easier to understand those who struggle daily. Patience deepens. Words are chosen more carefully. Small irritations lose their weight. In this way, fasting becomes a social bridge, reconnecting individuals to one another through shared vulnerability.

Yet fasting is not only about how one treats others; it is also about inner refinement. Faisal Jameel, a communicator and social media activist, emphasises that the benefits of fasting extend beyond physical health. “Fasting purifies the soul, increases one’s consciousness of Allah and

Ramadhan is the month of mercy, forgiveness and kindness. Fasting teaches people to remain soft, compassionate and respectful toward others. It makes one more supportive, whether within the family, at work or in society overall.

ABDULAZIZ AL JAHDHAMI

strengthens faith,” he explains. “It protects the spirit and heart from moral ailments while also preserving the body. Its benefits are countless.”

The spiritual dimension of Ramadhan often unfolds quietly. It is found in moments

before Iftar, when gratitude feels sharper and more sincere. It is heard in the measured recitation of prayer, in the pause before speaking, in the decision to respond with restraint instead of anger. In these moments, silence speaks, reminding individuals that growth often happens inwardly before it becomes visible outwardly.

Throughout the month, familiar routines slow down. Evenings stretch longer, marked by family gatherings and shared meals. Generosity becomes instinctive. Acts of charity increase, not as grand gestures but as everyday kindnesses. The fast teaches that true abundance

is not measured by consumption, but by self-control and gratitude.

Ramadhan ultimately becomes a mirror. It reflects habits that need mending and strengths that deserve nurturing. Through restraint comes awareness. Through hunger comes humility. Through silence comes clarity.

By the end of the month, many discover that the most lasting change is not physical, but emotional and spiritual. The discipline learned does not disappear with the sighting of the next crescent. Instead, it lingers, in gentler speech, in deeper patience, in a renewed sense of purpose.

In a world that rarely pauses, Ramadhan invites reflection. It slows time just enough for individuals to listen, to their faith, to their conscience and to one another. And in that quiet space, the month changes us.

Israeli strikes kill 11 in Lebanon

ISRAEL expanded its air strikes in Lebanon on Wednesday, targeting the area around the presidential palace near Beirut and other areas south of the capital as well as strongholds of the Lebanese group Hezbollah, killing at least 11 people. Lebanon was drawn into the Middle East war on Monday when Hezbollah attacked Israel in response to the killing of Iranian supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei during US-Israeli strikes over the weekend.

An air strike hit a hotel in Hazmieh on Wednesday, the first reported Israeli attack on the predominantly Christian area in Beirut’s suburbs near the presidential palace and several embassies. Some rooms were gutted in the strike, while wounded people received treatment in the lobby. People also fled through debris, carrying suitcases past the Comfort Hotel’s sign, which had fallen broken to the ground. It was not possible to determine who was targeted in the attack.

The southern suburbs of Beirut, a Hezbollah stronghold, were targeted again on Wednesday morning, following an evacuation order from Israel’s military. Smoke rose over the densely populated area, where some residents fled when the violence erupted. In Aramoun and Saadiyat south of Beirut — two towns outside Hezbollah’s traditional strongholds — the health ministry said Israeli strikes killed six people and wounded eight others. It cautioned that this was a

An air strike hit a hotel in Hazmieh, the first reported Israeli attack on the predominantly Christian area in Beirut’s suburbs near the presidential palace and several embassies. Some rooms were gutted in the strike, while wounded people received treatment in the lobby

“preliminary toll”. Footage from Aramoun showed damaged cars and rescue workers carrying a wounded person on a stretcher. Strikes also targeted a four-storey building in the city of Baalbek, in Lebanon’s east far from the border where Hezbollah also has a strong presence. Five people were killed, 15 were wounded and three remain missing, Lebanon’s state-run National News Agency reported. One side of the building collapsed. AFP correspondents saw rescue workers searching through the rubble for survivors.

The Israeli military called on people to “immediately” leave 13 towns and villages in southern Lebanon on Wednesday morning ahead of strikes against Hezbollah, the military’s Arabic-language spokesman Avichay Adraee said on X. A similar evacuation warning had earlier been issued for 16 other southern towns and villages. Hezbollah carried out a series of strikes against Israel on Tuesday, claiming to have targeted sites including the northern Haifa naval base in retaliation for Israeli strikes in southern Beirut.

Hezbollah said on Wednesday it had struck two Israeli military vehicles in the southern Lebanese village of Houla, as Israel’s army reportedly advances over the border. In a statement, Hezbollah said it struck an armoured personnel carrier in Houla with “appropriate weapons, achieving a direct hit”. In a separate statement, Hezbollah said it had also struck a Merkava tank in Houla, “achieving a direct hit”.

Since Monday, Israeli strikes have



Smoke rises from the site of an Israeli air strike that targeted the Al Lailaki neighbourhood in Beirut. — AFP

killed at least 50 people and wounded 335 in Lebanon, the health ministry said before the overnight strikes. World Health Organization chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said three paramedics were killed and six injured “while recovering people injured by explosions” in Lebanon’s southern Tyre district. “Warring parties must abide by international humanitarian law and protect health workers, facilities

and patients,” he said on X. Lebanese authorities on Monday recorded the displacement of more than 58,000 people from areas targeted by strikes. The Israeli military has said it will continue to strike Hezbollah until the Lebanese group disarms. Israeli forces also launched a ground incursion on Tuesday, advancing into a border area in southern Lebanon, a Lebanese army source said. — AFP

Sultanate of Oman

Ministry of Defence

ENGINEERING SERVICES

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

Ministry of Defence invites Contractors specialized in the under mentioned works and registered with the Govt. Tender Board and Ministry of Defence to participate in the following tender.

Tender No.	Tender Name	Contractors Grade	Last Date to Obtain Tender	Tender Submission Date	Tender Price (RO)
2025/026	Building works – Mussanah	Excellent	12 March 2026	11 May 2026	1,575 R.O
2025/044	Building works – Salalah	Excellent	12 March 2026	18 May 2026	1,575 R.O
2026/002	Building works – Wudam	First & Above	12 March 2026	20 April 2026	282.227 R.O
2026/003	Building works – Seeb	Excellent	12 March 2026	20 April 2026	1,013.250 R.O
2026/004	Electrical works – Al Buraimi	First & Above Specialized In Electrical Works - Solar PV system	12 March 2026	13 April 2026	262.500 R.O
2026/006	Building works – Khassab	Excellent	12 March 2026	11 May 2026	600.265 R.O

*For more information about the above Tenders please visit gate number (14)

- Tender Documents (Electronic Tender Document) can be obtained from the Tender office, Gate No: 14, Muaskar Al Murtafa'a after payment of the tender fee indicated above.
- The Payment should be made electronically by using SMART CARD, VISA CARD and VISA ELECTRON. Sunday to Thursday (0900 – 1300 Hours).
- Bidders shall present the omization certificate issued by the ministry of labour prior to purchasing the tender documents provide that it meets the approved that it meets the approved minimum omization percentage as stipulated by ministry of labour.
- The Bid to be accompanied by Tender Bond in the value of (1%) of the bid value in the form of a Bank Guarantee or Certified Cheque issued by a local bank and addressed to HE the Chairman of the Tender Committee.
- Bids are to be submitted in sealed envelopes addressed to HE the Chairman of Tender Committee and marked with Tender Number and Name. Name of Bidder or any other marks should not be printed on the envelopes.
- Bids to be deposited in the Tender office at Gate No: 14 Muaskar Al Murtafa'a before 1300 hours on the assigned day for submission of the Tender.
- We would like to draw your attention to the Importance of adherence to the submission date, request and any queries related should not be submitted to MODES fourteen days prior to submission of offer & that queries must be on electronic (Microsoft word).
- You are requested to submit the following items within your tender submission, failure to submit the required information may result a disqualification of your offer without any further notification.
 - Percentage of Omanisation within the company supported by an authenticated certificate from the Ministry of Labour (Updated Copy).
 - Detailed priced breakdown to be specified as per scope of works and drawings.
 - Tender Form and Tender Bonds to be submitted as hard copy and others documentation shall be as **SOFT COPY** (USB) in two separate files:
 - Financial (**bill 1&2 separated file from bill3**)
 - Technical files.
 - Confirmation of site visit.
 - All addendums and circulars.
 - List of sub-contractors/suppliers and their acceptance letter to this project.
 - List of current and executed projects for the last Five years.
 - Valid Registration Certificates from Tender Board.
 - Financial Statement for the last Three years.

Bahrain opens door for wartime volunteers

MANAMA: Bahrain said on Wednesday that residents could register as volunteers to aid war efforts in sectors including health, engineering, logistics and administration, as Iran pressed on with its Gulf retaliation campaign. Iran has lashed out with missile and drone strikes on countries from the Gulf to Israel since the United States and Israel launched a massive air campaign.

Thirteen people, seven of them civilians, have been killed in countries around the Gulf since the war began. The Pentagon has announced the deaths of six US servicemen since Saturday, four of them in Kuwait. Iran has targeted US military assets in Bahrain, the airport, residential buildings and hotels, killing one civilian.

“Those wishing to volunteer can register for the “Bahrain is Safe... As Long as You Are Its People” campaign through the National Volunteer Platform, volunteer.gov.bh,” the statement published by the Bahrain News Agency said. — AFP



TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

Nama Electricity Supply Company S.A.O.C invites interested companies to participate in the following tender:-

Tender No.	Description	Last Date of Buying	Date of Submission	Grade	Tender Price (OMR)
NESC/2026/004	FM Radio advertising services	25/03/2026	31/03/2026	Specialist	26.250

The table below shows the instructions for participation: -

Participation	- Companies registered with Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion may obtain Tender documents. - The amount specified above is including 5% VAT. - The amount specified above is Non-Refundable payment (Terms and Condition apply). - To obtain the tender document and payment procedure, please visit www.supply.nama.om, under NESC VENDOR / E-Tender.
Enquiries	- Any inquiry can be sent to procurement@supply.nama.om, using the inquiry form found in the tender document (05) Five working days before bid submission date. - Any request for clarification received after the above-mentioned period will not be considered.
Tender Submission	Please follow SUBMISSION OF TENDER and supplier guidelines available at NESC Website www.supply.nama.om, under NESC VENDOR / E-Tender.
Guarantee	- The Tender should enclose a bank guarantee or a certified cheque issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman Unconditional and irrevocable and shall be disbursement as soon as it is submitted for the value of (1%) of the tender value valid for a period of not less than Ninety (90) days from the last date of tender submission and addressed to the CHAIRMAN OF PROCUREMENT COMMITTEE, Nama Electricity Supply Company S.A.O.C. - The hard copy of the bid bond should be deposited in the Tender Box at the Nama Electricity Supply Company Main Office at Wilayat Al Seeb, before 10:00 AM on the day specified for bid submission or any extended deadline. - Any tender not accompanied by a Tender Bond shall be rejected.
Terms and Conditions	- The Tender shall be valid for a period of (90) days from the last date of tender submission including any extension thereof. - If the submission date extended, the bank guarantee or a certified cheque shall be extended in accordance with the bid extension date. - NESC is not bound to accept the lowest (or highest) Tenderer. - A certificate confirming a minimum Omanization level of 30% within the organization is obligatory , bidder who fails to submit this certificate will result in exclusion from the tender evaluation process. - Preference of awarding the tender will be given to those bidders who achieved a high percentage of purchasing from Local Products and have a High-level percentage of Omanization - NESC gives priority to award the projects to SMEs companies. - Failure to comply with the instructions in tender document may lead to disqualification.
Incentives and exemptions	- Riyada card holders from Small and Medium Enterprises, SME, are exempted from Tender fees - Riyada card holders from Small and Medium Enterprises, SME, are exempted from bid bond requirements. - Riyada card holders from Small and Medium Enterprises, SME, are exempted from registration fees on business opportunities platform and supplier registration with Nama Group.

Nama Electricity Supply Company SAOC

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IRAN CLAIMS ‘COMPLETE CONTROL’ OF HORMUZ

IRAN'S Revolutionary Guards said on Wednesday they had total control of the Strait of Hormuz, a key waterway for global energy transit, as Israel launched a new wave of strikes on the Iranian capital. In Lebanon, the Israeli military told residents south of the Litani River to move north, warning that the army was “compelled to take military action” against Hezbollah in the area. Governments around the world scrambled to evacuate citizens stranded by the war in the Middle East, with Iran expanding a missile and drone barrage on the fifth day of a war that sent global shares sinking.

The war sparked by a US-Israeli attack that killed supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has seen Iran lash out with missile and drone strikes from Israel across the Gulf, and has also drawn in Tehran's proxy Hezbollah in Lebanon. Cities like Dubai and Riyadh, which have long taken pride in their safety from the tumult of the region, have been drawn in, with the growing chaos sparing few countries in Iran's vicinity.

A ballistic missile launched from Iran, heading towards Turkish airspace through Iraq and Syria, has been destroyed by Nato air defence systems, Turkish officials said on Wednesday. With energy prices already spiking, President Donald Trump had said the US Navy was ready to escort oil tankers through the crucial Strait of Hormuz. Earlier, the Revolutionary Guards warned ships against entering the strait, and major shipping firms have already suspended transit through the waterway with maritime agencies reporting several ships attacked.

