

OMAN SENDS CONDOLENCES TO ALGERIA OVER FOREST FIRES

MUSCAT: Oman's Foreign Ministry has expressed its condolences and sympathy to the government, the people of Algeria, and the bereaved families of forest fire victims which broke out in various states, wishing the injured persons speedy recovery.

—ONA



THE MAGIC BEANS OF ETHIOPIA

One of the highly consumed beverages and the biggest traded commodity around the world, Coffee, has its roots in the highlands of Ethiopia where it was first discovered and later spread to the rest of the world across the Arabian Peninsula. **>A4**



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7.92bn

Omani Rials was the share of investments from UK into Omani projects, while the US pledged a further OMR1.84 billion, during the first three quarters of 2020, according to data from the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI)

OMAN'S TOP FOREIGN INVESTORS COMMITTED TO ECONOMIC GROWTH

The UK and the US are the countries that lead foreign investments into Oman

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman's top foreign investors say they are keen to continue developing the country's economy and contribute towards the objectives of Vision 2040.

The United Kingdom and the United States were the countries that led foreign investment into Oman last year.

The UK contributed OMR7.92 billion in investment projects, while the US pledged a further

OMR1.84 billion, during the first three quarters of 2020, according to National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) data.

Foreign direct investments (FDIs) from the UK amount for nearly half of the foreign investment received by Oman during this period: about OMR15.65 billion. Investment from Britain is guided by the UK-Oman Comprehensive Agreement, signed in May 2019, which in particular has facilitated trade and investment

in science, health, technology and innovation.

"This aims to support increasing Omani desire for foreign investment," said the UK's Department for International Trade. Investment during the first three quarters of 2020 were 11 per cent greater than the same time frame for the previous year, when the UK provided funding worth OMR7.26bn.

Future investment in Oman is likely to expand into "renewables and green technology, by leveraging the common ground between the UK's industrial/energy strategy priorities and Oman's Vision 2040 sustainability plans."

Green energy plays a key role in the UK, employing three quarters of a million people, with investments of over £14bn (OMR 7.5bn) in the British economy in 2019,

leading to the generation of £95bn (OMR51bn) in value-added economic activity. Trade between the US and Oman, on the other hand, is governed by the Free Trade Agreement signed between the two nations in 2009.

"This has increased trade in both directions, created opportunities for US and Omani businesses, and supported Oman's goals of attracting investment and diversifying its economy in line with Oman Vision 2040," said Leslie M Tsou, the ambassador of the US to Oman.

"Oman is a key strategic partner of the United States," she added. "Our relationship is strong and getting stronger, anchored by close people to people ties, an enduring security partnership, and robust trade between our countries." **>A4**

ROYAL OMAN POLICE

Adam-Haima road accident leaves three people dead



Times News Service

MUSCAT: Three people have been killed following a collision between two vehicles on the Adam-Haima road, the Royal Oman Police (ROP) said on Tuesday.

"For users of Adam-Haima road, a collision occurred between two vehicles heading to Haima, which led to the death of three people. Please pay attention and be careful," ROP said in a statement.

The nationalities of the dead persons have not been revealed. The ROP also said that the injured were later transferred to Nizwa. "Police aviation carried out the transfer of three other people in critical condition to Nizwa Reference Hospital, after they were injured in the accident," ROP added.

Salalah has been receiving a

large number of tourists recently ever since the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism issued a circular allowing hotels in the Dhofar Governorate to increase capacity, in order to meet the demands during Khareef season.

Hotels in the governorate can operate with a capacity of 75 per cent room occupancy from today until further notice, while adhering to the approved preventive measures.

Police checkpoints have also been set up in the areas leading to Salalah, such as Thumrait, Harit, and Hasik, to make sure that only vaccinated people are allowed to enter the city.

This in keeping with regulations concerning visits to Dhofar during the Khareef season, which this year is taking place in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES



OMAN Air India flights from Muscat cancelled

1 Passengers travelling on Air India from Muscat to India might have to change their travel timing, after the airline announced cancellation of a number of flights from the Omani capital to Indian destinations. **>A3**

WORLD 'No return of troops to Afghanistan'

2 German Defence Minister Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer has rejected calls to redeploy troops to Afghanistan. Taliban on Monday announced capture of Aybak, the capital of the northern Afghan province of Samangan. **>A7**

MARKET Pact to supply transformer inked

3 An agreement has been signed between Voltamp Transformers Company and Bahwan Engineering Company to manufacture and supply a 500 MVA, 400kV transformer. **>B1**

TRAILER RELEASED

New Bollywood flick features Muscat



Times News Service

MUSCAT: The trailer of a new Bollywood movie, *Bellbottom* with Indian superstar Akshay Kumar in lead role, features scenes from Muscat.

At the 1:30 mark in the 3:29 minute trailer, a panoramic shot of Muscat's famous Muttrah Corniche is featured, with traditional dhows in the foreground, and the iconic Muttrah souq is also featured.

The shot also showcases the winding road that hugs the coastline and leads to Old Muscat and

beyond. Scheduled to release on August 19 in cinemas across Oman, *Bellbottom* features the actor as a secret agent who goes undercover to foil a plot hatched by airline hijackers.

The film is set in the 1980s, and with a plot centred on a group of hijackers who take over an Indian Airlines flight, in the hope of forcing the Indian government to meet their demands. With the amount of fuel onboard the aircraft, Kumar deduces that there are only three locations – all in the Middle East – where the plane can land before it runs out:

Muscat, Dubai, and Abu Dhabi.

Kumar aside, the film stars Vaani Kapoor, Huma Qureshi, Denzil Smith, Aniruddh Dave, Adil Hussain, Thalavaisal Vijay, and Lara Dutta as former Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi.

Produced by film house Pooja Entertainment in association with Emmay Entertainment, production is overseen by Jackky Bhagnani, Deepshikha Deshmukh, and Nikkhil Advani. The film was officially announced in November 2019, and was initially set for a release date of 26 January, 2021, India's Republic Day.



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Times of Oman

VOL. 9, NO. 24

MUSCAT, THURSDAY, AUGUST 11, 1983 — DHUL QADA 3, 1403

PRICE BAIZAS 200

12 granted Omani citizenship

Twelve leading expatriate businessmen — originally from India — have been granted Omani citizenship.

The announcement about the grant of nationality has been made in a Royal Decree (No. 3/1983), published in the Official Gazette this month. The Decree also referred to Decree No. 26/75 which concerns the organisation of adminis-

tration, amended early this year.

Those granted nationality are:

Kanaksi Gokaldas Khimji;
Pankaj Kanaksi Khimji;
Nailesh Kanaksi Khimji;
Anil Mathradas Khimji;
Ajay Mathradas Khimji;
Sudhir Keshavji Sampat;
Mahesh Keshavji Sampat;
Narendra Keshavji Sampat;
Ramesh Jannadas Khimji;
Mulraj Dharamsey Nensey;
Ashwin Dharamsey Nensey;
Bipin Dharamsey Nensey.



The State Consultative Council on Tuesday wound up three-days of meetings at the Ghubrah Guest House after adopting several important

decisions on a number of subjects discussed during the meetings.

A spokesman for the Council said that it approved the

recommendations on the topic of citizenship for foreigners and other subjects like encouragement of local investments and the marketing of lemons.

All the recommendations discussed and decisions adopted will be submitted to His Majesty Sultan Qaboos for his final endorsement.

The meetings, which began on Sunday, were held under the chairmanship of the Council President, Mr. Khalfan bin Nasser al Wahaibi.

ROP on the hunt



The Royal Oman Police is looking for a man in connection with theft cases.

The police has put up posters with the man's photograph at public places in the Capital Area.

The real name of the alleged thief is Khamees Obaid Shanter al Naimi and the given name is Khamees Juma Rashid al Naimi. He is a resident of Wilayat Dhank.

The police has asked that people report to the nearest police station or dial 600099 if they have any information about Khamees.

Capital boom in building permits

The Capital Municipality issued 1,288 building permits during the first seven months of this year as against 1,950 permits granted last year. This represents a remarkable growth in construction activity in the Capital Area.

This was stated by Mr. Ali Salem Ali al Hosni, Deputy Director of Technical Affairs, and head of the Building Permits Department of the Capital Municipality.

The building inspectors made 210 challans against contractors for violation of building rules in 1982. The number of violations recorded this year was 116

by Muzaffar Mohammad

Mr. Ali Salem said most of the violations registered were of contractors not adhering to the building plans approved by the department.

Contractors sometimes tried to add structures which were not mentioned in the plan. They, however, did so at the explicit wish of the owner who had no idea of building bye-laws.

The Building Permits chief said contractors had to obtain approval from the department before adding an extra structure to the building. The penalty for violation

116 VIOLATIONS REGISTERED

of building rules ranged from RO 25 to RO 1,000.

Building permit

Anybody who owns land and an approved site plan from the Planning department can apply for a permit. The applicant is required to submit four sets of drawings by an architect registered with the Tender Board.