The Israeli military said it had begun “broad scale strikes” in Tehran on Wednesday. Earlier, US President Donald Trump said the US had “knocked out” Iran's navy, along with its air force and radar systems, while the US military said it had hit nearly 2,000 targets since first launching strikes.

Admiral Brad Cooper, commander of US forces in the region said the first day's barrage had been bigger than the so-called “shock and awe” assault on Saddam Hussein's Iraq in 2003. Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu have urged Iranians to rise up but the US leader also said regime change was not the goal. The assault came weeks after Iranian authorities clamped down on mass protests, killing thousands according to rights groups.

Saudi Arabia said it intercepted two cruise missiles as well as a drone targeting its huge



A man holds an Iranian flag amid the debris of a destroyed building following airstrikes in central Tehran. — AFP

Türkiye says Nato defence systems destroyed missile

ANKARA: Nato air and missile defence systems stationed in the eastern Mediterranean destroyed a ballistic missile fired from Iran as it headed into Turkish airspace after passing Syria and Iraq, the Turkish Defence Ministry said on Wednesday. The incident marks the first time that Nato member Türkiye, Iran's neighbour to the northwest, has been drawn into the expanding conflict between Iran and the US and Israel that now involves several countries in the region.

“We warn all parties to refrain from actions that would lead to further escalation of conflict in the region. In this context, we will continue to consult with Nato and our other allies,” the ministry said, adding there were no casualties or injuries. “All necessary steps to defend our territory and airspace will be taken resolutely and without hesitation. We remind all parties that we reserve the right to respond to any hostile actions against our country,” it added. — Reuters



Iranians make their way after crossing into Türkiye at the Kapikoy Border Gate. — Reuters

Spain defies Trump's threats over stance on Iran war



This combination shows US President Donald Trump (L) and Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez. — AFP

MADRID: Spain “will not be vassals” to another country, Deputy Prime Minister Maria Jesus Montero said on Wednesday, defying US President Donald Trump's threats to cut trade with Madrid over its stance against the US-Israeli strikes on Iran. Trump floated imposing a trade embargo on Madrid over its refusal to allow US aircraft to use jointly operated naval and air bases in southern Spain for the offensive against Tehran. Spain has denounced the US and Israeli bombings of Iran as reckless and illegal, while most other European nations have withheld direct critique of the attacks. “We are certainly not going to be anybody's vassals, we won't tolerate any threats and we'll defend our values,” Montero told reporters, citing support for Spain from the European Commission.

France's President Emmanuel Macron on Wednesday told Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez he stood by him after President Donald Trump threatened to sever trade with Spain over it refusing US use of its bases to attack Iran, his office said. — Reuters

87 bodies recovered after warship sinks off Sri Lanka

GALLE: Sri Lanka's navy has recovered 87 bodies of sailors from an Iranian warship that was sunk on Wednesday by a US submarine off the island's southern coast, police and defence officials said. “We have collected 87 bodies, and a search is still on for the others who are still missing,” a navy official said on condition of anonymity. Police and navy spokesmen said 61 sailors were still missing. Some 32 have been rescued and are being treated at a hospital in the city of Galle, according to officials.

Nearly 150 people were missing and several dead after an Iranian warship sank on Wednesday off Sri Lanka following what crew members reported as an explosion, officials said.

This sinking comes as war has broken out in the Mideast, after Israel and the United States launched strikes against Iran. Foreign Minister Vijitha Herath told parliament that 32 rescued Iranians were rushed to the main hospital in the island's south while two navy craft and a plane were deployed to search for survivors. — AFP



An injured Iranian sailor receives treatment at the Karapitiya hospital in Galle. — AFP

Ras Tanura refinery, while drones struck near the US consulate in Dubai, starting a fire, and a missile hit the US military base at Al Udeid in Qatar. The UAE and Qatar both said they had intercepted drone and missile salvos on Wednesday, with Abu Dhabi saying it had been targeted by three ballistic missiles and 129 drones, intercepting all but eight drones. Kuwait has also been struck, with the health ministry announcing the death of an 11-year-old girl killed after she was hit by falling shrapnel.

A Malta-flagged container ship was struck while transiting the Strait of Hormuz on Wednesday, two maritime security agencies reported, as Iran pressed its retaliation campaign in the Gulf. The ship was, “transiting eastbound in the Straits of Hormuz” when it was “hit by an unknown projectile just above the water line causing a fire in the engine room,” according to the United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO). Private maritime security agency Vanguard Tech said the vessel was the Malta-flagged Safeen Prestige. Information from shipping activity tracker Marine Traffic shows the vessel was en route from the UAE's Ghantoot port to Jeddah in Saudi Arabia. It was the fourth reported attack in regional waters within 24 hours, after projectiles struck or landed near three other vessels off coasts.

The Pentagon identified four of six US troops killed in the war so far, saying they were hit by a drone attack in Kuwait. The United States encouraged all Americans to leave the region if they could find commercial flights, though air travel has been severely disrupted, while governments including Britain and France sent chartered flights to get their citizens out. The war was taking a growing toll on Lebanon, from where Iran-backed militant group Hezbollah launched drones and rockets at Israel in retaliation for Khamenei's killing.

According to the Iranian Red Crescent, the US and Israeli attacks have killed 787 people in Iran, a toll that could not be independently confirmed. Iran repeatedly vowed to inflict a heavy price in retaliation, with the judiciary saying that those who aid the country's enemies “will be dealt with decisively and severely”.

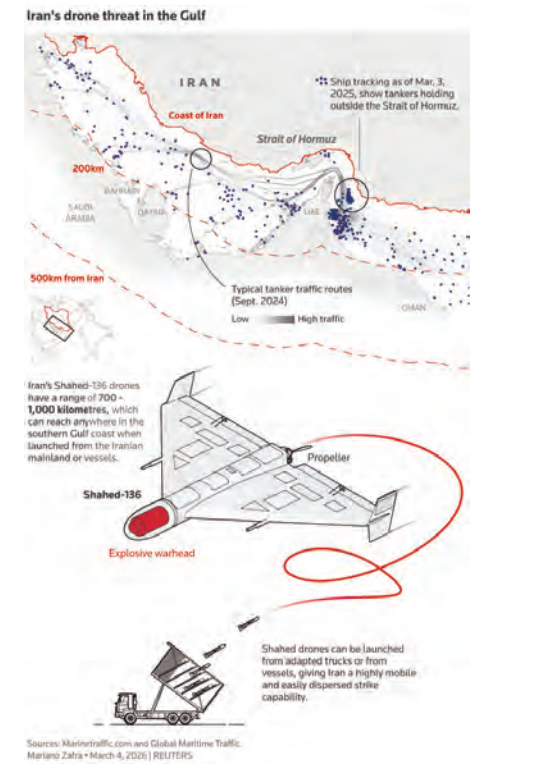
In Tehran, residents who have not fled remained shut away in their homes, fearing the US-Israeli bombardment. The Iranian capital is normally home to around 10 million people, but in recent days “there are so few people that you'd think no one ever lived here”, said Samireh, a 33-year-old nurse. — AFP

LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN MIDDLE EAST WAR

Khamenei funeral postponed
The funeral for Ayatollah Ali Khamenei that was due to take place on Wednesday evening has been postponed in anticipation of unprecedented turnout.

Guards claim control of Hormuz
The Revolutionary Guards said Iranian forces had “complete control” of the Strait of Hormuz, and any vessels seeking to pass risked damage from missiles or stray drones.

Drone targets Saudi oil
Saudi Arabia intercepted a drone attack targeting its massive Ras Tanura refinery, following an earlier hit on the complex this week.



UAE, Qatar intercept drones, missiles
The UAE's ministry of defence said its air defences “successfully engaged today with 3 ballistic missiles and detected 129 drones.” Qatar's military said it was targeted “at dawn today, by 10 drones and 2 cruise missiles.”

Cosco halts Gulf shipping
Chinese shipping giant Cosco, which operates one of the world's biggest oil tanker fleets, said it is suspending services to and from countries including the UAE, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Kuwait.

More Israeli strikes in Tehran
The Israeli military said it had begun a fresh wave of strikes on Tehran, as a journalist reported a fresh explosion in the northeast of the Iranian capital.

Iran says ready for long haul
Iran has no intention of negotiating with the United States and can continue the war for “as long as we want”.

Stocks tumble
The Dubai and Abu Dhabi stock exchanges reopened sharply lower after a two-day trading suspension over Iran's missile and drone attacks across the Gulf.

Jordan withdraws diplomats
Jordan's Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi said that his country had evacuated all staff from its diplomatic mission in Tehran, with all staff now back in the country.



Fire and smoke rise in the Fujairah oil industry zone, in Fujairah, United Arab Emirates. — Reuters

OPINION

Iran’s missile and drone barrages create dilemma for Gulf states



CALLUM PATON

The writer is an AFP reporter

FOR FOUR days, Iranian missiles and drones have swept Gulf states’ cities and infrastructure, sundering ties with Tehran and placing the neighbours on a potential course for greater military confrontation, analysts said.

After years of careful diplomatic rapprochement with the Islamic republic and weeks of publicly arguing against war, Gulf countries including Saudi Arabia and the UAE, now face a dilemma: to hit back and risk stiffer attacks, or maintain their defensive position and hope to absorb the blows.

“Arab Gulf states are on the frontlines of a war they sought to avert,” Middle East expert Hasan Alhasan wrote for the International Institute for Strategic Studies.

“A debate is brewing in Gulf capitals about the merits of strategic patience and restraint.”

Qatar, the Gulf state seen as having the closest ties to Iran, downed two Iranian fighter jets — notable for being the first time a Gulf country has hit manned Iranian planes since the war broke out.

Farea al Muslimi, a researcher at the UK-based Chatham House’s Middle East and North Africa Programme, said he would be “extremely shocked” if Saudi Arabia in particular “did not respond militarily”.

“Saudi Arabia, if not the whole Gulf, is preparing for some form of response to Iran. It cannot afford to do nothing after being attacked,” Al Muslimi said.

Saudi Arabia’s military raised its readiness

levels in response to attacks by Iran, a source close to the army said on Monday, while another warned of a possible military response if its oil infrastructure was targeted.

On Monday, Saudi Arabia was forced to halt some operations on its massive Ras Tanura refinery due to Iran’s attacks.

Falling debris from an intercepted Iranian attack sparked a fire at the facility, according to the kingdom’s energy ministry.

In a landmark Chinese-brokered deal, Tehran and Riyadh agreed in March 2023 to restore ties and reopen their respective embassies, marking a significant improvement in relations between the longtime rivals.

Hesham al Ghannam, a Saudi security analyst, said that ahead of Saturday’s attacks, Riyadh “denied airspace and basing rights, signalling neutrality to Tehran”, but “Iran struck Saudi territory anyway”, wiping out the diplomatic investment.

The UAE has been targeted by more than 800 drones and 200 missiles since Saturday, according to its defence ministry, bearing the brunt of Iran’s retaliatory campaign across the Gulf.

The UAE fully reopened its embassy in Tehran in 2022 during a thaw in relations, after years of tensions and a tougher line taken during US President Donald Trump’s first term.

UAE-based political scientist Abdulkhaleq Abdulla said that since Saturday, the

After years of careful diplomatic rapprochement with the Islamic republic and weeks of publicly arguing against war, Gulf countries face a dilemma: to hit back and risk stiffer attacks, or maintain their defensive position and hope to absorb the blows

relationship had reached “the lowest of the low”, describing the barrages as “an aggression that takes us... to probably a new stage”.

“We are definitely angry as hell, and this is just the beginning of things to come.

Despite being Iran’s second-largest trade partner, the UAE was disproportionately targeted, Abdulla said, with 63 per cent of projectiles aimed at the six Gulf states landing in the Emirates.

“There is an understanding now, a Gulf understanding, and a perception that Iran has become an enemy of a sort, has become an aggressor,” he added.

Before Qatar downed two Iranian Sukhoi Su-24 warplanes on Monday, its state-run QatarEnergy, one of the world’s largest producers of Liquefied Natural Gas, had been forced to suspend production after drones targeted two of its key facilities.

Sharing the world’s largest gas field with Iran, Qatar maintained relations with the Islamic republic despite being targeted by Iranian rockets in June 2025 during the last conflict between Israel and Iran.

At a Tuesday news briefing, Qatar’s foreign ministry spokesman Majed al-Ansari said all Qatar’s “red lines have already been crossed”, calling the strikes “a blatant attack on our sovereignty”.

“We reserve the right to retaliate,” he said, adding that leaders were “considering right now all the options”. — AFP

NETANYAHU’S POLITICAL FUTURE AT STAKE WITH IRAN WAR

MICHAEL ZEEV BLUM

With elections approaching in Israel, the war with Iran has handed Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu an opportunity to restore an image deeply scarred by Hamas’s October 7, 2023, attack, experts say. But any political dividend would depend on how the conflict unfolds and how long it lasts, they say.

A day after Iran’s supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei was killed in a wave of US-Israeli strikes, Netanyahu said that his close ties with Washington had enabled Israel to “do what I have long aspired to do for 40 years: to strike the terrorist regime decisively”.

The Gaza war, sparked by Hamas’s unprecedented attack on Israel on October 7, 2023, eroded Netanyahu’s popularity.

Critics have accused him of seeking to evade responsibility for the authorities’ failure to prevent the deadliest day in Israel’s history.

At 76, the leader of the right-wing Likud party is Israel’s longest-serving prime minister, with more than 18 cumulative years in office across multiple stints. Known for his political resilience, Netanyahu has been without a parliamentary majority since the summer, amid a crisis with his ultra-Orthodox religious allies.

He is also standing trial in a long-running corruption case and has sought a presidential pardon, with US President Donald Trump repeatedly pressuring President Isaac Herzog to grant one. Elections must be held by October 27 at the latest. Netanyahu will call early elections, says Emmanuel Navon, a political analyst at Tel Aviv University.

“It’s obvious. He won’t wait until October given the commemoration of the October 7 anniversary,” Navon said.

“If Netanyahu was at rock bottom after the Hamas attack, he has since gradually turned the tide,” he added, citing heavy blows dealt by the Israeli military to Hamas, Hezbollah and Iran since the start of the Gaza war. A Likud party led by Netanyahu would emerge ahead in elections held today, opinion polls suggest.

That would likely see him tasked with forming the next government, though he would still lack a majority with his current allies. A victory over Iran could change that calculus, experts say. — AFP

Trump struck Iran because he sensed weakness

LET’S THINK about the Iran war in the light of Donald Trump’s career to date. What has made him so historically significant, so effective as a politician in spite of all his sins and faults, so enduring and dominant in the American political landscape? One thing especially: an incredible instinct for the weaknesses of enemies and rivals, a willingness to tear away what looks like strength to reveal the rot beneath, an eye for the main chance and an appetite for conquest.

The Republican establishment in 2016 offered a case study in the vulnerabilities that he exploits: a party elite that had been discredited by the Iraq War and the financial crisis but didn’t fully realise it, a cadre of politicians who were easily unmanned by insults and braggadocio, a long list of names who staked out high-minded opposition and then inexorably bent the knee.

The same pattern prevailed in his defeat of Hillary Clinton’s complacent campaign and then his post-2020 comeback against a political establishment that constrained him for a while but allowed itself to be hollowed out by radicalism. And the scene at his second inaugural, where lords of industry who once participated eagerly in the resistance lined up to pay him homage, was the perfect capstone: He had taken their measure all along.

Which left only the world to conquer.

It was obvious enough in Trump’s first term that he was not really a dove or an isolationist. But the second term has made it clear that



ROSS DOUTHAT

The writer is an American author and New York Times columnist

But the dark path here — a half-collapsed Iran fighting a decentralised war against its neighbours, a suppurating crisis that will be blamed on Israel by the further right and left alike — seems bad enough to pin Trump down in Bush territory for the remainder of his term. “We destroyed their nuclear program” will not be enough of a justification in his own coalition, let alone the country as a whole.

the recurring Trumpian arguments for foreign policy restraint should be understood primarily as rhetorical bludgeons against his neoconservative and liberal opponents that, having served their purpose, can be discarded when new opportunities appear.

Likewise, his impulse for deal making should be understood as just one means of power projection, whose pleasures are milder than the thrill of seeing geopolitical rivals humiliated or captive or simply dead.

So what does his eye for weakness see in Iran? First, a regime that has seen its networks of regional power ruthlessly dismantled over the past few years, primarily by Israeli operations, and that has the same government as in the 1980s but a drastically different domestic situation — with far less religious zeal and far less legitimacy for the clerical regime. (Note that this sense of Iranian weakness is a very different rationale for war from the argument about imminent military danger that Trump’s subordinates feel obliged to offer to Congress and the press.)

Second, Trump senses a larger weakness in the quasi-axis arrayed against the American imperium. During Joe Biden’s administration it felt as if Russia, Iran and China were all acting in a kind of loose concert, probing and testing and attacking. But these powers are not actually allied with one another, and when one is imperiled, the others do not necessarily rush to its defence. Still less are they loyal to their client states, whether in Latin America or the Middle East. So the Russian quagmire in Ukraine

becomes an opportunity to knock off the Assad regime in Syria.

The Chinese and Russians do not bestir themselves in defence of Venezuela (or, tomorrow, Cuba). And Iran in its weakness doesn’t have a powerful authoritarian alliance to back it up. It’s just a wobbly dictatorship that, if toppled, leaves the anti-American world order weaker than before.

Finally, Trump senses a window of opportunity created by advances in military technology, with the earlier strikes on Iran and the raid in Venezuela as proofs of concept, which make it possible to conduct a kind of fatal surgery on an adversary’s leadership class. It’s not shock and awe; it’s drone strike and assassinate. The hope is that this new combination can produce a more tractable elite without the necessity of Iraq-style occupation and counterinsurgency.

Obviously, there is more to the story here than just Trump’s instincts. But I think it makes sense to put them at the centre of the story, rather than Israeli influence or Saudi pressure (real as those are), the residual power of a baby boomer conservatism that took shape during the Iran hostage crisis or the supposed tendency of right-wing nationalists to look abroad for splendid little wars when domestic politics aren’t going their way.

Put another way, the reason that some of these forces matter is that they dovetail with Trump’s instincts. Trump identifies with the Israelis and Saudis and is a baby boomer for whom the idea of settling unfinished Cold War business, from Tehran to Havana, has a special historical appeal.

— The New York Times

A mismatch between dialogue and actions



SONIA AMBROSIO

The writer is a journalist, academic and researcher in media studies

IN WAR, the goal is to compel the opponent to submit to one's will. Within the current situation, there is a blatant hostile intention, regardless of how intensive the dialogues may be. It appears that engaging in an argument is no longer an invitation to understanding. Occasionally, time spent on dialogue is merely a pretext.

According to Carl von Clausewitz, a Prussian military theorist, war is a continuation of politics by other means. He describes it as the collision between hostile bodies, where the impact of opposing forces leads to reciprocal actions. History, as we have seen repeatedly, is full of examples where war brings about a worse change.

The challenges of a new global order point to the relevance of Desiderius Erasmus's principles on dialogue. Five centuries ago, Erasmus's ideology was fundamental to creating consensus, not merely about winning an argument, but partners working together to explore both sides of an issue. He favoured mutual understanding over violence.

In recent times, the Italian philosopher Norberto Bobbio, who chose Erasmus as his model, has advocated for the need for dialogue during turbulent times. Bobbio's 20th-century ideas concentrate on achieving peace and upholding human rights.

From a less benevolent perspective, it can be hypothesised that international relations in the current world are facing unprecedented levels of complexity and

chaos. We are experiencing a recession of trust, characterised by a decline in confidence across global businesses, national governments, and institutions. People are retreating from dialogue while the use of force is becoming prevalent. The reasons for escalating tensions can be as diverse as one wants them to be; the 'let's see what happens' approach.

In 2025, amid rounds of indirect talks facilitated by the Sultanate of Oman between the United States and Iran, the United States bombed Iran's nuclear infrastructure, which formed part of a broader Israeli assault. During the February 2026 talks, Iran acknowledged an atmosphere of mistrust among opposing states.

In today's media-saturated and often polarised political environment, Bobbio's philosophy provides a critical framework, especially as power often remains unchecked and decision-making processes lack transparency.

In analysing contemporary media, where digital platforms frequently exacerbate the polarisation of political discourse, it is essential for intellectuals to reveal the underlying influences and manipulation within the media in order to prioritise constructive dialogue.

The media have changed dramatically since historical diplomatic negotiations such as the 1978 Camp David Accords (Israel-Egypt peace), the 1995 Dayton Accords (ending the Bosnian War), and the 2015 Iran Nuclear Deal (JCPOA, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of

In today's media-saturated and often polarised political environment, Bobbio's philosophy provides a critical framework, especially as power often remains unchecked and decision-making processes lack transparency

Action, which aimed to ensure Iran's nuclear programme remained exclusively peaceful by limiting enrichment activities for sanctions relief).

Partisanship has always been a characteristic of mainstream media. However, in an unfamiliar landscape, social media platforms often amplify radical, polarised content, creating an environment favourable to the spread of misinformation. Fabrication and information manipulation are fragmenting societies. Sensationalised or false reports can quickly incite populations to engage in violence or hinder peace negotiations.

The philosophy of diplomatic negotiation is to prevent conflicts through proactive engagement and to manage existing disputes through peaceful, structured communication.

The aim is to bridge differences by identifying common ground, converting a struggle of interests into a mutually acceptable solution. It is also about understanding different cultural values, such as collectivist versus individualistic perspectives on issues like human rights and sovereignty.

As trust erodes and conflicts intensify, dialogue is indispensable for finding solutions. However, a significant aspect of achieving peace lies in a genuine desire for it.

As recently demonstrated, dialogue can be employed deceptively when the potential for confrontation outweighs the benefits of diplomacy.

DISINFORMATION SURGES AS CONFLICT ROILS MIDDLE EAST

ANUJ CHOPRA

Recycled images, video game footage passed off as missile strikes, and AI-generated combat visuals: the US-Israeli assault on Iran has unleashed a torrent of online disinformation that analysts are calling a war of narratives.

Since US and Israeli strikes over the weekend ignited a regional conflict, a parallel information war has erupted, with supporters on both sides flooding social media with falsehoods that often spread faster than the facts on the ground.

AFP's fact-checkers have debunked a series of claims by some accounts posting old videos to exaggerate the damage from Tehran's missile strikes on Israel and Gulf states including the UAE and Saudi Arabia.

"There is definitely a narrative war unfolding online," Moustafa Ayad, from the Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD), said.

"Whether it was to rationalise the strikes across the Gulf, or to trumpet military might in the face of the Israeli and US strikes, the goals seem to be wear down 'enemies.'"

On the other end of the divide, Iranian opposition outlets have pushed false narratives on X and Telegram blaming a missile strike on an Iranian girls' school on the Iranian government itself, researchers said.

ISD also cautioned that fake social media accounts have sprung up impersonating senior Iranian leadership.

Meanwhile, video game clips repurposed as Iranian missile strikes and AI-generated images of US warships being sunk, including the USS Abraham Lincoln, have garnered millions of views across major platforms. Similar disinformation tactics have also been reported in other global conflicts including Ukraine and Gaza.

"It is really the speed and scale of these representations that is astounding, driving much of the online confusion of what has been targeted, or casualty counts for instance," said Ayad.

Such fabricated visuals - portraying Iran as more menacing than evidence from the ground suggests - have collectively garnered more than 21.9 million views on the Elon Musk-owned X alone, according to the disinformation watchdog NewsGuard. X on Tuesday announced it would suspend creators from its revenue sharing programme for 90 days if they post AI-generated videos of armed conflicts without disclosing they were artificially made.

The policy change targets what the company described as a threat to information authenticity amid the ongoing war.

"During times of war, it is critical that people have access to authentic information on the ground," X's head of product Nikita Bier said, adding that current AI technologies make it "trivial to create content that can mislead people." — AFP

Iran crisis tests Trump standing with young

WHEN Michael Leary learned the United States had struck Iran, he questioned whether the move honoured the "America First" pledge that earned his vote for President Donald Trump and feared it could pull the country into another Middle East quagmire.

Yet the 19-year-old student said he welcomed news of the death of Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and was not ready to condemn Trump's decision, expressing hope the joint operation with Israel would be swift and spare American lives.

"One of my things with Trump was it was going to be 'America First.' That was the rhetoric he was running on," said Leary, who cast his first presidential ballot for Trump in 2024.

"It's not that I disagree with the war or the strikes... We need to learn more and see what's going to happen. But it felt like a step back from what he was saying."

That mix of approval and unease - support for killing Khamenei while worrying that Trump's push for "regime change" could pull the US into a prolonged conflict - was echoed by five other Trump voters on a student panel that Reuters interviewed this week at Saint Anselm College in New Hampshire.

Young male voters were one of the biggest surprises of the 2024 election, swinging towards Trump after years of Democrats dominating the youth vote. But recent public opinion polls show that support slipping amid frustration over persistent inflation and hard-line immigration enforcement, tactics that some view as overly harsh.

Only one in four Americans support the US strikes, Reuters/Ipsos polling at the weekend found.

The student panel, while a small sample, offers an early snapshot of how some young men are processing the Iran strikes, suggesting Trump may have a limited window to deliver clear



Sophomore Ian Pomfret, 20, and sophomore Artemius Gehring, 20, pose for a picture after being interviewed on the US-Israeli attacks on Iran as young Trump voters, at Saint Anselm College in Manchester, New Hampshire, US. — Reuters



NATHAN LAYNE

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ALEKSANDRA MICHALSKA

The writer works for Reuters

gains for the United States and stabilise a conflict that has spread to Lebanon, rattled global markets and sent oil prices sharply higher.

A swift end to the Iran war could help Trump project an image as a decisive commander in chief, but a drawn-out conflict risks alienating the young men who helped power his 2024 resurgence.

John Fitzpatrick, a 20-year-old politics major, said he supported "decapitating" an Iranian regime and dismissed Iran's retaliatory strikes as "scrambling for one last gasp of air."

"It would be nice to see regime change - not that we should have boots on the ground or be as deeply entrenched as we were in Iraq," said Fitzpatrick, who chairs the Saint Anselm College Republicans. "I think it's overall positive."