Architects in the category No.3 are not allowed to make a plan for a building of more than two floors while second-grade architects are eligible for drawing a plan up to 10 floors. Category 1 architects can make a plan for public utility buildings such as hospitals, hotels etc.

The plan is checked by the department's architects and structural engineers before it is approved. The fee for a building permit is RO 5.

Deposit

A plan of RO 100 to RO 150 per floor depending on the area is charged from the applicant. This is simply meant to ensure that all debris and rubbish will be removed from the site after the work is finished. A No Objection



Mr. Ali Salem

Certificate for water and electricity connection will not be given unless building inspectors verify that the site has been cleaned of rubbish.

Rules

The contractors are required to erect a signboard on the site indicating details of the construction. They must put up plywood fencing around the site — painted in white. The walls should have gaps for building inspectors to look in.

Building permits allow contractors to work on the site until Maghreb (sunset). After that all work must be stopped. Special

● Turn to Page 3

Summons issued to 79 people

The Municipal Court has issued summons to 79 people asking them to appear in person in connection with violation of various municipal rules concerning building and health.

Of these, 54 people have been summoned through announcements on radio and television while 25 people have been issued summons in writing.

The Court has also issued 15 final warnings to individuals charged with violation of rules. It issued stoppage of work order in six cases while 24 offenders were given time to rectify the violations.

The Court has referred seven cases of violation to the police for necessary action.

Book on towns

The Area Urban Development Institute, an affiliate of the Arab Towns Organisation, is to publish a book on Arab towns.

The Institute has requested the Capital Municipality to provide information and photographs of Muscat city for inclusion in the book.

Your TV and radio programmes are on page 22.



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400 study-abroad scholarships given to Omani students this year



CONDITIONS: Students who wish to apply for scholarships from the ministry must secure at least 90 per cent marks, besides meeting other specified conditions. -File photo used for illustrative purposes only

About 805 partially and fully-funded scholarships have been provided by the private sector to students pursuing bachelors’ degrees

KHALED ORABI
K.Orabi@shabiba.com

MUSCAT: 400 Omani students were provided scholarships in 2021 to pursue their higher education overseas, down from 750 last year, and 1,500 in 2019.

This is because efforts were made to improve the quality of education in Oman that is provided to students.

“This reduction was not down to material challenges, but because arrangements were made for more students to take up internal scholarships,” said Hamad bin Khalfan Al Harthi, the Assistant Director General of Scholarships at the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation.

“These were issued as part of

our efforts to improve the quality of local higher education institutions,” he added, speaking to *Al Shabiba*, the Arabic publication of the *Times of Oman*.

“We have also expanded the number of programmes for which internal scholarships are available, from three to five. On the other hand, the cost of a foreign scholarship varies between students, on the basis of their specialisation, university, and country of choice.”

About 805 partially and fully-funded scholarships have been provided by the private sector to students pursuing bachelors’ degrees. Students who wish to apply for scholarships from the ministry must secure at least 90 per cent marks in their exams,

alongside other conditions listed by the government.

Medical specialisations

“While there is no change in the criteria for medical specialisations, Australia and New Zealand are no longer considered viable destinations in this category,” said Al Harthi. “Among other academic courses, there is no change to our recognition of countries that offer them, such as the US, UK, Malaysia, and Australia.”

The Assistant DG also recommended that more has to be done for local universities so that they can reach the level of their international counterparts.

“Many universities abroad were established hundreds of years ago, and their international rating depends on their research facilities and other criteria,” he explained.

“We have to support local organisations by encouraging our students to enroll with them, and by increasing the number of internal scholarships provided to those who attend these institutions.”

Adding to this, Nasser bin Rashid Al Abri, the Vice Chairman of the Education and Research Committee at the Majlis Al Shura, explained that introducing more areas of specialisation and improving the quality of education within the country would reduce the amount of money spent on foreign scholarships awarded to students.

“The amount spent by the ministry towards overseas funding could reach OMR100,000 per student,” he said.

“It is therefore high time to widen the doors of higher education in our country. There are also about 23,000 students who stop studying after securing their general education diplomas. “They should be given the chance to continue higher education, if they score 60 percent or more in their exams,” he added.

Al Abri went on to say that the Majlis Al Shura is in close contact with the Ministry of Higher Education, Research, and Innovation, to understand the developments taking place in education. These include discussions over the numbers of foreign scholarships issued, over which we aim to reach a common understanding.

“If there is a need to increase the number of grants issued, because students require them, we will communicate this to the ministry,” said Al Abri.

Air India cancels more flights originating from Muscat

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Passengers travelling on Air India from Muscat to India might need to change their travel timing, after the airline cancelled a number of flights.

The AI 985 flight from Muscat to Mumbai, and the AI 1976 flight from Muscat that first lands

in Ahmedabad and then Mumbai on Friday, August 13, has been cancelled. The same flights will also no longer run on Saturdays, at least until August 31. There is also a change in the flight pattern for planes operating the Muscat – Ahmedabad – Mumbai route.

On Fridays and Sundays, while the original route for AI 1975 was

Mumbai – Ahmedabad – Muscat, it will now operate as AI 1976, which will take off in Muscat, stopover in Ahmedabad, and end its route in Mumbai.

Renamed

On the other hand, AI 986, which flies from Muscat to Mumbai on these days, will be renamed AI 985,

and fly from Mumbai to Muscat.

Similarly, until the end of this month, the AI 973 and AI 974 flights that operate to and from Muscat and New Delhi will no longer operate on Fridays and Sundays.

Flights from Hyderabad and Vijayawada to Muscat (AI 999) and from Muscat to Hyderabad (AI

978) will also no longer operate on Tuesdays, until the end of August.

Neo ISO

India's national airline has also said that the Muscat to Chennai route will deploy Neo ISO aircraft until August 31.

Changes in flight plans had to be made “due to operational reasons,”

explained the airline. “We would like to thank you for the valued support being extended to Air India.”

“Please inform all passengers regarding the above flights for their immediate rescheduling,” added Air India, in a letter to travel agents in Oman. “We sincerely regret the inconvenience caused on this account.”

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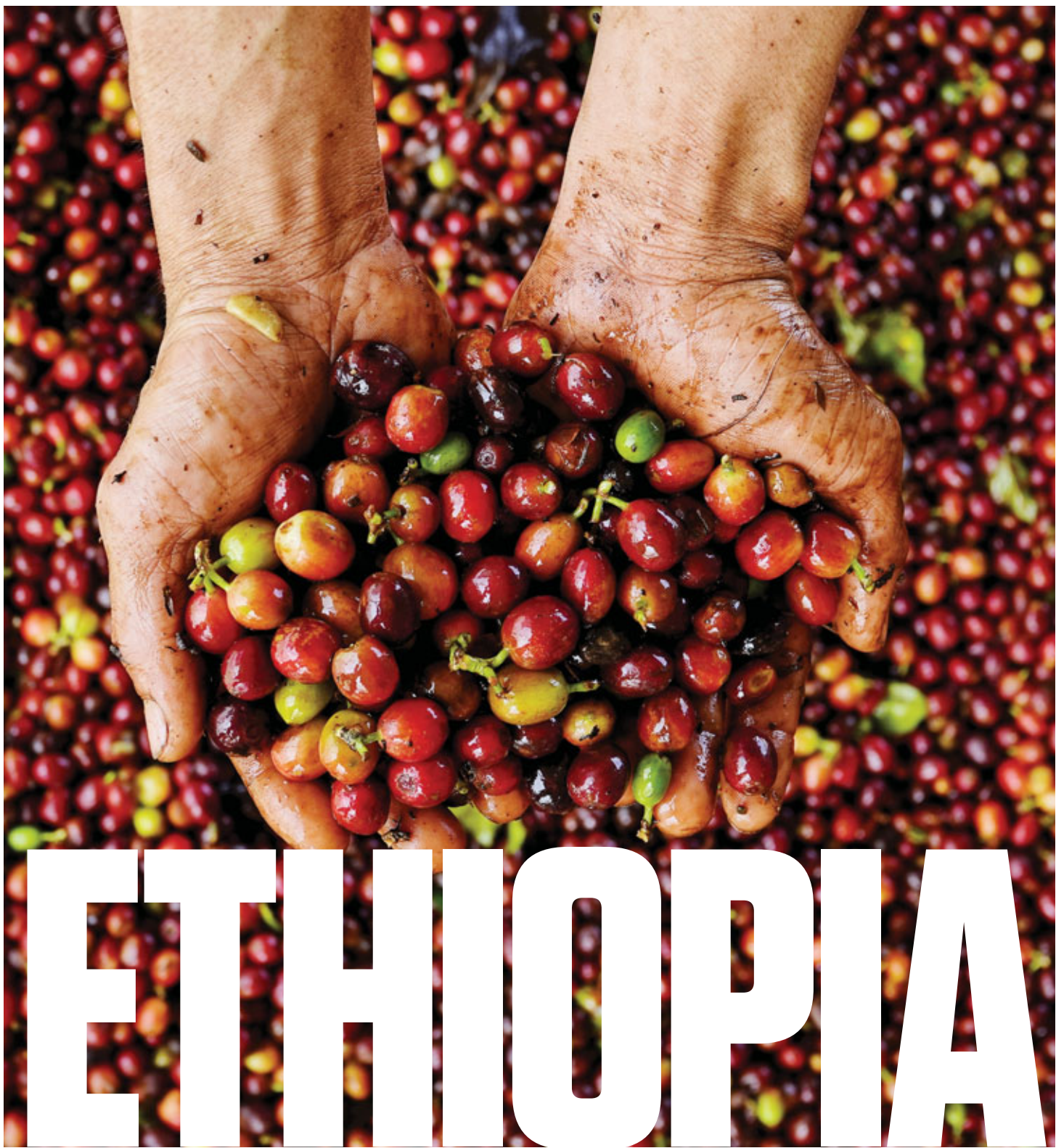
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THE MAGIC BEANS OF

One of the highly consumed beverages and the biggest traded commodity around the world, Coffee, has its roots in the highlands of Ethiopia where it was first discovered and latter spread to the rest of the world across the Arabian Peninsula.