Artemius Gehring, 20, agreed, saying Trump's objective was to bring closure to a longstanding conflict stretching back to the 1979 crisis.

"I think what he's trying to do is just end it," Gehring said. "It's the right move."

Tyler Witzgall, a 20-year-old sophomore, said that while he was worried about the apparent lack of a concrete plan by the Trump administration to replace the supreme leader, a vacuum he feared could fuel instability or

even civil war.

"He's telling the people of Iran to rise up and take over the government, and that's easier said than done," Witzgall said. "Why are we taking these actions when there's no specific plan right now or none that we know of?"

Witzgall said the Iran strikes, along with the capture of Venezuela's Nicolás Maduro in January, reflected what he saw as an overemphasis on foreign policy. He said he voted for Trump to boost the economy and deliver on domestic priorities and would like to see him focus more of his attention there.

Trump's promises to rein in inflation, boost growth and toughen immigration enforcement helped attract young men to his campaign. Exit polling analysed by the Pew Research Centre shows he won 46 per cent of men ages 18 to 29 in the 2024 election, compared with 51 per cent for the Democratic nominee, former Vice-President Kamala Harris. That marks a big shift from 2020, when Trump lost young men to President Joe Biden by 14 points, 53 per cent to 39 per cent.

Yet recent polling shows those gains have evaporated. In February, some 33 per cent of men aged 18-29 approved of Trump's performance in the White House, down from 43 per cent in the same month of 2025, according to Reuters/Ipsos polling during those periods.

How the Iran crisis is resolved could determine whether Trump's approval rating rises or falls, with potential consequences for Republicans in November's midterms. A CNN poll of 1,004 Americans found that voters ages 18 to 34 registered the strongest opposition to the strikes, with 71 per cent saying they disapproved.

Leary said it was too soon to say whether the Iran attacks were the correct course of action.

"It could absolutely turn into the right move, or we could stay in Iran for 30-plus years, spend a tonne of money - money that could have been spent at home."

SPORTS

ROUND TWO



Emerald secured victory over Betal.
— Ammar al Musafir

QEEM AL ALAMIYA BEAT SHOOTING STARS, EMERALD WIN

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, MARCH 4

Qeem Al Alamiya and Emerald continued their strong performances in the Fifth Ramadhan Women’s Basketball Championship for Institutions and Organisations 2026, organised by the Oman Basketball Association. Both teams finished the second round at the top of the standings following two matches held at the sub-hall of Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher.

The round saw Qeem Al Alamiya defeat Shooting Stars 45–37, while Emerald secured a 35–28 victory over Betal. With these results, both Qeem Al Alamiya and Emerald moved to four points each, while Shooting Stars and Betal remained on two points apiece.

The clash between Qeem Al Alamiya and Shooting Stars lived up to expectations, delivering a competitive contest from the outset. Qeem Al Alamiya ended the first quarter ahead 12–5 and gradually widened the margin in the second quarter to lead 24–16 at half-time.

Although Shooting Stars improved significantly in the fourth quarter and managed to reduce the gap by scoring 16 points, Qeem Al Alamiya’s

earlier scoring advantage ultimately secured them a 45–37 victory.

Individually, Ghadeer delivered an outstanding performance for Qeem Al Alamiya with 20 points, supported by Reem with 8 points and Fatima with 8 points. On the other side, Shamsh al Duha led Shooting Stars’ efforts with 22 points, assisted by Malak (10 points), while Lamar and Sarah added contributions to keep the team within reach.

EMERALD TURN THE TABLES

In the second match, Emerald claimed a well-earned victory over Betal in a game that remained competitive for much of the first half before Emerald sealed the result in the closing minutes through solid defence and effective offensive rebounding.

The match began at a balanced pace, with Betal capitalising on organised attacks and close-range scoring to take the first quarter 11–9.

Emerald improved in the second quarter through defensive pressure and quick transitions, scoring 8 points against Betal’s 7, but Betal maintained a slim 18–16 lead at half-time.

Scoring stayed low in the third quarter as both teams relied on tight defence, with Emerald reducing the gap to 23–22 by the end of the period.

In the final quarter, Emerald showed greater determination, turning the score with structured attacks and effective rebounds. The team scored 13 points while holding Betal to just 4, sealing a 35–28 victory.

Kimia was the standout performer for Emerald with 25 points, supported by Juhaina (6 points), and contributions from Tami and Reema. For Betal, Bea (8 points), Ward (6 points) and Angelica (5 points) were the main scorers, while Kristina also made attempts to keep her team competitive.

Al Nahda snatch valuable win over Oman Club in JL

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT MARCH 4

AL NAHDA secured an important 1–0 victory over Oman Club in the postponed match from the sixth round of the Jindal League, held at Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher. The win earned Al Nahda three valuable points, raising their tally to 28 points in fifth place, while Oman Club remained on 21 points in seventh place.

The match began at a relatively calm pace, with both teams exchanging passes in midfield. Al Nahda attempted early to deliver balls into the penalty area, but Oman’s defence managed to clear the initial threats.

As the match progressed, Al Nahda gradually increased their attacking intensity. Abdulaziz al Shamousi fired a powerful shot from outside the penalty area, which was deflected for a corner kick. The corner, taken by Ahed al Mashaykhi, reached Mohammed al Habsi, who struck a strong shot that rebounded off the defence, before Oman goalkeeper Abdulaziz al Hosni cleared another ball for a corner in the 12th minute.

Oman Club nearly opened the scoring in the 25th minute when the ball reached Husni al Hinai inside the penalty area, but his shot went wide of the right post. In the 30th minute, Omar al Hosni unleashed a powerful strike that was brilliantly saved by Al Nahda goalkeeper Fayeze al Rushaidi.

Late in the first half, the referee awarded a penalty to Al Nahda before overturning the decision after consulting with the assistant referee in the 44th minute, leaving the first half to end in a goalless draw.

KEY SUBSTITUTION

The tempo increased slightly in the second half. Azzan al Tamimi tested the



Al Nahda and Oman Club players in action during the Jindal League.

Oman goalkeeper with a strong shot in the 49th minute. Oman Club came close to scoring in the 61st minute when Walid al Saleemi broke through on goal, but Fayeze al Rushaidi produced an excellent save and then denied Yazid al Rawahi on the rebound.

Both teams made several substitutions to refresh their squads. Al Nahda’s coach introduced Iraqi professional Amir Alaa in the 66th minute, a substitution that ultimately proved decisive. In the 82nd minute, Al Nahda scored the winning goal

when Harib al Saadi struck a shot inside the box, which Amir Alaa redirected with a quick touch into the net.

Then Oman Club intensified their pressure in search of an equaliser. Majid al Balushi nearly scored with a header in the 87th minute, but Fayeze al Rushaidi pushed it away for a corner. Oman continued pressing during the four minutes of added time, but the score remained unchanged as the referee blew the final whistle, confirming Al Nahda’s 1–0 victory.

Al Alawi hits hat-trick in Al Awqaf win at Ghazi tourney

RIYADH AL BALUSHI
@riyadhbaluch

The Ghazi Ramadhan Football Tournament in the Wilayat of Sur continued with another exciting round of fixtures, as the 23rd edition of the competition delivered thrilling encounters and impressive goal-scoring performances at the indoor hall of the Sur Sports Complex, drawing strong fan support.

In the opening match, the Public Authority for Charitable Work secured a deserved 2–0 victory over Madayn in a tactically disciplined contest. Muhannad al Farsi and Moayad Obaid scored the two goals for the Authority, while Madayn struggled to convert their chances despite several attempts to get back into the game. The second fixture saw the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion edge past Sur University of Technology and Applied Sciences 2–1 in a closely contested battle. Muhannad al Shibli opened the scoring, before Waddah al Siyabi added the second goal. Ahmed bin Amin al Ghilani netted the lone goal for Sur University, keeping the match competitive until the final minutes.



The Public Authority for Charitable Work secured a 2–0 victory over Madayn.



Al Awqaf claimed an exciting 3–2 win over the Directorate of Agriculture.

DOMINANT DISPLAY

In the third encounter, Al Awqaf claimed an exciting 3–2 win over the Directorate of Agriculture in one of the most entertaining matches of the evening. Abdullah bin Khamis al Alawi was the standout performer, scoring a hat-trick to guide his team to victory. Sharaf bin Obaid al Salti and Nayef bin Saleh al Shuaibi scored for Agriculture, but their efforts were not enough to overturn the result.

The final match of the night produced a dominant display from the Labour Directorate, who cruised to a 6–1 win over Omantel. Goals were scored by Juma al Farsi, Mani Rashid, Khalid Khalfan (two goals), Masoud al Rahbi and Mazen Mohammed, while Mohammed Khamis netted Omantel’s only goal.

The results highlight the growing intensity of the competition, with teams battling to strengthen their positions ahead of the decisive stages of the tournament. Once again, the Ghazi Ramadhan Tournament continues to affirm its status as one of the most prominent Ramadhan sporting events in Sur, thanks to its competitive spirit and strong community support.

PSMCRICKET



Players pose during the Ramadan cricket tournament organised by the Pakistan Social Club.

SENSATIONAL WIN
FOR HORIZON
AGAINST JAZZ BOYS

MUSCAT: One of the most sensational match was played on Tuesday at the Pakistan School Muscat (PSM) ground in the on-going Ramadhan cricket tournament organised by the Pakistan Social Club (PSC).

Horizon (Cosmos) won the toss and elected to field. They restricted a strong Jazz Boys to 84 runs. Only Asif Khan scored 22 runs due to some excellent bowling from Horizons supported by superb fielding. For Horizon, Farhan bowled well and got two wickets for 19 runs in two overs .

Chasing a stiff target, Horizon were struggling at one stage with some accurate bowling from Jazz Boys, who took the match to the last over. However, Sachin stood tall for Horizon and produced a match-winning knock of 34 runs in 13 balls with 5 sixes that took the match away from Jazz boys with three balls spare .

Sachin was declared man of the match and was presented with the trophy by chief guest Qamar Rana.

MRP XI WIN

In the second match between Boom Boom International and MRP XI, Boom Boom batted first and scored 88 runs for seven wickets in 8 overs. Tanweer scored 16 runs while no other batter scored more than 10 runs . Zia of MRP took two wickets .

Chasing a decent total of 89 runs, MRP reached the target in the last ball of the match with another thrilling finish coming in favour of MRP. Faheem of MRP scored a match-winning knock of 44 runs in 21 balls with 5 sixes and 2 fours. Chief guest Hafiz Mohamad Saeed presented the MoM in front of a good crowd of supporters.

On Monday, Jazz boys beat Meerath Pizza by 42 runs. Zikrea hit a 24-ball 76 runs as Jazz Boys scored a mammoth 150 runs in 8 overs. In reply, Meerath Pizza could manage only 102 runs with Sajid scoring 40 runs. Zikrea won the MoM and was awarded by DR Duleep, who was the chief guest.

In the second match of the evening, AR Roshni Barka thumped Indus XI team by 60 runs.

Batting first, AR Roshni XI scored 145 runs in 8 overs with Khaizar smashing 61 runs (8x6, 2x4) in just 16 balls.

In reply Indus XI, scored 85 runs only with Mansoor Mazher making 32 runs.

Khaizar claimed 2 wickets for 18 runs also to bag the MoM award. Imran Toor, PSC Director of Finance, was the chief guest for the awards ceremony.

On Wednesday, All Brothers take on Chaudhary XI (9 pm) and Charwa XI meet AR Roshni Barka (10 pm).



This marks the second appearance for Omani fencers at the world championship.

Oman fencers to compete at
2026 Junior World Fencing

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, MAR 4

OMAN'S fencers will vie at the 2026 Junior & Cadet Fencing World

Championships which will take place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil during March 31 to April 8. A delegation comprising seven fencers will represent Oman team at the prestigious global event including: Jana al Sharji, Israa al Siyabi, Salma al Dughaishi, Ali al Busaidy, Said al Shueibi, Ahmed Anwar Kaskas and Al Harith al Harthy.

This marks the second appearance for Omani fencers at the world championship, following their participation in China last year as a sign of the steady progress being made in the sport. The championship is organised under the supervision of the International Fencing Federation (FIE) and brings together the world's top junior and cadet fencers.

Speaking about this major event



The main purpose of competing at this event is to reach into the finals besides securing direct slots to the Dakar 2026 Youth Olympic Games in November.

HISHAM KARSHOOD
Fencing coach

participation, Oman fencing team head coach Hisham Karshood said that the purpose of this participation is the main goal of the team's participation is to reach the final rounds of the championship and compete strongly against the world's best.

"Attendance in this major key event is considered as a vital participation for our promising youngster fencers. The main purpose of competing at this event is to reach into the finals of the World event beside securing direct slots to the Dakar 2026 Youth Olympic Games (YOG) which will take place later this year in November. Competing at this level will give the athletes valuable international exposure and help them gain experience against higher-ranked opponents," he added.

PRACTICE SESSIONS

The fencers are currently engaged in a comprehensive daily warm-up at Seeb Stadium under the guidance of the experienced Tunisian coach Hisham Karshood. "During the holy

month of Ramadhan, the junior fencers are practicing during the evening sessions starting from 8 pm to 10:30 pm while the cadet players are practicing during 4 pm to 5 pm," he said.