According to legend, around 850 A.D. in the southern part of Ethiopia in a place called Keffa, a young goat herder named Kaldi discovered the coffee plant after noticing the energising effect it had on his flock. Legend has it that he discovered his goats eating the coffee fruit off of the trees and dancing wildly. He was so fascinated by these “magic” beans and reported his findings to the abbot of the local monastery who made a drink with the berries and found that it kept him alert through the long

hours of evening prayer. The abbot shared his discovery with the other monks at the monastery, and knowledge of the energizing berries began to spread across the Arabian Peninsula to the Islamic world. The story did not appear in writing until 1671 where it is also believed that the original name for coffee came from the name- ‘Keffa’.

Ethiopia is not only the birthplace of coffee but also one of the world’s top producers and consumers of the plant species Coffea Arabica. Unlike almost every other coffee-growing country, coffee trees grow naturally in most parts of Ethiopia whereby some of the best single-origin coffee types are sourced. The environment provides an excellent growing condition, especially the high elevations in the southern mountainous region is perfect to produce unique and excep-



tional verities without requiring any agricultural chemicals to it. Harar, Yirgacheffe and Sidamo are the three trademarked coffee regions that provide unique and specialty coffee beans. This rich heritage and outstanding quality make Ethiopian coffee amongst

the best in the world.

Although Ethiopia is one of the world’s largest producers of coffee with the main export destinations being Germany, USA, Saudi Arabia and Japan, it exports less than half of what it grows. It means, it consumes more than half of its

own production despite coffee being its number one export item.

Coffee has an important place in Ethiopian society. It is one of the highly consumed and preferred beverages almost in all parts of the country. Besides being enjoyed for its flavour and aroma, coffee has a strong cultural and social symbolism which is expressed in its unique Ethiopian coffee ceremony.

The Ethiopian coffee ceremony is an important part of Ethiopian culture. It is a significant occasion that even no important event is held without a coffee ceremony. It is the woman of the house or a younger woman in the household that performs the ceremony which involves the process from washing of the raw coffee beans, to roasting, grinding and boiling it in a special coffee pot called ‘Jebena’, up until it is finally served into the finished

cups of coffee boiled in three rounds of Abol, Tona and Baraka.

In Ethiopia, coffee is never consumed alone. Ethiopians enjoy coffee not only as a beverage but as a means to meet and get together. It always requires company and is a symbol of social relations.

To be invited to a coffee ceremony is a sign of respect, friendship and an excellent example of Ethiopian hospitality. “Nu buna tetu!” literally translated as “come drink coffee!” is a common phrase of invitation to attend a coffee ceremony; and of course, it is impossible to decline such a warm and sincere offer even from someone one doesn’t know. It creates an important social atmosphere where people share news, discuss current social and political issues as well as personal matters.

Ethiopian magic beans are indeed excellent example of what coffee is all about.

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< FROM A1 Duqm offers opportunities for foreign investments

One of the key areas Britain is keen to invest in is Duqm, the upcoming port city that aims to be the axis of Oman's non-oil future. A number of key installations, including the Port of Duqm, Duqm Dry Dock, the China-Oman Industrial Park, the Duqm Refinery, and many other facilities have either been built, or are under construction.

The UK is funding several projects in Duqm, including the Duqm Refinery, Port of Duqm, and Duqm Naval Dockyard (DND). This is in addition to a £23.8mn (OMR 13mn) investment to expand the Joint Logistics Support Base present.

“Duqm is the largest free trade zone in the Middle East and the single biggest economic initiative in Oman's modern history, and opportunities for British investment will continue to grow, including in sectors like mining, fishing, aquafarming, food distribution, healthcare, education and tourism,” said the Department for International Trade.

Oman's presence in the Gulf, given its strategic location, and potential for growth as a hub for trade with the Middle East and East Africa, also makes it a more attractive opportunity for British investors and companies. With growing bilateral trade up and down the country, there is a great deal of effort made to showcase Oman in the UK, and to British

businesses considering investment in the Gulf.

In terms of US concerns, there are about 100 American companies with investments or operations in Oman, many of them representing global, well-known brands. US investments in Oman span a wide range of sectors, including consumer products distribution, oil and gas exploration, hospitality, and other services including engineering, information technology, financial, accounting, legal, consulting, and many more.

Oman is one of only 20 countries with whom the United States has a free trade agreement, showing US confidence in Oman as a destination for US commerce and investment. Although there is a likelihood that investments from the US could contract because of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, US products continue to remain valued in Oman.

“By the same token, the United States, as the world's largest

economy, offers Omani companies unparalleled opportunities for investment,” said a representative of the US Embassy in Muscat. “The embassy and the Omani American Business Centre are eager to support US companies in new investment and expansion in Oman.”

Other major foreign investors in Oman are China (OMR848.9mn), the Netherlands (OMR337.4mn), India (OMR318mn), and Switzerland (OMR280mn). Among the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), i.e. the United Arab Emirates (OMR1.26bn), Kuwait (OMR0.92bn), Bahrain (OMR441.3mn), and Qatar (OMR410.6mn) all have significant holdings in Oman. Of the investments made, the majority of the funds (OMR10.06bn) went towards the oil and gas sector. The financial sector received another OMR1.47bn in investment, while real estate activities saw a further OMR1.14bn

RECALL

Beijing to recall envoy from Lithuania as Taiwan plans to open office there

BEIJING: China has decided to recall its ambassador from Vilnius after the Lithuanian authorities allowed Taiwan to open a representative office in the country, local media reported on Tuesday.

In July, Taiwanese Foreign Minister Joseph Wu announced that Taiwan would open a representative office in Vilnius.

The Chinese Foreign Ministry today strongly opposed Vilnius' decision saying "the government decided to recall the Chinese ambassador from Lithuania and asked the Lithuanian government to recall its ambassador from China."

"Despite numerous notes and warnings from the Chinese side, the Lithuanian government recently announced that it would allow the Taiwanese administration to open a 'representative office' on behalf of 'Taiwan', which became a gross violation of the communique



on establishment of diplomatic relations between our two countries," the Chinese Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

Last month, Wu had said that the country will be opening a representative office in Lithuania. Lithuanian Economy Minister

Ausrine Armonaitė said her country would open a trade office in Taiwan in October or November.

During a presser, Wu had said the governments of Taiwan and Lithuania agreed to open a representative office in their respective capitals. It is said to be Taiwan's second representative office in Europe. The first was opened in Slovakia in 2003.

Beijing claims full sovereignty over Taiwan located off the south-eastern coast of mainland China, despite the fact that the two sides have been governed separately for more than seven decades.

Earlier, Lithuanian Foreign Minister Gabrielius Landsbergis in July had said the establishment of a representative office in Taiwan and other Asian countries is not intended to counter China but to reach out to the Indo-Pacific region out of national interest, Taiwan News reported. **ANI**



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COVID CASES

India reports 28,204 new COVID cases, lowest in 147 days

NEW DELHI: With 28,204 new COVID-19 infections reported in the last 24 hours, India on Tuesday recorded the lowest daily cases in 147 days, informed the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. India has been witnessing a continuous fall in the active caseload. It today stands at 388,508, which is the lowest in 139 days. The ac-

tive cases constitute 1.21 per cent of the total cases, the lowest since March 2020. With the new cases, the COVID case tally in India has reached 31,998,158.

Of the people infected since the beginning of the pandemic, 31,180,968 patients have already recovered from COVID-19 and 41,511 recovered in the last 24 hours. **ANI**

DRUG SMUGGLING

Chinese court rejects Canadian man's appeal against death sentence



DEATH SENTENCE: Schellenberg, who was initially sentenced to 15 years of imprisonment in 2018, was handed a harsher punishment in January 2019, after he appealed against his sentence.

BEIJING: A Chinese court rejected Canadian citizen Robert Schellenberg's appeal against a death sentence for drug smuggling on Tuesday.