"I am confident that our fencers can deliver their outmost technical level in this essential globe championship. Despite the expected tough challenge, attendance of our fencers will provide them the experience and confidence they need. It will also allow them to exchange skills and learn from top-ranked international athletes," he ended.

Following their participation in Brazil, Oman's fencers will travel to Jordan to compete in the West Asian Fencing Championship, scheduled to take place in Amman from April 23 to 30.

The back-to-back regional and international events on the calendar will assist Oman's young fencing talents to continue their proper technical development and raise the national flag high on the global fencing stage.

Oman Club book final spot; Seeb, Muscat in race for second ticket

RIYADH AL BALUSHI
@riyadhbaluch

Oman Club officially booked their place in the final of the First Division Handball League for the 2025-26 season, scheduled for March 15, after claiming a hard-fought 26-25 victory over Muscat Club in Round Four of the final stage. The match was played at the main hall of Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher.

With this win, Oman Club raised their tally to 8 points at the top of the standings with two rounds remaining, confirming qualification for the final without depending on other results.

The team continued to demonstrate strong defensive organisation and attacking efficiency as they aim to retain



Oman Club claimed a hard-fought 26-25 victory over Muscat Club.

their league title.

The clash against Muscat was intense and evenly contested from the outset.

Muscat finished the first half ahead 15-14 after an energetic attacking display and disciplined defence.

However, Oman's experience and composure proved decisive in the second half. The match remained tightly balanced until the closing seconds, when Oman Club edged ahead to seal a dramatic 26-25 victory.

MUSCAT, SEEB LEVEL ON FOUR POINTS

Meanwhile, the race for the second qualification spot has intensified, with Muscat and Seeb level on four points each.

The two sides are set to meet in

a decisive playoff on March 12 to determine the second finalist. The encounter is expected to be highly competitive given the narrow gap in quality and shared ambition to reach the final.

Seeb boosted their chances by defeating Nizwa 32-30 in another match at the same venue. Seeb led 19-15 at half-time, while Nizwa improved in the second half and narrowed the gap but fell short of claiming their first win of the second stage.

Following their fourth consecutive defeat, Nizwa have officially been eliminated from the qualification race, remaining without any points.

Their remaining fixtures will serve as an opportunity to restore pride and conclude their campaign on a positive note.

SPORTS

ALLEN BLITZ PUTS NEW ZEALAND INTO T20 WORLD CUP FINAL

FINN ALLEN plundered the fastest century in Twenty20 World Cup history to lead New Zealand into the final with a nine-wicket demolition of South Africa at the Eden Gardens on Wednesday. South Africa, previously unbeaten in the tournament, recovered from a precarious 77-5 to post a competitive 169-8 after Marco Jansen led their recovery with a belligerent 55 not out. Allen smashed an unbeaten 100 off 33 balls, however, and shared a 117-run opening stand with Tim Seifert (58) as New Zealand romped to their target in only 12.5 overs. Allen, who hit eight sixes, finished the match with his 10th four to bring up the fastest hundred in a T20 international between two full-member nations. “I’d say it’s pretty up there,” player of the match Allen said. “Obviously, we wanted to try and put them on the back foot early. I think it’s easy for me when Timmy’s going like that. “I can kind of just watch and then hit it when it’s in my area and then just try and give him the strike.” South Africa went into the match on the back of seven wins in a row including a seven-wicket thumping of New Zealand in a group match. The presence of two left-handed batters in South Africa’s top three prompted New Zealand captain Mitchell Santner to bring on off-spinner Cole McConchie as early as the second over and the move immediately paid off.

- ALLEN SCORES FASTEST T20 WORLD CUP CENTURY
- SOUTH AFRICA’S UNBEATEN RUN ENDS WITH NINE-WICKET LOSS
- NEW ZEALAND BOWLERS CAPITALISE ON EARLY BREAKTHROUGHS



New Zealand’s Finn Allen and Rachin Ravindra celebrate after winning the ICC Men’s T20 World Cup 2026 semifinal against South Africa at the Eden Gardens in Kolkata, India, on Wednesday. — Reuters

Quinton de Kock (10) was snared at mid-on and Ryan Rickelton slashed the ball to backward point off the next delivery. New Zealand were denied a third powerplay strike when Rachin Ravindra spilled Aiden Markram (18) at midwicket with the South Africa captain on three. Ravindra made amends in his first over, however, as Markram was adjudged out even though fielder Daryl Mitchell himself was uncertain he had completed a clean catch in the deep. More drama followed in Ravindra’s next over when Glenn Phillips dropped David Miller, but five balls later Mitchell held on at long-off to remove him. Jimmy Neesham dismissed the dangerous Dewald Brevis (34) to reduce South Africa to 77-5 in the 11th over but the Proteas fought back as Jansen combined with Tristan Stubbs (29) in a rapid 73-run stand. Allen and Seifert looked in a hurry to finish the job from the start, amassing 84 runs in the six powerplay overs to take control of the match. Allen plundered 22 runs from a Corbin Bosch over in a scintillating display of power-hitting and it was not until the 10th over that Kagiso Rabada beat Seifert’s swipe across the line and sent the bails flying. New Zealand were cruising by then, however, and Ravindra joined Allen to complete the chase in dominant style. Defending champions India take on twice champions England in the second semifinal in Mumbai on Thursday. — Reuters

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186 million road projects awarded

THE Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MoTCIT), in coordination with the Projects, Tenders and Local Content Authority, has awarded two major road infrastructure projects valued at more than RO 186.3 million, covering the expansion of the Muscat Expressway and the dualisation of a key road in Ibra.

According to Eng Khamis bin Mohammed al Shammakhi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology for Transport, the projects form part of the ministry's strategy to strengthen the efficiency of the national road network in line with urban and population growth. They also aim to enhance connectivity between governorates while ensuring safer and more efficient transport infrastructure.

The Muscat Expressway expansion project, stretching from the Al Qurum Natural Park intersection to the Halban intersection, represents the largest share of the investment with a cost exceeding RO 157.2 million.

The project involves a wide package of upgrades, including converting the Al Qurum Natural Park and Saih Al Malih roundabouts into signalised intersections to improve traffic movement. The road between Saih Al Malih and Halban will also be widened and upgraded, strengthening



The projects form part of the ministry's strategy to strengthen the efficiency of the national road network in line with urban and population growth.

connectivity with the Al Batinah Expressway.

Works will further include improving bridge access points by adding additional lanes, creating two lanes in each direction for several entry and exit ramps. A direct exit will also be constructed at the Al Rusayl

Bridge for vehicles travelling from Muscat towards the Burj Al Sahwa roundabout, easing congestion along this busy corridor.

Additional overpasses will be developed to separate traffic flows at key junctions. These include a two-lane flyover for traffic coming from the Ruwi area towards the

Muscat Expressway and another at Al Khoudh 6 to facilitate smoother movement towards Al Kitab Roundabout.

The design also allows vehicles travelling from Al Dakhiliyah Governorate towards Suhar to bypass intersecting traffic flows heading in the opposite direction, improving safety and reducing bottlenecks.

Complementary improvements will also be implemented along the CD-Road from Al Ghubra to Al Maabela, easing entry and exit movements from overpasses onto the main carriageway.

Meanwhile, the Ibra road dualisation project, covering the Al Yahmadi-Al Qufaisi section, has been awarded at a value of RO 29.1 million. The project is expected to enhance the efficiency of the existing route, support smoother traffic flow and strengthen road connectivity within Al Sharqiyah North Governorate and neighbouring regions.

Eng Badr bin Salim al Maamari, Chairman of the Projects, Tenders and Local Content Authority, said the two projects reflect the government's continued focus on developing the road sector as a key pillar supporting economic growth and comprehensive development.

Once completed, the projects are expected to increase road capacity, reduce congestion during peak hours, enhance safety standards and shorten travel times across major transport corridors. — ONA

Mixed impact for Oman as war risk cover is rolled back

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, MARCH 4

A number of leading international P&I (Protection and Indemnity) Clubs have announced that war-risk cover will be rolled back on Thursday, across the Arabian Sea, Strait of Hormuz, Sea of Oman and parts of the Arabian Sea in light of heightened risks to vessels operating in these waters amidst the ongoing conflict involving Iran.

The measure applies to vessels traversing the following designated risk zone: all Iranian waters — including a 12-nautical-mile belt extending from Iran's coastline — as well as the entire Arabian Sea, the Strait of Hormuz and the Sea of Oman.

It also covers all waters west of an imaginary line drawn from Oman's territorial limit off Ras Al Hadd northeast to the Iran-Pakistan maritime border. In practical terms, this encompasses the full Hormuz gateway and surrounding approaches, but excludes the wider Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean beyond Oman's easternmost tip.

Cancelling or suspending war-risk coverage are Gard AS, Skuld, North Standard, London P&I Club, American Club, The Swedish Club and Steamship Mutual Underwriting Association, among others. Driving the action, however, are reinsurers that have begun tightening or withdrawing backing for Gulf-related exposure.

Consequently, war-risk cover is being cancelled across a broad range of marine and related liability policies.

These include P&I and liability covers for charterers and traders, comprehensive general liability policies for ships and mobile offshore units (MOUs), crew and passenger liability, carriers' liability, bunkers cover, as well as ancillary protections such as loss of use, loss of freight, extra costs, deviation liability, divers' cover and interest insurance for charterers and purchasers.

In essence, the cancellation applies not only to standard vessel P&I war extensions but also to a wide spectrum of associated maritime, offshore, cargo, crew and commercial liability protections that rely on war-risk backing.

According to market experts, the impact on vessel movements and cargo flows to and from Omani ports is likely to be less severe than for GCC ports located within



War-risk cover is being cancelled across a broad range of marine and related liability policies.

the Arabian Sea. Of Oman's three main commercial gateways, SOHAR Port and Freezone technically falls within the war-risk area designated by many P&I Clubs.

In practice, vessels calling at Sohar may require additional premiums, voyage-by-voyage approval and special underwriting clearance; war-risk cover is not necessarily denied, but it is no longer automatic under standard terms.

By contrast, Port of Duqm lies south-east of Ras Al Hadd and is generally outside the defined risk zone, while Port of Salalah, on the Arabian Sea, is clearly outside it.

Nevertheless, ships calling at Sohar, Duqm or Salalah may face higher insurance premiums if their voyage routes pass near designated risk zones. Even though these ports lie outside the Arabian Sea, carriers may factor increased insurance costs into rates for vessels bound for or departing Oman. Consequently, freight rates for Oman-linked cargo — particularly bulk, container and energy shipments — could rise.

Furthermore, with many carriers avoiding the Strait of Hormuz and parts of the northern Arabian Sea to limit war-risk exposure, shipping routes between Asia, Africa, Europe and the Gulf are being reshaped.

For Oman's ports, this may mean longer voyage times due to southern rerouting and altered traffic patterns as some carriers bypass the Gulf entirely in favour of alternative hubs. The result could be a shift in trade flows, potentially boosting Oman's role as a trans-shipment hub — or, conversely, reducing calls if Gulf-focused services are scaled back.

البنك الوطني العماني
لدول مجلس التعاون الخليجي
National Bank of Oman GCC Fund

ملادوقا

National Bank of Oman GCC Fund

Investment Manager Report
For Quarter 4 2025

In 2025, GCC equity markets underwent a significant “rebalancing,” marked by a sharp divergence between high-performing smaller markets and the region’s heavyweight, Saudi Arabia. While global indices like the S&P 500 saw double-digit gains, the GCC’s performance was localized, driven by domestic reforms rather than global trends.

During the quarter, the Saudi Tadawul Index was down by 8.80% while the S&P GCC Total Return Index reported a lower decline of 4.8% helped by a gain of 3.55% in Dubai and 14.20% rise in Oman. Kuwait saw some profit booking after the strong rally during the year and declined by -0.22%.

Sectors like Real Estate and banking saw traction in Dubai & Abu Dhabi while Saudi Arabia saw profit booking across led by fear of rising fiscal deficit due to lower oil prices.

The benchmark declined by 1.47%, while the Fund limited losses to 0.57%, outperforming the benchmark. Overweight exposure to Saudi Arabia detracted from returns, partially offset by higher allocation to Oman and Kuwait banks and positive contributions from UAE real estate and banking stocks.

The GCC equity market outlook for 2026 is characterized by a “decoupling” from oil volatility, with regional stock markets increasingly driven by structural reforms, non-oil GDP growth, and a robust IPO pipeline. 2026 can be viewed as a consolidation year where the “Giga-projects” and diversification strategies of the last decade begin to yield mature corporate earnings.

Overall, we believe that our portfolio is well positioned to benefit from the regional markets and is likely to deliver positive results to the unit holders.

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2025		
STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION		
	2025	2024
	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
ASSETS		
Investments at fair value through profit or loss	10,726,667	11,565,847
Cash and cash equivalents	341,954	559,493
Total assets	11,068,621	12,125,340
LIABILITIES		
Current liabilities		
Accruals and other payables	43,418	49,991
Total liabilities	43,418	49,991
Total net assets attributable to the Unitholders	11,025,203	12,075,349
Net asset value per unit	1.028	1.094
STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME		
	2025	2024
	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
INCOME		
Fair value changes in investments at fair value through profit or loss	47,215	1,133,688
Net realised loss on investments at fair value through profit or loss	(278,376)	(127,353)
Dividend income	335,147	337,636
Interest income	993	646
Other income	104,370	—
	209,349	1,344,617
Expenses		
Management fees	132,423	140,216
Brokerage expenses	58,057	45,951
Fund Management Body fees	33,600	35,000
General and administration	21,554	24,443
Administration fees	18,058	19,120
Custodian fees	11,453	11,577
Foreign exchange loss	569	8,346
	275,714	284,653
Net (loss) / profit and total comprehensive income for the year	(66,365)	1,059,964
Net (loss) / profit per unit	(0.006)	0.094

Investment Manager & Administrator

Note: The complete accounts, in Arabic or English as requested, will be sent by mail to any shareholder within 7 days of a written request addressed to the Administrator, Investment Banking Operations, National Bank of Oman, P.O.Box 751, PC 112, Ruwi, Sultanate of Oman. Tel: 24778757. Fax: 24778893 Email: GCCFund@nbo.co.om

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The Ramadhan souq offers a warm and vibrant setting where families and friends can gather after Iftar to explore, shop, and celebrate the season.

Experience the spirit of Ramadhan at Sohar International Souq — Layali Al Mouj

MUSCAT: In the spirit of Ramadhan and in support of local businesses, Sohar International invites the community to the second edition of “Sohar International Souq — Layali Al Mouj”, taking place from Thursday, March 5 to Saturday, March 7, 2026, at the picturesque Al Mouj Marina from 7 pm to 12 midnight.

The three-night Ramadhan souq offers a warm and vibrant setting where families and friends can gather after iftar to explore, shop and celebrate the season.

“Sohar International Souq — Layali Al Mouj” will be officially inaugurated by Halima bint Rashid al Zari, Chairperson of the Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development (ASMED), underscoring the initiative’s alignment with national economic diversification priorities.

This year’s edition will host approximately 150 participants, including 100 SMEs across diverse sectors such as food, fashion, lifestyle, and creative industries, alongside 50 young entrepreneurs featured within a dedicated Children’s Corner.

Commenting on the initiative, Abdulwahid bin Mohamed al Murshidi, Chief Executive Officer of Sohar International, stated: “Small and medium enterprises are central to building a resilient and diversified economy. In Oman, strengthening this segment is essential to advancing private sector competitiveness and long-term national growth. The Sohar International Souq — Layali Al Mouj reflects our commitment to going beyond financing by enabling structured market access for Omani businesses.

As Oman progresses towards the objectives of Oman Vision 2040, expanding opportunities for SMEs to connect directly with consumers is critical to sustainable economic development”.

Set against the serene marina waterfront, “Layali Al Mouj” brings together a curated selection of local entrepreneurs, artisanal brands and homegrown concepts, featuring unique gifts, handcrafted products, specialty treats and thoughtfully designed pieces perfect for Ramadhan and Eid.

With its festive evening ambience, illuminated marina views and community-focused atmosphere, the Souq offers a welcoming space to support Omani businesses while embracing the spirit of the Holy Month.

NEW INDIA ASSURANCE — OMAN HOSTS BROKERS MEET 2026

MUSCAT: The Oman operations of the New India Assurance Company Limited successfully hosted its brokers meet 2026 on February 16, 2026, bringing together its valued broker partners for an evening of engagement, collaboration and forward-looking discussions.

The event provided a dynamic platform for brokers to interact directly with the marketing, underwriting, claims, medical and operations teams, reinforcing the company’s shared commitment to



transparency, responsiveness and sustainable growth. The interactive session

enabled open dialogue on market developments, service enhancements and strategic priorities for the year ahead. Addressing the gathering, Gaurav Sharma, Chief Operating Officer — Oman Operations stated: “In 2025, Oman Operations crossed RO 20 million in premium, with nearly 45% of portfolio driven through broker partnerships — a testament to the strength of our collaborative relationships in the market”.

Discover life with the all-new Lincoln Navigator

AS the Sultanate of Oman prepares for a season of reflection and connection, Lincoln Oman is proud to feature the all-new Lincoln Navigator as a cornerstone of its highly anticipated “Lincoln Ramadhan Wishlist” campaign. Reflecting the brand’s commitment to sanctuary and effortless luxury, the Navigator stands as a flagship SUV that harmoniously blends power with artistic craftsmanship. Running till April 9, 2026, this campaign ensures that the dream of owning Lincoln’s most prestigious vehicle is accompanied by a suite of benefits designed for total peace of mind. The “Lincoln Ramadhan Wishlist” campaign provides an unparalleled value package for the all-new Navigator, emphasising a worry-free ownership experience.

Customers who choose the Navigator during this period will receive a comprehensive 5-year/100,000 km service package (covering 10 services), a 5-year/100,000 km manufacturer’s warranty and complimentary one-year registration. These benefits are tailored to allow owners to focus entirely on the exceptional driving experience that only a Lincoln flagship can provide.

In the spirit of the season, Lincoln Oman is also introducing an element of modern excitement to the campaign. Every visitor who experiences the Navigator firsthand



Reflecting the brand’s commitment to sanctuary and effortless luxury, the Navigator stands as a flagship SUV that harmoniously blends power with artistic craftsmanship.

through a test drive will be entered into a raffle draw to win one of two iPhone 17s. For those who move forward with a purchase, a special Buy & Win draw offers the chance to win the sleek iPhone 17 Air. Both draws will take place on April 26, 2026, adding an extra layer of celebration to the Holy Month. The all-new Navigator itself is a masterpiece of design, highlighted by the signature Lincoln front light bar and an illuminated Lincoln star. Its commanding presence is felt through the satin chrome

mesh grille and 22-inch wheels, while the class-exclusive Lincoln split gate offers versatile cargo access that doubles as a seating area for family leisure. Inside, the cabin is transformed into a multi-sensory sanctuary, featuring a massive 48-inch panoramic display and the 28-speaker Revel Ultima 3D audio system. Passengers can further unwind with the Lincoln Rejuvenate system, which orchestrates lighting, sound and digital scents for a spa-like recharge on the go.

Hongqi unveils exclusive Ramadhan privileges

MUSCAT: This Ramadhan, Hongqi at Mohsin Haider Darwish LLC invites customers to celebrate a season of grace with exceptional privileges crafted to elevate every journey.

Blending refined luxury with remarkable value, Hongqi’s Ramadhan campaign delivers exclusive benefits alongside the opportunity to win a brand-new Hongqi H6.

Running from up to April 8, 2026, the limited-time offer provides customers with cash benefits ranging from RO 1,350 up to RO 7,000, depending on model and variant, in addition to a comprehensive suite of ownership advantages.

Ramadhan privileges include: 7 years unlimited mileage warranty; 7 years roadside assistance; Complimentary insurance (1st year — Oman & UAE);



Complimentary registration (1st year); 2-year/45,000 km service package (whichever comes first) and an exclusive gift from Amouage.

Adding to the excitement of the season, every vehicle purchased during the campaign period qualifies for an entry into the grand raffle draw to win a Hongqi H6

2.0T, 2025 model year. Additionally, walk-in customers will have the chance to win one of 10 exclusive Amouage gifts through a raffle draw. Mohsin bin Hani al Bahrani, CEO — MHD ACERE, said: “Ramadhan is a time that reflects grace, generosity and meaningful experiences. With Hongqi, we are proud to present a campaign that embodies distinguished luxury while offering exceptional value and long-term peace of mind. From comprehensive warranty coverage to exclusive rewards and the opportunity to win a Hongqi H6, this initiative reaffirms our commitment to delivering premium ownership experiences for our customers in Oman”.

Lulu’s ‘Convoy of Goodness’ sets out to spread smiles during Ramadhan

MUSCAT: Lulu Oman has launched an extensive drive to distribute ‘Ramadhan Kits’ to deserving families across Oman, in a bid to reinforce social responsibility and reflect the spirit of sharing and caring in its true sense during the Holy Month of Ramadhan. The ‘Convoy of Goodness’ campaign is part of Lulu’s initiatives to engage in acts of charity and community service during Ramadhan.

The Convoy of Goodness travelled across major governorates in Oman, starting from Khasab all the way to Salalah, where volunteers worked diligently to distribute Ramadhan essentials to around 1,400 families. The kits contained food



The Convoy of Goodness travelled across major governorates in Oman.

provisions and groceries needed for a whole month for an entire family during Ramadhan. The Ramadhan essentials were distributed by the charity teams allotted for respective areas. In Salalah, the initiative was carried out by Salalah Charity team and Omani Women’s Association and in Bausher, the kits were distributed by the Nidaa team to name a few. Speaking on the initiative, Shabeer K A, Director — Oman, said, “As an organisation with strong CSR policies, giving back to the community has always been our priority. We believe in creating meaningful and lasting impacts in the lives of people by being part of

various social initiatives. Ramadhan provides the perfect opportunity for us to promote a culture of giving and to create a tangible difference in the lives of people around”, he added. Through this campaign, Lulu aims to foster the spirit of unity and relationship with the community as well as contribute to instilling the concept of sharing and caring during Ramadhan. As part of its ongoing CSR commitment in the Sultanate of Oman, Lulu’s Convoy of Goodness initiative reaffirms the Group’s dedication to supporting families in need and making a meaningful difference across communities in Oman.

SHORTTAKES



The Bank’s annual support to the initiative reaffirms its ongoing commitment to Corporate Social Responsibility CSR and community service.

BANK MUSCAT SUPPORTS FAK KURBA INITIATIVE TO RESOLVE 297 CASES

MUSCAT: Bank Muscat has extended the impact of the “Fak Kurba” initiative organised by the Omani Lawyers Association in coordination with the Ministry of Social Development and the Supreme Judicial Council. The Bank’s annual support to the initiative reaffirms its ongoing commitment to Corporate Social Responsibility CSR and community service.

The current edition of the initiative reflects the ongoing partnership between the Omani Lawyers Association throughout the past eight years. The initiative aims to support individuals incarcerated due to failing to clear financial obligations.

The Bank has actively contributed to the initiative by supporting 297 cases of individuals involved in civil, commercial, religious and labour-related cases.

Until now, the Bank has contributed to the resolution of 2,200 cases, excluding cases related to banking or financial institutions.

The “Fak Kurba” initiative is an important volunteer-driven venture supported by the efforts of the Omani Lawyers Association and it aims to raise community awareness of the significance of social bonds and solidarity.

The initiative, since it was launched in 2012, has contributed to resolving many cases across the Sultanate of Oman and has been running as a year-round sustainable project.

Hamad bin Hamdan al Rubaie, Chairman of the Oman Lawyers Association, said: “We are pleasantly proud of continuing our partnership with Bank Muscat that has been the strategic contributor to the success of this humanitarian initiative for many years.

The success of this year’s edition of the Fak Kurba initiative reflects the continued profound and positive impact of this humanitarian project since its inception. Throughout the past years, the initiative has contributed to the resolve of over 8198 individuals.”

BUSINESS REPORTER

MUSCAT, MAR 4

The Financial Services Authority (FSA) reviewed the key challenges related to insuring industrial facilities during a dialogue session it hosted under the title ‘Securing Industrial Facilities and Safety Requirements’.

The session aimed to examine the current challenges faced by several industrial establishments in obtaining appropriate insurance coverage for various industrial activities.

This was done through reviewing the perspectives of facility owners and representatives, as well as insurance companies. The session also sought to discuss practical proposals and solutions to enhance protection levels and preventive readiness

OIL MARKET

Oil edges higher amidst Iran tensions



International oil prices rose about 1 per cent on Wednesday as US-Israeli strikes on Iran disrupted supplies in the Middle East region.

However, gains slowed after US President Donald Trump indicated the US Navy could escort vessels through the Strait of Hormuz. Brent crude rose 91 cents to \$82.31 a barrel, while US West Texas Intermediate gained 63 cents to \$75.19. — Reuters

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, MAR 4

TOTSA, the trading arm of French energy major TotalEnergies, has issued a tender to sell up to two million barrels of Oman crude for April loading, according to traders cited by Reuters. The offer represents the first Middle East oil tender since escalating tensions involving Iran disrupted regional energy flows and heightened volatility in global crude markets.

The cargoes are scheduled to load between April 1 and April 27 from Mina Al Fahal, Oman’s main crude export terminal. The tender closed on Wednesday afternoon in Singapore, where many regional oil traders and refiners are based.

Totsa — formally known as TotalEnergies Trading — is one of the world’s major energy trading houses. The unit manages the purchase, sale and transportation of crude oil and refined petroleum products globally.

Its tenders are closely watched by market participants as they often signal supply availability and emerging pricing trends in international oil markets. The timing of the tender is notable, coming amidst heightened geopolitical tensions in the Gulf following the Iran conflict,

AIRLINE SHARE SELLOFF EASES AS SOME FLIGHTS LEAVE GULF



The forum examined current challenges faced by industrial establishments in obtaining appropriate insurance coverage.

in this vital sector, thereby supporting the sustainability of industrial operations, strengthening business continuity and fostering a safe and attractive investment environment.

ENERGY COOPERATION

Japan, US consider nuclear energy project



Japan and the United States are considering adding a nuclear power project to the second phase of Japan’s \$550-billion investment package.