Schellenberg, who was initially sentenced to 15 years of imprisonment in 2018, was handed a harsher punishment in January 2019, after he appealed against his sentence.

The harsher punishment came soon after Canada arrested Huawei executive Meng Wanzhou, at the request of the US. Wanzhou, the chief financial officer of Huawei, is also the daughter of the founder of the global telecommunications giant. The arrest infuriated Beijing, which saw it a political ploy to stop its rise on the world stage.

Diplomatic tensions between Canada and China have taken a nosedive since.

How have Canadian authorities reacted?

Canada's ambassador to China told reporters that he had spoken with Schellenberg who was

"remarkably composed," according to Canadian newspaper The Globe and Mail.

Dominic Barton said the trial is "part of a geopolitical process" and it was "no coincidence that this is happening right now while events are ongoing in Vancouver," referring to Wanzhou's extradition trial in Canada.

"This is by no means done," Barton said.

Schellenberg's lawyer told The Globe and Mail that the verdict was not a surprise. Though the verdict is yet to be approved by China's Supreme Court, Zhang Dongshuo said chances of the verdict being commuted were "relatively low" but "not impossible."

Dongshuo was not able to meet his client before the hearing, according to the newspaper report.

The Chinese court had heard Schellenberg's appeal against the death sentence in May last year, and confirmed the verdict on Tuesday.

When did the spat begin?

Schellenberg was detained by

Chinese authorities in December 2014, charged with drug smuggling in 2015, and sentenced to 15 years of imprisonment on November 28, 2018.

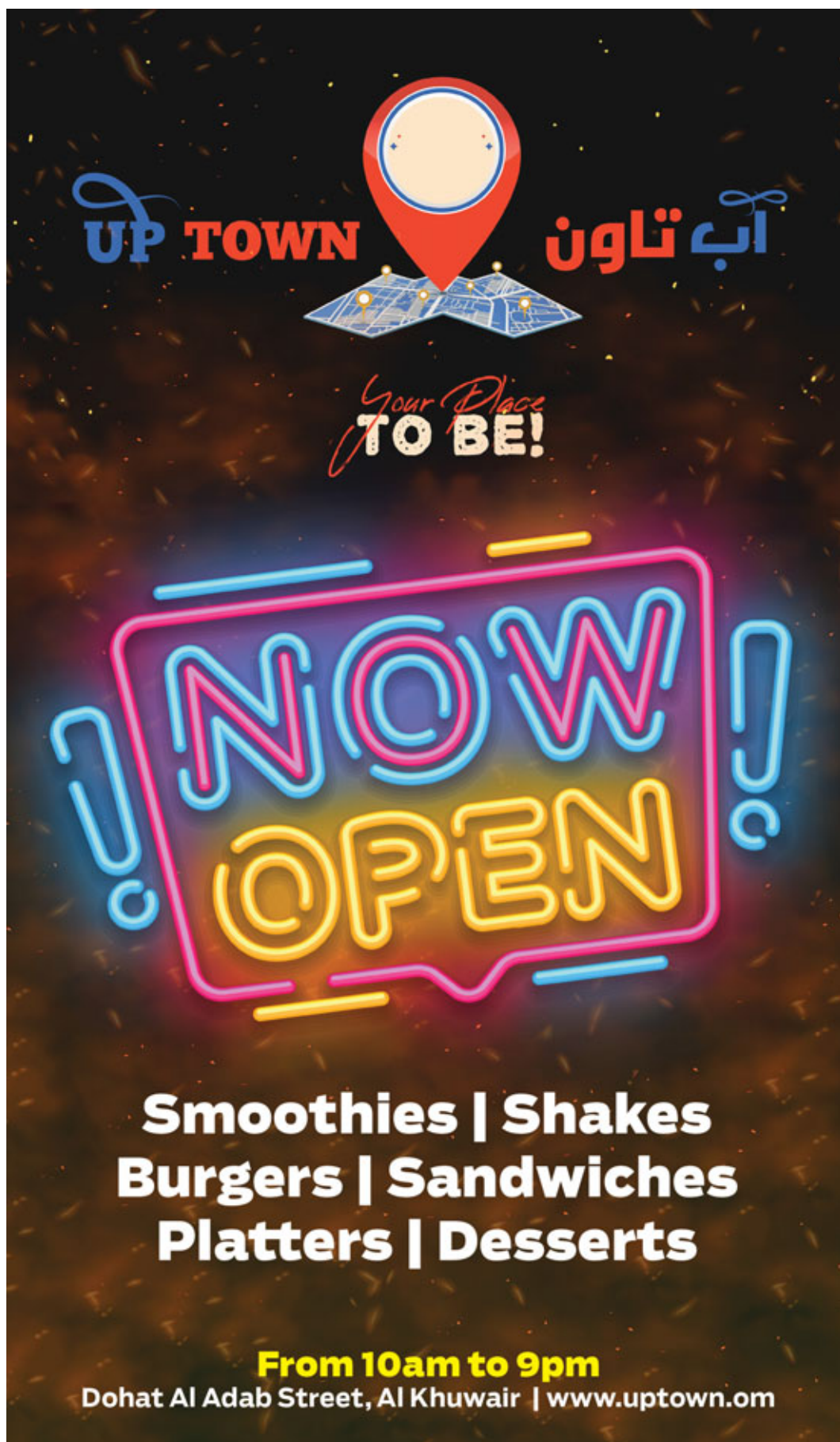
A Chinese court ordered a retrial of Schellenberg's case on December 29 when he appealed against the long sentence. In January 2019, the Dalian Intermediate People's Court in China's northeastern Liaoning province re-tried Schellenberg and imposed the death penalty.

Beijing warned of unspecified consequences unless Meng was released.

The Chinese government arrested a former Canadian diplomat, Michael Kovrig, and a Canadian entrepreneur, Michael Spavor, just days after Meng was detained in Canada.

The verdict for Spavor is expected to be out as early as Wednesday, news agency Reuters reported.

Two other Canadian, Fan Wei and Xu Weihong were also sentenced to death on drug charges in 2019. **DW**



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P.O. Box 49, Rusayl - 124, Sultanate of Oman

BOARD OF DIRECTORS' REPORT

On behalf of the Board of Directors, it is my pleasure to present the financial results of Sweets of Oman SAOG for the three months ended 31st March, 2021.

1. Results for the period:

During the quarter ended 31st March, 2021 your company's total turnover is RO 778,415 (RO 1,746,815 Restated for the corresponding period of 2020). The profit and loss account for the three months ended 31st March, 2021 shows a net loss of RO 648,514. (The net loss was RO 887,677 Restated for the corresponding period of 2020).

Overall the company has to tackle Covid, difficult market conditions and low working capital availability in Q1 2021 and this has affected the sales drastically. On a positive note the distributors from India and Jordan have come forward and provided their support with advancement of payments against service of Goods. This has helped us avoid complete shutdown of operations which would have resulted in further losses.

2. Internal control:

After the management of the company was informed of the suspected misrepresentation, the board has taken adequate measures to strengthen internal controls and systems to commensurate with size of the business and incompliance local laws and regulations. The internal audit has been outsourced to Backer Tilly and regular audits are being planned to be carried out. The Audit Committee reviews these reports regularly, follows up on action points with the management and updates the Board of Directors.

3. Future outlook:

We expect the pandemic to impact sales negatively this year and working capital issues to be sorted out from Q3 2021. Stringent cost reduction measures have been planned to combat these difficult times. We are confident that these measures will help to cut fixed costs, thereby improving profitability.

4. Other Matters

During the year ended 31 December 2020, the management of the company was informed that the financial statements of the company for the half year ended 30 June 2020, years were materially misstated by some of the key management personnel of the company. The board ascertained the misstatements as on 30th June 2020 and necessary corrections to the financial statements were done.

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 31 MARCH 2021

	31-03-2021 R.O.	Restated 31-03-2020 R.O.	31-12-2020 R.O.
ASSETS			
Non current assets			
Property, plant and equipment	4,131,839	4,570,233	4,233,442
Intangible assets	17,387	33,511	20,559
Right-of-use assets	594,117	425,101	639,806
Investment in subsidiary	461	461	461
Deferred tax asset	71,824	21,369	71,824
Total non current assets	4,815,628	5,050,675	4,966,094
Current assets			
Inventories	1,120,469	1,858,499	1,179,753
Accounts and other receivables	501,328	2,552,410	345,780
Cash and cash equivalents	51,538	29,095	128,551
Total current assets	1,673,335	4,440,004	1,654,084
TOTAL ASSETS	6,488,963	9,490,679	6,620,178
EQUITY & LIABILITIES			
Equity			
Share capital	700,000	700,000	700,000
Legal reserve	233,333	233,333	233,333
(Accumulated losses) / retained earnings	(6,378,899)	(2,106,356)	(5,730,385)
Total equity	(5,445,566)	(1,173,023)	(4,797,052)
Non current liabilities			
Employees' end of service benefits	430,442	519,440	413,721
Term loan	1,115,526	1,107,616	1,115,526
Lease liabilities	528,774	395,307	528,774
Total non current liabilities	2,074,742	2,022,363	2,058,021
Current liabilities			
Current portion of term loan	700,000	700,000	700,000
Current portion of lease liabilities	175,747	43,143	175,747
Bank borrowings	5,963,241	5,796,020	5,895,939
Accounts and other payables	3,020,799	2,102,178	2,497,523
Total current liabilities	9,859,787	8,641,339	9,359,209
Total liabilities	11,934,529	10,663,702	11,417,230
TOTAL EQUITY & LIABILITIES	6,488,963	9,490,679	6,620,178
Net assets per share	(0.778)	(0.168)	(0.685)

STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE PERIOD JANUARY TO MARCH, 2021

	31-03-2021 R.O.	Restated 31-03-2020 R.O.
Revenue	778,415	1,746,815
Less: cost of revenue	(768,743)	(1,904,703)
Gross profit/(loss)	9,672	(157,888)
Other income	3,369	8,649
Depreciation	(158,267)	(176,848)
General and administrative overheads	(340,261)	(453,979)
Finance charges	(133,639)	(107,611)
Allowance for expected credit losses	(29,398)	-
Net loss before tax	(648,514)	(887,677)
Tax expense	-	-
Total comprehensive loss for the period	(648,514)	(887,677)
Basic earnings per share	(0.093)	(0.127)

Chairman.

Oman confirms hosting Mumbai to prepare for WCL League Two

The record 41-time Ranji Trophy winner, Mumbai, will arrive on August 20 to play 3 T20 and a similar number of one-day matches against Oman

Times News Service

MUSCAT: One of India's strongest cricket teams Mumbai will be touring Oman later this month for a number of T20 and 50-over games against the country's national cricket team.

The record 41-time Ranji Trophy winner, Mumbai, will arrive on August 20 to play 3 T20 and a



T20 WORLD CUP: Oman is going to host two triangular series as part of the WCL League 2 tournament; first against Nepal and USA from September 13 to 20.

similar number of one-day matches against Dulip Mendis-coached Oman as part of the country's preparations for the seven-nation

World Cricket League (WCL) League 2 tournament that Oman currently leads with 16 points from 10 games as well as for the

ICC T20 World Cup that Oman is going to host along with the UAE in October.

"The Mumbai's tour of Oman

is confirmed and I am sure they will be bringing the best available squad. These matches will be an ideal preparation for the WCL League 2 tri-series in September and the T20 World Cup in October. Mumbai has a strong side and we will get proper match practice," said Mendis who is also Oman Cricket's Chief Development Officer.

Oman is going to host two triangular series as part of the WCL League 2 tournament; first against Nepal and USA from September 13 to 20 followed by tri-series against Scotland and PNG from September 25 to October 2.

Sultanate's Red Brigade has been in the training mode since late June despite the harsh weather conditions and has played practice games to prepare for both the formats.

"Both the tournaments hold immense importance to Oman Cricket and we are determined to do well. Oman is leading the WCL League 2 table and would like to stay there as the tournament progresses. We know the top three teams will go through to the 2023

ICC Cricket World Cup and Oman would do all it can to be one of them," added the former Sri Lankan great.

While Oman is currently busy boosting its infrastructure to be able to host first round of T20 World Cup successfully, coach Mendis feels focus remains on its performance on the field.

"With all the facilities we are going to have in place before the World Cup starts what we want from our team is performance on the field.

That is our main target and we are concentrating on that. We are putting our heart and soul into the preparation and discussing various ways and strategies for the tournament. Hopefully, we will get the results we want from the team," he said.

Oman will be trying a few new players who have qualified to play for the country during the games against Mumbai. "Yes, we have two to three new players who will be tried in the practice matches to see if they are good enough to be included in the final squad," confirmed the Oman coach.

RANDOM CHECKS

Premier League to begin random COVID status checks of ticket holders

LONDON: Spectators attending Premier League matches are set to face random spot-checks of their coronavirus status at some grounds in the first few match-days of the upcoming season.

The Premier League and its clubs are looking forward to having full stadiums again and the organisers said it is vital that everyone works together to make matchdays safe during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. "Initially, in the first few match-days of the season, supporters can expect the introduction of random spot-checks for ticket holders at some grounds as we establish the required processes so clubs and fans are prepared for all match attenders to have their COVID-19 status checked upon arrival, should it become mandatory," the Premier League said in a statement.

From the start of the 2021/22

season, match-going fans should be prepared to show they have been fully vaccinated or have received a negative lateral flow test in the previous 48 hours.

"Your matchday routine is going to be a little different to normal and the Premier League is working with clubs to introduce COVID-19 status checks in a staged way so there is the least disruption and maximum safety possible," it added.

The Premier League said it will continue consulting with all key stakeholders, including the Football Supporters' Association, and will be running a series of fan-engagement campaigns to help all ticket-holders ensure they are match-ready.

"Even though the nation is reopening, the Government has made it clear that this pandemic is still far from over," the statement further read. **ANI**

INTERNATIONAL CRICKET COUNCIL

ICC to push for inclusion of cricket in 2028 Los Angeles Olympics

DUBAI: The International Cricket Council (ICC) on Tuesday confirmed its intention to push for cricket's inclusion in the Olympic Games going forward, starting preparations for a bid on behalf of the sport with the primary target being its addition to the Los Angeles 2028 itinerary.

According to the apex body, a working group to lead the bid has been assembled by the ICC. ICC said 30 million cricket fans live in the USA, making LA 2028 the ideal Games for cricket to make its return to the Olympic competition.

Cricket, till now, has made just one appearance in the Olympics, way back in 1900 in Paris when only two teams competed at the event - Great Britain and hosts France - meaning the sport's inclusion in 2028 would mark the end of a 128-year absence.

ICC Chair Greg Barclay said the addition of cricket to the Olympic Games would be beneficial to both the sport and the Games themselves.

"Firstly on behalf of everyone at the ICC, I would like to congratulate the IOC, Tokyo 2020, and the



people of Japan for staging such an incredible Games in such difficult circumstances. It truly was fantastic to watch and captured the imagination of the world and we would love for cricket to be a part of future Games," Barclay said in a ICC release.

"Our sport is united behind this bid, and we see the Olympics as a part of cricket's long-term future. We have more than a billion fans globally and almost 90 percent of them want to see cricket at the Olympics.

same. But we feel now is the time to put our best foot forward and show what a great partnership cricket and the Olympics are," Barclay opined.

The sport will feature in the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games next year, which shapes as a perfect showcase for what the sport can bring to the Olympics, as well as being a momentous occasion on its own.

The ICC Olympic Working Group will be chaired by England and Wales Cricket Board Chair Ian Watmore.

He will be joined by ICC Independent Director Indra Nooyi, Chair of Zimbabwe Cricket Tavengwa Mukuhani, ICC Associate Member Director and Vice President of the Asian Cricket Council Mahinda Vallipuram and Chair of USA Cricket Parag Marathe. Marathe believes the time is now for cricket to make its long-awaited return to the Olympics, confident the sport's inclusion at the showpiece event would accelerate the growth of the game in the USA. **ANI**

AUSTRALIA VS BANGLADESH

Shakib's spirited bowling sees Bangladesh defeat Australia in 5th T20I



DHAKA: A spirited bowling performance helped Bangladesh defeat Australia by 60 runs in the fifth and final T20I here at the Shere Bangla National Stadium on Monday. With this win, Bangladesh won the five-match series 4-1. Earlier, Australia had lost the T20I series against West Indies by the same margin. Chasing 123, Australia got off to a bad start as they lost five wickets with just 53 runs on the board. Daniel Christian (3), Matthew Wade (22), Mitchell Marsh (4), Ben McDermott (17), and Alex Carey (3) all failed to leave a mark with the bat.

No Australian batsmen was able to show fight and the visitors

were bundled out for 62 inside 14 overs. Earlier, Nathan Ellis and Dan Christian scalped two wickets each as Australia restricted Bangladesh to 122/8 in the allotted twenty overs. Naim top-scored for the hosts as he played a knock of 23 runs with the help of one four and one six.

No Bangladesh batter was able to stay at the crease for a long time and this resulted in the hosts being reduced to a below-par score.

Brief Scores: Bangladesh 122/8 (Naim 23, Mahmudullah 19, Nathan Ellis 2-16); Australia 62 all out (Matthew Wade 22, Ben McDermott 17, Shakib Al Hasan 4-9). **ANI**

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DOLLAR HITS 4-MONTH HIGH

The dollar hit a four-month high versus the euro on Tuesday after upbeat US jobs data bolstered expectations that the Federal Reserve could soon start tapering its massive bond-buying programme.

MARKET
BUSINESS & FINANCE



OIL RECOVERS

Oil prices rose more than 1 per cent on Tuesday, recouping some of the losses in the previous session when prices hit a three-week low, but gains are likely to be limited on worries that rising COVID-19 cases and restrictions in China will dent fuel demand.