The project aims to strengthen energy supply chains amidst renewed concerns over Middle East security. Announcements may coincide with Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi’s planned meeting with President Donald Trump on March 19. — Reuters



The availability of Oman crude is drawing interest from refiners seeking stable supplies.

The official price of Omani crude oil for May delivery reached \$85.93 per barrel on Wednesday, rising by \$3.84 compared with Tuesday’s price of \$82.09.

which has raised concerns about shipping security and supply flows through the Strait of Hormuz.

Around a fifth of the world’s oil shipments typically transit the strategic waterway, making any disruption a key factor influencing global prices. Against this backdrop, the availability of Oman crude is drawing interest from refiners seeking stable supplies. Oman’s export terminal at Mina Al Fahal lies outside the Strait of Hormuz, offering logistical advantages during periods of regional tension and allowing

shipments to move without passing through the narrow maritime chokepoint.

Oil prices have also strengthened in recent sessions. The official price of Omani crude oil for May delivery reached \$85.93 per barrel on Wednesday, rising by \$3.84 compared with Tuesday’s price of \$82.09.

Meanwhile, the average monthly price of Omani crude oil for March delivery stood at \$62.17 per barrel, representing an increase of 8 cents compared with the February delivery price.

percentage drops in the past few days, wiping tens of billions of dollars from airlines’ market value.

Lufthansa was down 0.8% and Qantas was 2.7% lower — both have lost more than 10% of their value this week so far, their worst week in almost a year. BA-owner ICAG was down 1.5%, having fallen more than 11% in the past three days.

The Gulf is also a major hub for air cargo, putting further pressure on international trade routes.

— Reuters

FSA reviews insurance and safety requirements of industries

The session was led by Abdullah bin Salim al Salmi, Executive President of the FSA and attended by Ghalib bin Said al Maamari, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion for Commerce and Industry (MoCIIP); and Eng Ahmed bin Hassan al Dheeb, Deputy Chairman of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ).

Representatives from several relevant public and private entities also participated, including the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn), the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), in addition to representatives of insurance companies and industrial establishments.

In his opening remarks, Al Salmi emphasised the importance of enhancing awareness of industrial insurance and its vital

role in managing risks faced by industrial facilities. He noted that there is a gap in understanding between insurance companies and industrial establishments regarding insurance requirements and safety and security standards.

He further explained that some industrial establishments face challenges in obtaining suitable insurance coverage, while insurance companies indicate that certain facilities are classified as high-risk if safety and security requirements are not met.

He stressed that strengthening risk management culture and compliance with safety standards contribute to reducing risk levels and enhancing the ability of establishments to obtain insurance coverage appropriate to the nature of their industrial activities.

CHINA ECONOMY

China factory activity contracts again



China’s manufacturing sector contracted for the second consecutive month in February, according to the National Bureau of Statistics.

The Purchasing Managers’ Index fell to 49, down from 49.3 in January, marking its lowest level in four months. A reading below 50 indicates contraction. Analysts expect activity to improve in coming weeks following reductions in US tariffs. — ONA

OPINION

From freehold to usufruct: Rethinking land distribution in Oman



HAIDER AL LAWATI
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The writer is a Muscat-based economic analyst who previously worked for CBO and OCCI

THE Sultanate of Oman preceded many countries in the region in distributing vacant land plots to citizens for various purposes at nominal prices. The process of land distribution began during the 1970s and it continued until recently under the renewed era of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq when certain decisions were issued to enable citizens to obtain land plots, particularly in Muscat Governorate.

In previous decades, some merchants, influential individuals and financially capable citizens were able to acquire more than one plot of land for different purposes. However, many of these lands remained unused, prompting the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning to reconsider such grants in order to ensure fairness in access to land, especially in Muscat Governorate.

This led to a review of the right to free ownership and the adoption of the usufruct system, which is considered more equitable and sustainable for land management.

The aim was to utilise lands allocated to some citizens under usufruct but left unused for decades, as well as to enhance fairness among current generations and generate developmental impact economically, environmentally and socially.

The future vision of land distribution under the usufruct system aligns with

national development directions within the framework of Oman Vision 2040, with the goal of sustainability.

The gradual shift from free ownership to usufruct represents an organised and fair approach for citizens. It does not deprive citizens of their right to housing or investment, rather it ensures that land becomes a tool for production and development rather than an instrument for monopoly or stagnation.

Therefore, equitable land distribution between Muscat and other governorates is not merely an administrative issue, but a developmental matter affecting the economy, environment, and society.

Usufruct represents a more balanced and sustainable model, as it preserves state ownership of resources, ensures optimal use, enhances intergenerational justice, supports balanced regional development, and achieves comprehensive and sustainable national growth.

As we understand, in Muscat Governorate, population density and economic activities are more concentrated than in other governorates, raising the issue of distributional justice to ensure that those in genuine need obtain land.

The usufruct system emerges as a more just and sustainable tool compared to ownership, as Muscat represents the

The future vision of land distribution under the usufruct system aligns with national development directions within the framework of Oman Vision 2040, with the goal of sustainability.

administrative and economic heart of the Sultanate of Oman, attracting investments, services and employment opportunities.

This has led to rising land prices in some areas and difficulties for young people in acquiring land, while some individuals monopolise unused plots in vital areas.

However, a pressing question remains among citizens: every head of the household today aspires to obtain a land plot of approximately 600 square metres to build a private home, particularly young people, as was common in previous decades.

This can only be achieved through planning new land areas and providing essential services such as electricity and water to those vast regions.

Oman's geographical area is sufficient to distribute thousands of new plots to citizens so they can build homes according to their preferences, as was previously the case.

This would also create job opportunities for contractors and small Omani entrepreneurs in the construction sector and reduce unemployment rates.

The relevant authorities should consider this demand.

Moreover, the idea of granting a land plot to every citizen should continue regardless of the planning of new residential cities that often benefit large contractors and developers before ordinary citizens.

HYUNDAI MOTOR’S ROBOTS HERALD HARDWARE REBOOT

KATRINA HAMLIN

Robots are hard at work for Hyundai Motor Co. Although cars generate the profit, its Boston Dynamics unit is more responsible for the sudden rise in market capitalisation. As investors increasingly value technological hardware as much as software, more companies across Asia will be rewarded.

The Hyundai conglomerate’s automotive shares have roughly doubled this year, compared to a 40% rise in the domestic benchmark index. Vehicles, including its Tucson SUV, power the bottom line. Hyundai Motor Co is on track for \$9 billion of net profit next year, according to Visible Alpha. A

basket of international peers trades at about 7.5 times earnings on average, which would impute roughly \$70 billion of equity value. There’s also a stake in sister carmaker Kia, worth \$16 billion and \$17 billion of book value from investments in other related companies, as of September. Korea Investment analysts appraise the financing division at \$15 billion. Add it all up, slap on a 40% conglomerate

discount and the company is worth about \$70 billion. Hyundai Motor Co’s market value is now closer to \$100 billion, however. Its rally began in January after Boston Dynamics showcased the Atlas humanoid cyborg at the annual consumer tech expo in Las Vegas and unveiled plans for mass production.

Every scrap of related news since has stoked further excitement: the stock leapt 11% on Friday after Seoul said the Hyundai group would invest some \$6 billion in an artificial intelligence data centre and robot factory.

It’s more than just hype. Hyundai is well-positioned to sell autonomous machines like its four-legged Spot, wheeled Mobed and biped Atlas. The group’s decision to buy an 80% stake in Boston Dynamics from SoftBank in 2021 accelerated a multi-decade push into the technology; Hyundai Motor Co owns a roughly 28% indirect holding.

The parent’s broad portfolio also manufactures everything from ships to space exploration vehicles, enabling it to experiment and gather data for industrial applications. Essential components are also available internally.

China’s homegrown champions, such as Unitree, present formidable competition, but Hyundai is better positioned to tap the lucrative US market, where higher labour costs make a compelling case for automating production. It’s already introducing Atlas to production lines in Georgia. — Reuters

European exchange CEOs eye 2026 deal spree

EUROPEAN

stock exchange operators are poised to strike a flurry of M&A deals this year as they look to integrate the region's capital markets and diversify their businesses. Exchange chiefs have recently talked up the potential for more acquisitions following a series of major deals last year.

Chief executive of Deutsche Borse, Stephan Leithner told reporters in December that the German exchange operator saw dealmaking as a key part of its growth strategy.

“We’ll financially be very disciplined on M&A”, he said. “I think we also see us clearly focusing on strengthening some of our fast-growing businesses and in that context we do have strong financial firepower, so we are not constrained. In November, Deutsche Borse confirmed a non-binding, cash-and shares proposal to acquire European fund distribution platform All-funds for around 5.3 billion euros.

It would be Deutsche Borse’s biggest acquisition ever, following its 3.9 billion euros deal for Danish investment management software company SimCorp in 2023.

“We are ready to act again” after integrating SimCorp, Leithner said. We have the right financial resources”. With European IPO activity muted and an increasing share of equities trading taking place from exchanges, market operators have doubled down on fast-growing segments such as financial data, analytics and technology.

Meanwhile bourse owners have scaled up in recent years by consolidating Europe’s scattered national stock exchanges.

Euronext, which accounts for about a quarter of European equities trading, completed a 413 million euros all-share acquisition of the Greek stock exchange in November.

It is Euronext’s fourth exchange takeover since 2018 and adds an eighth country to its network of bourses in Paris, Amsterdam, Dublin, Milan, Oslo Lisbon and Brussels.

The firm has also made recent



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The writer is our foreign correspondent based in the UK.

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Brokers work at the stock exchange in Frankfurt am Main, Germany. — Reuters

acquisitions in market data services, fintech and corporate solutions. Euronext’s CEO, Stephane Boujnah, is set on further takeovers. “We continue to explore potential acquisitions both to diversify the revenue mix of Euronext and/or to consolidate market infrastructures in Europe”, he told reporters in November.

He said that he was interested in buying Nasdaq’s Nordics business and Spanish exchange group BME, as well as a “combination” with central securities depository Euroclear.

He has also signalled he could bid for the London Stock Exchange if it went up for sale. However, data and analytics-heavy parent company LSEG has fended off suggestions it should offload its flagship bourse, which now comprises just 5 per cent of the group’s revenue.

LSEG chief executive David Schwimmer said back in May that the FTSE 100 firm continued to “look at a lot” of M&A opportunities. Since joining LSEG from Goldman Sachs in 2018, Schwimmer has overseen several big-ticket acquisitions that have transformed the group’s business mix and geographical footprint.

The biggest deal by far has been LSEG’s \$27 billion acquisition of data and analytics firm Refinitiv,

which completed in 2021. Since then, it has made further purchases of companies including cloud-based tech provider Tora for \$325 million and transaction risk firm Quantile for up to £274 million.

Last month, Bjorn Sibbern, who leads Swiss bourse operator SIX Group, said that he was on the lookout for more acquisitions. SIX, which snapped up BME for about 2.8 billion euros in 2020, completed a £225 million deal for London’s challenger stock exchange Aquis in July.

Sibbern has said future deals are likely to centre around SIX’s exiting main business areas: exchanges, securities services, financial information and banking services.

The prospect of further consolidation among European exchanges comes as EU policy makers push ahead with the Savings and Investment Union — a long-planned series of reforms designed to harmonise regulation across different jurisdictions and unlock around 10 trillion euros of EU retail savings parked in bank deposits.

Back in October, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz called for the creation of “a kind of European stock exchange” to counter a wave of homegrown companies listings in the US, where pools of capital are deeper.

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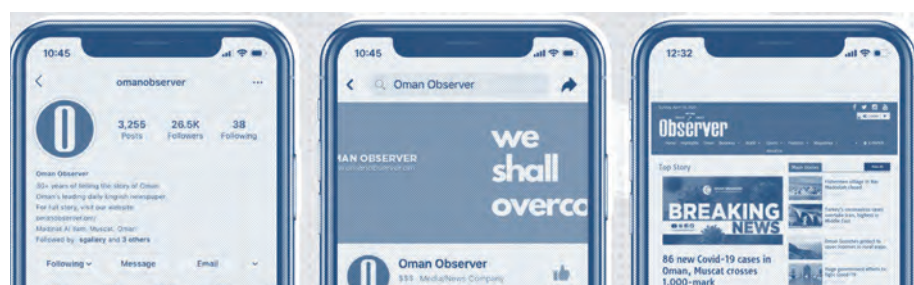
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WHERE HERITAGE MEETS CELEBRATION: FASHIONING RAMADHAN IN OMAN

BUTHAINA AL RIYAMI

AS the year gets ready to welcome Ramadhan, Muslim countries across the world are enriched by welcoming the long-awaited month, when tranquility fills the atmosphere, weaving a gentle rhythm and spreading a soothing fragrance.

This month brings blessings, the greatest of which are spiritual, but it also holds many other gentle rhythms that spark creativity and a sense of celebration in different ways.

Ramadhan extends beyond worship and fasting to reshape daily life into a shared cultural rhythm, celebrating values such as modesty, hospitality and presence.

These values are reflected creatively in various fields, including fashion, where clothing becomes one of the visible expressions that embody deeper meanings, designed to harmonise with family gatherings, celebrate this religious occasion and lend a sense of distinction to these blessed days.

As Ramadhan approaches, Omani fashion designers ignite a flame of creativity, weaving fashion collections aligned with the atmosphere of gathering and celebrating Ramadhan.