AGREEMENT

Pact signed to manufacture first-of-its-kind power transformer in Oman



Times News Service

MUSCAT: An agreement has been signed between Voltamp Transformers Company and Bahwan Engineering Company to manufacture and supply a 500 MVA, 400kV transformer for Oman Electricity Transmission Company's network. The agreement was signed by Eng. Ali bin Said Al Hadabi, Vice Chairman of Voltamp Power and

Ajay Jhavar, adviser to Vice Chairman and Business Units Head - projects and Products at Bahwan Engineering Company. The manufacturing of this category of transformers is considered first-of-its-kind in the Sultanate and the region, while the signed deal comes within the framework of the contributions made by the Oman Electricity Transmission Company in strengthening the

fundamentals of infrastructure and supporting the energy industry sector in the Sultanate. Commenting on this deal, Eng. Abdullah Bin Said Al Badri, CEO of Voltamp Energy, said, "We are extremely delighted by signing this agreement today with Bahwan Engineering Company and we are proud to also inform that Voltamp Power has successfully manufactured and tested its High Voltage

Transformers of 500 MVA / 220 kV rating during this year and again this is first of its kind in the region, this will be installed for Oman Electricity Transmission Company's network." "Voltamp Power is a leading manufacturer of high voltage power transformers in Oman, which is well known for its accredited high quality and reliability and on-time delivery," Al Badri added.

AIR TRAVEL

Asian airlines offer perks to keep grounded lucrative fliers on board

SYDNEY: From wellness workshops to dinner with a celebrity chef and flights to nowhere, Asia's big international airlines are working hard to keep their most lucrative customers engaged as the pandemic-related travel halt stretches beyond 18 months.

While flights are starting to rebound in the United States and Europe, international travel is still down 96 per cent in Asia due to tough travel restrictions, making it harder to maintain a relationship with grounded premium clients, according to a media report.

Frequent fliers

Elite frequent flyers, many of them business travellers, are coveted by full-service carriers like Australia's Qantas Airways Ltd, Singapore Airlines Ltd and Hong Kong's Cathay Pacific Airways Ltd, and the airlines want them back when travel resumes.

Before the pandemic, around 5 per cent of international passengers globally flew in premium classes, but they accounted for 30 per cent of international revenue, data from airline industry group IATA shows.

Status extensions

Asian airlines have given status extensions of at least two years to elite tier customers who have earned access to airport lounges and other perks such as priority access to seats and upgrades to higher flight classes.

Qantas Loyalty CEO Olivia Wirth said customers had made clear to the airline that such extensions were important.

"They work in many cases for years to achieve these high statuses and high tiers, so it was really important for us that we were going to continue to be loyal to them just as they had been loyal to us in the years gone by," she said.

For airlines, the extensions come at a relatively little cost given the potential future reward. Grounded elite members are not accessing airport lounges stocked with fine wines, made-to-order meals and day spas, although Qantas did host a dinner in Sydney for a few of them with celebrity chef Neil Perry and CEO Alan Joyce in June.

Online courses

Singapore Airlines, which lacks a domestic market, said it has hosted virtual wellness workshops and online courses such as miniature clay art and coffee-brewing and offered a first-class dine-at-home experience.

Some other engagement initiatives are paid for by the flyer. Michael Dean, a Qantas Platinum One flyer, said his status enabled him to secure his preferred business class seats on a 747 joy flight from Brisbane last year - for A\$747 (\$550) a seat - just before Qantas retired the jumbo jet. "It was not cheap, but great fun," he said.

With flights grounded, airlines globally have also boosted engagement with another lucrative group - customers who fly less often but spend large amounts on co-branded credit cards that earn users air miles they can redeem for flights.

Airlines earn money from such cards by selling frequent flyer miles to credit card issuers to use as rewards for cardholders. — BNA



OMAN TELECOMMUNICATIONS CO (S.A.O.G)

Chairman's Report and Condensed Consolidated Interim Financial Statements (unaudited) for the period ended 30th June 2021

Respected Shareholders

We are pleased to present to you a summary of the results of the operations for the 6 months' period ended 30th June 2021.

Operating performance:

REVENUE

Group Revenue for the period ended June 2021 has reached RO 1194.1 million compared to RO 1242 million for the corresponding period 2020. Omantel (Domestic performance) Revenues reached RO 265.7 million compared to RO 288.1 million for the corresponding period 2020. Revenues growth achieved in Mobile Postpaid, Fixed Broadband, and Wholesale Capacity Sale have contributed in managing the Gross Margin for the first half of 2021, despite a fall in Mobile Prepaid due to challenging market conditions.

EXPENSES

Group's total Operating expenses decreased to RO 1007.5 Mn compared to RO 1038.6 Mn for the corresponding period 2020, a decrease of 3.0%.

NET PROFIT

The Group achieved an after tax Net Profit of RO 108.6 Mn compared to RO 100.5 Mn in 2020. After adjusting for minority interest the net profit for the period is RO 32.4 Mn compared to RO 24 Mn in 2020.

Oman Domestic operation continued its impressive performance in Q2-2021 despite the business disruptions witnessed resulting from Covid-19 pandemic. Net profit for the six months ended June 2021 stands at RO 36.1 Mn which is a growth of 14% in comparison to Year 2020 performance. This is mainly due to realization of higher margin on Capacity sales, significant growth in Postpaid Mobile (YOY growth of 19.5%) and Fixed broad band revenue (10.7%). This was further supplemented by a reduction in Operation and Maintenance costs on account of proactive cost optimization measures.

Group Earning per Share (EPS) for the period ended June 2021 is RO 0.043 compared to RO 0.032 for the corresponding period of year 2020.

SUBSCRIBER BASE

The total domestic subscriber base as of June 2021 (including mobile and fixed businesses) was 3,215 Mn (excluding Mobile Resellers) compared to 3.2 Mn of the corresponding period of the previous year, recording a growth of 0.5% over the last period. Total subscriber base with mobile resellers reached 3.8 Mn.

Subsidiary Companies:

1) Mobile Telecommunication Company (Zain):

Zain Group revenues recorded a drop of 2.9% and reached RO 932.4 Mn as of June 2021 compared to the corresponding period revenues of RO 961 Mn. EBITDA stands at RO 385.4 Mn, compared to the corresponding period EBITDA of RO 409.4 Mn recording a decline of 5.8%. Net profit stands at RO 115.3 Mn to RO 116.6 Mn of the previous period.

Total customer base of Zain Group increased by 1.3% to 48.3 Mn compared to 47.6 Mn of the previous period.

The Board of Zain Group at the meeting held on 14th July 2021 recommended to pay an interim dividend of 10 fils per share as part of the minimum 33 fils annual dividend policy.

Market Share:

Omantel's Mobile market share (including Mobile Resellers) is 53% with a revenue share of 59.5%. The Fixed Telephone (post & pre-paid) market share is 69% with a revenue market share of 79.6%.

Tower Sale

On April 25, 2021, Board of Directors of the Company approved the sale and lease back of 2890 telecom towers in Oman. Under the agreement, Omantel will sell only its passive mobile infrastructure assets in the country and enter into a long-term master services agreement to continue to utilize the tower assets.

Omantel will retain full ownership and control of its active network and spectrum as well as its software, technology and intellectual property with respect to managing its networks. The sales proceeds will be used for deleveraging, support strategic investments in next generation advanced technologies and capabilities enhancement. Various processes and activities towards financial closing are underway. The sale is expected to be completed by end of the year 2021.

Thanks and appreciation

We take this opportunity to express our heartfelt thanks to our shareholders and loyal customers for their continued support that enabled us to achieve these excellent results. Also, we wholeheartedly appreciate the sincere contribution of the Executive Management and Employees for the performance in the challenging situation. With your support, we are confident that Omantel will continue its good performance and will be able to reach new heights of excellence.

On behalf of the Board of Directors and the staff, we are honored to greet His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq for His visionary leadership. We pray to Almighty Allah to return this occasion to His Majesty with good health, happiness and long life, and to the Omani people with prosperity under the wise leadership of His Majesty.

CHAIRMAN

Condensed Consolidated Statement of Profit and loss – Six months ended 30 June 2021 (Unaudited)

	Three months ended 30 June		Six months ended 30 June	
	2021	2020	2021	2020
	RO'000		RO'000	
Revenue	591,376	590,971	1,194,085	1,242,004
Cost of sales	(175,606)	(157,382)	(364,282)	(353,538)
Operating and administrative expenses	(171,546)	(167,337)	(329,719)	(349,455)
Depreciation and amortization	(146,675)	(151,935)	(293,422)	(298,858)
Expected credit loss on financial assets (ECL)	(8,379)	(20,356)	(20,133)	(36,763)
Interest income	962	1,635	3,263	3,778
Investment income/ (loss)	2,462	(1,191)	3,274	340
Share of results of associates and joint venture	693	275	1,069	822
Other income/(loss)	3,957	1,263	8,746	(3,455)
Gain on sale and lease back transaction	782	-	782	5,806
Finance costs	(35,132)	(42,444)	(68,756)	(87,135)
Loss from currency revaluation	(2,902)	(11,015)	(9,423)	(11,178)
Net monetary gain/ (loss)	908	3,956	(783)	4,241
Profit before income tax	60,900	46,440	124,701	116,609
Taxation	(8,341)	(8,454)	(16,107)	(16,124)
Profit for the period	52,559	37,986	108,594	100,485
Attributable to:				
Shareholders of the Company	15,334	7,974	32,433	23,962
Non-controlling interests	37,225	30,012	76,161	76,523
	52,559	37,986	108,594	100,485
Earnings per share				
Basic and diluted – RO	0.020	0.011	0.043	0.032

Note:
1. The unaudited consolidated financial statement will be delivered to any shareholders or other interested party who requests them, within 5 days of the written request. The request must indicate preference for Arabic or English.

2. Request may be addressed to Secretary, Board of Directors, Omantel P.O. Box 789, P.C. 112, Ruwi Sultanate of Oman. Fax: 242 40 586.

Condensed Consolidated Statement of Financial Position – 30 June 2021

	Unaudited 30 Jun 2021 RO'000	Audited 31 Dec 2020 RO'000
ASSETS		
Current assets		
Cash and bank balances	449,855	583,012
Trade and other receivables	896,276	838,757
Contract assets	92,449	84,542
Inventories	62,676	68,402
Investment securities at fair value through profit or loss	21,208	19,446
Investment securities at amortised cost	-	2,000
	1,522,464	1,596,159
Assets of disposal group classified as held for sale	33,003	8,523
Total Current assets	1,555,467	1,604,682
Non-current assets		
Contract assets	50,809	45,128
Investment securities at fair value through profit or loss	29,847	27,744
Investment securities at FVOCI	21,130	6,561
Investment securities at amortised cost	1,000	-
Investments in associates and joint venture	112,511	109,827
Other non-current assets	81,258	70,317
Right of use of assets	233,870	229,349
Property and equipment	1,925,761	2,136,521
Intangible assets and goodwill	3,552,982	3,505,642
Total non-current assets	6,009,168	6,131,089
Total Assets	7,564,635	7,735,771
LIABILITIES AND EQUITY		
Current liabilities		
Trade and other payables	1,288,316	1,391,317
Contract liabilities	120,542	146,193
Income tax payables	34,867	44,713
Borrowings	437,775	295,179
Lease liabilities	46,423	50,037
	1,927,923	1,927,439
Liabilities of disposal group classified as held for sale	3,938	1,622
Total current liabilities	1,931,861	1,929,061
Non-current liabilities		
Borrowings	2,078,121	2,034,833
Lease liabilities	210,716	194,279
Other non-current liabilities	611,231	681,573
Total non-Current liabilities	2,900,068	2,910,685
Total Liabilities	4,831,929	4,839,746
Equity		
Share capital	75,000	75,000
Legal reserve	25,000	25,000
Voluntary reserve	49,875	49,875
Capital contribution	7,288	7,288
Capital reserve	36,893	36,893
Foreign currency translation reserve	(83,498)	(65,297)
Investment fair valuation reserve	(2,151)	(2,197)
Other reserves	(7,789)	(10,600)
Retained earnings	451,108	460,345
Equity attributable to equity holders of the parent	551,726	576,307
Non-controlling interests	2,180,980	2,319,718
Total Equity	2,732,706	2,896,025
Total Liabilities and Equity	7,564,635	7,735,771

MARKET

Oil recovers from 3-week low amid surge in Delta variant infections



OIL PRICE: US oil was up by 99 cents, or 1.5 per cent, at \$67.47 a barrel, having fallen by 2.6 per cent in the previous session. - BNA

Brent crude was up by 84 cents, or 1.2 per cent, at \$69.88 a barrel by 0656 GMT, after falling 2.3 per cent on Monday

TOKYO: Oil prices rose more than 1 per cent on Tuesday, recouping some of the losses in the previous session when prices hit a three-week low, but gains are likely to be limited on worries that rising COVID-19 cases and restrictions in China will dent fuel demand. Brent crude was up by 84 cents, or 1.2 per cent, at \$69.88 a barrel by 0656 GMT, after falling 2.3 per

cent on Monday. US oil was up by 99 cents, or 1.5 per cent, at \$67.47 a barrel, having fallen by 2.6 per cent in the previous session, according to a media report. China on Tuesday reported more COVID-19 infections in the latest outbreak of the disease that was first detected in the country in late 2019, in what analysts said was the biggest test of Beijing's

zero-infection strategy.

Some cities in China, the world's top crude oil importer, have stepped up mass testing as authorities try to stamp out locally transmitted infections of the highly transmissible Delta variant of the coronavirus.

"In the short-term oil market may be volatile with frequent pull-back as crude prices are beginning to struggle," said Avtar Sandu, senior manager, commodities at Phillip Futures in Singapore, adding any deep pullback in prices is a buying opportunity.

"There is a possibility of additional Iranian, United Arab Emirates and Libyan barrels flooding the market but we are expecting overall global GDP growth to hold up energy demand," he said.

In the United States, the Senate is set to vote on the passage of a \$1 trillion infrastructure bill later on Tuesday, which, if passed would boost the economy and demand for oil products, analysts said. But surging cases of COVID-19 are blighting the outlook for economic growth and overall consumption.

"Investors are also questioning the recovery in the US amid rising case numbers. US air travel has plateaued for almost two months amid ongoing travel restrictions," ANZ Research said in a note.

Still, US crude, gasoline, and other product inventories are likely to have dropped last week, with gasoline stocks forecast to fall for a fourth consecutive period, a preliminary Reuters poll showed on Monday. -BNA

SAVILLS RESEARCH

Sharjah residential market continues to witness strong demand in first half of 2021

SHARJAH: Grade A residential market in Sharjah has remained strong over the first half of 2021, reported Savills, the leading global real estate advisers.

According to Savills latest 'Market in Minutes' research, despite the downturn that occurred at the onset of the pandemic in 2020, activity levels have bounced back with robust demand recorded across the Emirate since H2 2020. This trend has continued throughout H1 2021.

Registration department

The Sharjah real estate registration department recorded approximately 12.2 billion in property sales in H1 2021, a 40.5 per cent year on year increase, with residential transactions accounting for nearly 50 per cent of demand.

Shane Breen, Director - Valuations, said, "Financial reforms and

incentive measures implemented by the Executive Board in November 2020 improved investors' confidence in the real estate market in Sharjah. This has resulted in improving developers' confidence to continue construction activity and new project launches. The majority of the master-planned projects that have recently been launched are around new Sharjah, with a preponderance of activity being concentrated in the University City district. However, micro markets like Al Khan District, Al Suyoh, and Al Rahmaniya Suburbs have seen development activity, which is projected to result in an increase in the supply of high-quality developments at competitive prices."

According to Savills research, Sharjah currently has approximately nine master-planned neighbourhoods under construc-

tion, several of which is partially completed and has experienced an increase in occupancy levels over the last 12 to 18 months. Low interest rates, affordable ticket prices, flexible payment plans, service charge exemptions, and higher-quality projects have benefited investors and end-users, further stimulating demand. During H1 2021, more than 2,200 units were completed across master-planned communities, including Al Jada, Al Mamsha, and Maryam Island.

Work from home boom

Commenting on the pandemics' influence on Sharjah's real estate sector, Breen said, "The work from home boom has resulted in the growing interest for more livable space. This has led to an increase in demand for townhouses and villas from investors and end-users."

UPBEAT

Dollar hits four-month high against euro on Fed taper talk

LONDON: The dollar hit a four-month high versus the euro on Tuesday after upbeat US jobs data bolstered expectations that the Federal Reserve could soon start tapering its massive bond-buying programme.

Analysts said the dollar was getting support from rising US bond yields, as the prospect of reduced Fed stimulus weakened bond prices, according to a media report.

US job openings, a measure of labour demand, hit a record high in June while hiring also increased, the Labour Department said in a monthly survey on Monday. That followed Friday's non-farm payroll report showing jobs increased by 943,000 in July, above the 870,000 forecast by economists in a Reuters poll.

The dollar index strengthened on Friday and Monday and reached an 18-day high of 93.02 during Asian trading hours on Tuesday. At 0850 GMT, it was flat at 93.035.

The euro hit a four-month low against the dollar, with the pair changing hands at \$1.1726.

The Swiss franc and Japanese yen were both down 0.1 per cent against the dollar, as demand for safe-haven currencies fell.

Attention now turns to US consumer inflation data due on Wednesday, which could provide more cues on the timing of the Fed's bond-purchase taper.

Although there is talk among analysts of the market being "data-driven," US jobs market



RIISING US BOND YIELDS: Analysts said the dollar was getting support from rising US bond yields, as the prospect of reduced Fed stimulus weakened bond prices. - BNA

and inflation statistics are difficult to interpret, Commerzbank (DE: CBKG) Ulrich Leuchtmann wrote in a client note.