For many designers, Ramadhan collections are not mere seasonal demands or trends, but a gentle statement to celebrate this month in their own way, as a response to women's need for clothes that balance comfort during family gatherings and communal iftars with refined elegance.

Azza al Riyami, a fashion designer and the owner of the Philippa Dress brand, finds herself welcoming every cultural occasion by drawing on the luxurious beauty of Omani traditional attire — its textures, embroidery and beadwork — as a sign of her celebration.

Azza al Riyami's latest collection features luxurious dara'as — traditional long dresses commonly worn by women across the Gulf region on special occasions such as Ramadhan and Eid. Also, it features kids dress that mix between the present and the past. The details were carefully designed to align with the atmosphere and gatherings of Ramadhan, which the collection was meant to convey.

In this collection, the dara'a builds a bridge between generations. While her usual touches and design identity remain familiar, this collection carries its own sense of distinction. All the garments in this collection, with their refined detailing and thoughtful fabric choices, succeed in speaking to modern Omani women who seek pieces that honour tradition without feeling ceremonial or distant from everyday life.



FATWA

QUESTION & ANSWER

Shaikh
Dr Kahlán
Al Kharousi

Assistant Grand
Mufti of the
Sultanate
of Oman

QUESTION

I bought an electrical appliance from a store and paid extra to extend the warranty. Is this permissible?

ANSWER

Paying to extend the warranty is considered entering a commercial insurance contract, which involves uncertainty and is not permissible in Islamic law. As for the warranty that comes with the product at purchase, there is no problem with it. And Allah knows best

QURAN

VERSE OF THE DAY

﴿إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ﴾

“We Ourselves have sent down the Reminder (the Quran) just as We are safeguarding it”.

[Surat Al Hijr] — Verse 9

HADITH

A GUIDE FOR THE FAITHFUL

Narrated Abu Huraira:
I heard Allah's Messenger (PBUH) saying regarding Ramadhan,

“Whoever prayed at night in it (the month of Ramadhan) out of sincere Faith and hoping for a reward from Allah, then all his previous sins will be forgiven”.

[Sahih Al Bukhari]



R A M A D H A N A N D M E N T A L H E A L T H

THE QUIET EMOTIONAL SHIFT

NAJAH AL RIYAMI

AS the sun sets and the call to prayer echoes across Muscat, a subtle transformation unfolds. Ramadhan is often described through its visible rituals, fasting, prayer, charity and communal meals, yet beneath the structured rhythm of the month lies something quieter and more complex, an emotional recalibration.

For many in Oman, Ramadhan is not only a spiritual exercise but a psychological one.

Fasting alters the body's chemistry and daily routine. Early mornings for suhoor, long daylight hours without food or water and later nights can disrupt sleep and energy levels. Health professionals note that fluctuations in blood sugar and sleep patterns may temporarily influence mood, irritability and concentration. Yet these physical shifts are only part of the story.

Psychologists describe Ramadhan as a period of heightened emotional awareness. With daily distractions reduced and social habits adjusted, individuals often become more reflective. Fasting cultivates delayed gratification and self regulation, qualities linked to emotional resilience. Many report greater mental clarity in the second half of the month, once the body adapts to its new rhythm.

At the same time, Ramadhan can intensify feelings that remain unnoticed during the rest of the year.

Community is central to the month. Family iftars and gatherings after Tarawih prayers reinforce belonging and strengthen support networks. But for some, particularly expatriates, the elderly living alone, or those navigating grief, the emphasis on togetherness can amplify loneliness.

The spiritual atmosphere encourages introspection, which can be both healing and confronting. Memories, regrets and unprocessed grief may feel sharper when one is physically depleted and emotionally open.

In Oman's close knit society, conversations around mental health are becoming more visible, yet



stigma persists. Ramadhan presents a paradox, it is a time of compassion and empathy, yet individuals may hesitate to speak openly about anxiety, depression or emotional fatigue.

The expectation to appear spiritually uplifted can discourage honest dialogue about struggle.

Specialists emphasise, however, that Ramadhan can also support psychological wellbeing when approached with balance. Structured routines, meaningful rituals and reduced daytime distractions can lower stress.

Acts of charity and volunteering foster purpose, which research consistently links to improved mental health outcomes. Gratitude practices, central to the month, are similarly associated with emotional stability and reduced depressive symptoms.

There is also a neurological dimension.

Spiritual practices such as prayer and meditation have been shown to activate regions of the brain associated with calm and focus. Repeated nightly

prayers and recitation may reinforce these effects, offering a form of mindfulness embedded within faith.

For employers and institutions, awareness of Ramadhan's emotional dimension is increasingly important. Reduced working hours acknowledge physical demands, but mental wellbeing requires broader sensitivity.

Flexible expectations, supportive leadership and open dialogue can make a meaningful difference.

Ultimately, Ramadhan is not defined solely by hunger or ritual, but by intention.

For some, it becomes a reset, a space to detach from constant stimulation, reassess priorities and strengthen relationships. For others, it is a reminder to seek support, reconnect with faith or simply slow down.

When the month concludes and normal schedules resume, many speak of a lingering calm.

In the stillness between the adhan and the first sip of water at iftar lies a pause and in that pause, reflection, vulnerability and, often, healing.

RAMADHAN TWEETS



Sami alhinai

@sami_alhinai

X.com

Translated from Arabic by Grok

If neighbors gather around one single table, the whole neighborhood becomes a family 🤍 Affection lasts longer than the meal, and this is how the neighborhood breathes in Ramadan 🌙

Rate this translation: 👍 👎



The holy month brings Omani people closer through iftar



خلود سعود

@khulood93hadrm

X.com

Translated from Arabic by Grok

A fast accepted, a delicious iftar, and sins forgiven

"May Allah accept from us and from you our righteous deeds and acts of worship" 🤍 🌿

#RamadanMubarak

#Oman

Rate this translation: 👍 👎



A young girl in Omani clothing holds a tray of dates for Ramadan iftar

PROMINENT OMANI FIGURES

Who is he?
Sayyid Suleiman bin Ali bin Al Qasim al Busaidy

Sayyid Suleiman bin Ali bin Al Qasim al Busaidy
Served as Commander of the Army in Zanzibar.
Appointed Governor of Mogadishu (present-day Somalia) in 1880 during the reign of Barghash bin Said.

RAMADHAN TRADITION



Moroccans have their traditional clothes that they wear during Ramadhan. Men wear Djubba Gandoura in different colours, sometimes they wear it going to pray and women have different types of clothes, but the most famous one and their favourite is Kaftan.

HEALTH TIPS

CUTTING BACK ON SUGAR AND JUNK FOOD

Ramadhan is often associated with indulgent feasts, but a well-balanced diet is crucial to keeping your energy levels steady. Instead of fried and sugary foods, opt for:

- Fresh fruits and vegetables to provide essential vitamins.
- Dairy products like yoghurt and milk to aid digestion.
- Lean proteins and whole grains for sustained energy.

FEATURES

RAMADHAN AND THE DISCIPLINE OF EMOTION



BALQEES ALORAIMI

RAMADHAN is often perceived as a month of physical restraint, yet its deeper cultural significance lies in emotional discipline. In Omani society, the holy month has long been associated with calmness, patience and a collective effort to soften daily interactions. As routines slow and priorities shift, Ramadhan offers an opportunity to examine how fasting reshapes anger, stress and emotional responses.

Traditionally, fasting in Oman is understood as a comprehensive moral exercise. Elders remind younger generations that it extends beyond abstaining from food and drink to include restraint of speech, behaviour and temperament. Emotional control is therefore central to the Ramadhan experience.

According to Dr Noora al Kharousi, a psychologist specialising in behavioural health, fasting increases emotional awareness. “Ramadhan interrupts automatic habits”, she explains. “When physical comfort is reduced, individuals become more conscious of their emotional triggers. This awareness is the first step towards regulating anger and managing stress”.

The early days of Ramadhan can test this ideal. Disrupted sleep, hunger and work pressures may heighten irritability. Traffic before iftar and workplace demands can expose vulnerabilities rather than conceal them. For many, however, this phase is temporary. As the body adjusts, emotional balance gradually emerges.

Culturally, Ramadhan creates a shared emotional environment. In Oman’s close knit communities, fasting is a collective experience that fosters empathy. There is an unspoken understanding that patience should prevail, as everyone navigates similar challenges. This shared condition reduces social friction and encourages tolerance.

Social worker Mariam al Ghailani highlights the importance of this collective shift. “Ramadhan reshapes social behaviour because it resets expectations”, she says. “The community becomes more forgiving, less confrontational and more aware of emotional boundaries. Anger is not normalised during this month; it is quietly discouraged”.

Structural changes also contribute to reduced stress. Shorter working hours, increased family gatherings and a slower pace of life ease daily pressures. Evenings are often dedicated to prayer and reflection rather than productivity, allowing space to decompress.

Worship practices further reinforce regulation. Regular prayers, Quran recitation and supplication provide



moments of stillness that counter anxiety and frustration. In mosques across Oman, the rhythm of Taraweeh prayers creates a shared sense of release, where personal stress blends into communal devotion.

Yet modern challenges persist. While Ramadhan encourages inward focus, constant exposure to social media and digital news can reintroduce strain. Online debates, comparisons and information overload may undermine the calming influence of fasting.

Intergenerational perspectives reveal subtle differences. Older Omanis recall a simpler Ramadhan with fewer distractions, where calmness emerged naturally. Younger generations, facing academic, professional and digital pressures, may experience stress differently. Still, Ramadhan offers a shared framework for emotional recalibration across age groups.

Ultimately, Ramadhan’s influence on anger and stress lies in its ability to realign priorities. By promoting restraint, empathy and reflection, the month provides practical lessons in emotional mastery. Anger becomes something to observe rather than express and stress an invitation to slow down rather than react.

As Oman balances tradition and modernity, Ramadhan remains a cultural anchor, renewing faith while restoring emotional equilibrium. In a world defined by urgency and noise, the holy month quietly teaches that strength lies in patience and peace begins with control over one’s inner state.



CHANGINGWORLD

PROTECT YOUR PEACE: NAVIGATE NEWS WITHOUT LOSING YOUR MIND



SHADDAD AL MUSALMAY
The writer is a Senior Editor at Oman Daily Observer.

The recent events unfolding in the Middle East have brought back constant news updates about conflicts, attacks, and tensions which can take a toll on our mental well-being.

I have been there, feeling like the weight of the world is on my shoulders, and it’s hard to shake off the anxiety. But I have learned that it’s possible to stay informed without letting it consume you.

As a journalist who is into news, I advise all to verify, verify, verify! Don’t just share or react to something that sounds juicy or fits your narrative. Check the source, check the facts, and check your biases. Ask yourself: who’s behind this story? What’s the motive? Is there evidence to back it up? If it sounds too good (or bad) to be true, it probably is.

Be critical, be curious, and don’t spread misinformation. Let’s do our part to keep the facts straight!

And for a common person, I would suggest to designate specific times to check news and stick to it. Avoid mindless scrolling through social media or news apps, and set a timer to take breaks from the constant stream of updates.

It’s easy to get sucked into the 24-hour news cycle, but trust me, it’s not worth the mental fatigue.

When you’re checking news, rely on trusted outlets. Avoid sensationalist or biased sources that thrive on clickbait headlines – they’re only going to fuel our anxiety.

Sometimes, it’s essential to disconnect from the news cycle altogether. Take a digital detox, plan a vacation, or engage in activities that bring you joy. Focus on potential solutions and support organisations working towards peace, advocacy, or humanitarian aid. Make time for activities that nourish your mind, body, and soul, like exercise, reading, or hobbies that bring calm and happiness.

Instead of getting bogged down by the chaos, let us focus on what we can control. I advise to channel your energy into local issues, volunteer work, or personal projects to maintain a sense of agency and purpose. This helps shift your focus from the things that are outside of your control to the things that you can actually make a difference in.

When news starts to overwhelm you, take a deep breath and ground yourself in the present. Practice mindfulness techniques like meditation or yoga to calm your mind. Limit your exposure to social media, and unfollow or mute accounts that trigger anxiety.

It is also really important to talk to friends, family, or a therapist about your concerns. Sharing your feelings can help you process and gain perspective.

Sometimes, just acknowledging your emotions and validating your experiences can be incredibly liberating. And let us be real, we all need a break sometimes. Sometimes, it’s essential to disconnect from the news cycle altogether. Take a digital detox, plan a vacation, or engage in activities that bring you joy.

Focus on potential solutions and support organisations working towards peace, advocacy, or humanitarian aid.

Make time for activities that nourish your mind, body, and soul, like exercise, reading, or hobbies that bring calm and happiness.

Stay informed about the situation, but don’t let it consume you. Find a balance between being aware and maintaining your mental peace. By implementing these strategies, you’ll navigate the complex news landscape without sacrificing your mental well-being. Your peace of mind is worth it.

It is not about being ignorant or dismissive of the issues; it’s about being intentional with your mental energy.

You can’t pour from an empty cup, so prioritise your own well-being first. When you are feeling more grounded and centered, you will be more effective in your own sphere of influence.

So, take care of yourself, and don’t let the news dictate your mood or emotions. You are stronger than you think.