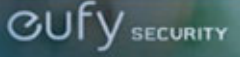
"Even if the macro data from the United States is currently astounding, it says little about where the dollar should trade in the medium term," he said. "And that's why the FX market is wary of any significant reassessments."

Atlanta Federal Reserve Bank President Raphael Bostic, speaking after the jobs data, said he was eyeing the fourth quarter for the start of a bond-purchases taper, but was open to an earlier move. Boston Federal Reserve Bank President Eric Rosengren said the Fed should announce in September that it will reduce asset purchases in the autumn.

"Market participants will be watching comments from Fed officials even more closely than normal in the near-term for any signs that the Fed could speed up plans for tighter policy," MUFG currency strategist Lee Hardman said in a note to clients.

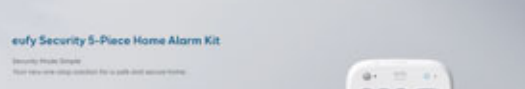
Elsewhere, risk appetite was harmed by worries about growth in China and the fast-spreading Delta coronavirus variant, which led to oil prices hitting a three-week low in the previous session.

The Australian dollar, which is seen as a proxy for risk appetite, was hurt by lower commodity prices and extended lockdowns in the country. At 0751 GMT, it was up 0.1 per cent at \$0.7334, having spent the last three weeks at levels not seen since December 2020. -BNA



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Asian stocks on backfoot

SYDNEY: Asian stocks started on a weak footing on Tuesday after a largely soft performance on Wall Street and as persistent concerns over the spread of the Delta variant of the coronavirus dented sentiment and triggered falls in metals and oil prices.

MSCI's broadest index of Asia-Pacific shares outside Japan declined 0.4 per cent in early trading, with Korea's KOSPI index down 0.56 per cent while China's blue-chip index CSI300 shed 0.33 per cent.

"With the Delta variant spreading, money managers who were over-invested in the re-opening trade continue to unwind that trade because it's not working right now," said Dennis Dick, a trader at Bright Trading LLC, Reuters reported.

Japan's Nikkei was UP 0.9 per cent while Australia's benchmark S&P/ASX200 was 0.2 per cent higher on the back of strong earnings results.

US crude oil futures were trading at \$66.82 per barrel, up \$0.35 or 0.53per cent. Brent crude was at \$69.29, up \$0.25 or 0.36per cent higher. Gold stabilised after falling to a more than four-month low on Monday as strong US jobs data bolstered expectations for an early tapering of the Federal Reserve's economic support measures.

Spot gold XAU= was fetching \$1,732.13 an ounce, up 0.16 per cent. -BNA

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Email: jawadazeez123@gmail.com

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26, Indian male born in Oman, with 3years of experience, having valid D/L, looking for suitable placement in Engineering Sales/Marketing Field Holder of Bachelors in Electronics and Telecommunications Engineering. Contact 98914229





LOST AND FOUND

Tips for managing commonly misplaced items

In the haste to break free from your pandemic routine, you may find your new schedule overwhelming and hectic. And with that, comes the inconvenience of misplacing commonly used items. According to a survey conducted by Bluetooth tracking company Pixie based in the US, Americans spend an average of 2.5 days out of each calendar year searching for lost items.

The most common reason we keep misplacing our items is absentmindedness. Psychologists have a phrase for this, “If you don’t encode, you can’t retrieve.” This means that if you go through your day without consciously thinking about where you’re placing your keys, your brain has no information stored about the item’s whereabouts. Other factors, such as stress levels and overall mental health, can also play a role in how often you misplace items.

Here are a few tips on how to prevent your precious possessions from going missing:

1 Set digital reminders
If you regularly lose track of specific items, digital reminders might be for you. There are a variety of great productivity apps available on most smartphones to remind you to double check your wallet before leaving the house. Most calendar apps such as Google Calendar and Outlook have reminder features that can help you organise your valuables. There are also useful apps like Todoist that specialise in creating reminders and daily lists.

2 Retrace your steps
“Retracing your steps” after losing an item can be a useful approach when activating your brain’s context-dependent memory. With context-dependent memory, your memory is the strongest when you mentally or physically place yourself back in the environment in which the item was lost. Reconstructing these events visually can help trigger your memories and be an important step in rediscovering a misplaced item.

3 Try a Bluetooth tracker for smaller items
For smaller items like your phone, wallet and keys, Bluetooth trackers can provide much-needed tech relief. Trackers like these are designed for those times you lose an item within close proximity. Instead of wasting precious moments searching for your lost item, you can pull up an app to tell you where it is.

4 Use the power of GPS tracking devices for high-value items
When it comes to highly valuable items like photography equipment, luggage and even pets, you’ll need more protection. Mobile Tracker uses a combination of GPS technology to track an item at any moment from anywhere.

Just because you lost an item doesn’t mean that you should lose hope or panic. With a few changes to your routine and even some tech upgrades, you’ll find it much easier to cope during those forgetful moments. -BPT



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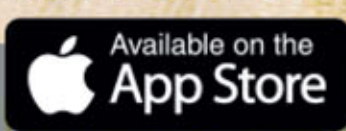
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ROUND-UP

Zubair Corp forms team to support and empower Omani talents

The team will be responsible for implementing various plans, programmes and initiatives

MUSCAT: The Zubair Corporation announced the formation of a team to support and empower Omani competencies within the Zubair Group of companies. The team was created based on the initiative of The Zubair Corporation's management and under the supervision of Al Zubair Mohammad Al Zubair, Vice Chairman of the Board of Directors.

The team, comprising the Head of Institutional Services and the Human Resources Management Team at The Zubair Corporation, reviewed various topics with the Vice Chairman of the Board of Directors, including part of the plans, programmes and initiatives, the mechanism of their implementation and the goals envisaged in the short and long term. It also touched upon the design and preparation of programmes that are directed towards the implementation of a qualitative and strategic



Omanisation policy. The policy is not solely based on numbers or percentages but focuses on empowering and developing young Omani talents and preparing them to occupy leadership, supervisory and specialised positions that are corresponding to their aspirations and capabilities across all levels. Moreover, it will aid in the preparation of a clear plan for career advancement to help in the continuous development of their career.

Commenting on the formation of this team, the Vice Chairman of the Board of Directors said, "The forma-



tion of this team stems from our belief that the prosperity of the various business sectors depends entirely on the extent of our innovation in managing human capital. This is an approach that the institution has followed and continues to follow to optimally invest in Omani talents and competencies. Now, more than ever, we need to reinforce this approach by developing appropriate strategies for each stage."

"Through the formation of this team, we also aim to build a work environment based on a culture of performance and excellence.

Moreover, with the creation of a spirit of challenge and motivation among Omani competencies towards more innovation at work, we can enhance productivity. This will positively reflect on the overall performance of the institutions to ensure continuous and purposeful development in various sectors of business," he added.

A number of different programmes and initiatives that were recently reviewed by the team and their respective arrangements will be announced soon. From his side, Hilal Omar Al Siyabi, Chief Corpo-

rate Services Officer at The Zubair Corporation, highlighted the importance of the role assigned to this team, explaining that the recently approved work plan includes programmes and initiatives that do not target the group's employees only but also include initiatives that fall within the social responsibility of the institution. It includes designing practical training programmes for graduates to prepare them for the labour market and creating meaningful partnerships with various educational institutions in this aspect. This is

in addition to other plans and programmes that will be announced consecutively and according to a suitable time frame.

The Zubair Corporation is one of the most important economic multi-activity conglomerates in the Sultanate, which operates in various sectors. Over the past years, the corporation has sought to empower national competencies by providing many training and qualifying opportunities to develop talent within the corporation and senior executives in various group companies.

SPLENDID COLLECTION

Malabar Gold & Diamonds unveils Gemstone Jewellery Festival

MUSCAT: Malabar Gold & Diamonds, the leading global jewellery retailer with over 260 outlets across 10 countries unveils the 'Gemstone Jewellery Festival' across their showrooms in GCC, Singapore and USA commencing August 11.

This festival showcases a dazzling jewellery collection, delicately designed with precious gems and uncut diamonds. These stunning pieces crafted in gold, perfectly capture the essence of every occasion and elevate its splendour.

Gemstone Jewellery Festival mainly features Era - uncut diamond jewellery and Precia - precious gem jewellery.

The Era collection, exquisitely crafted in 22K gold, is inspired by the cultural heritage of India and features the magnificence of uncut diamonds and precious gems, symbolizing royalty and sheer brilliance while Precia is a fine assortment of jewellery featuring emeralds, rubies and sapphires,



beautifully handcrafted in 22k gold. It features a graceful collection of precious gems jewellery, designed for the woman of today.

As part of the festival, a whole new collection of jewellery, ranging from bangles to necklaces, have been curated within the Era and Precia collections, incorporating the latest design trends

to suit the varied interests of customers. These are accessible across all stores of Malabar Gold & Diamonds and come with the added assurance of a transparent and detailed price tag and quality certification.

As part of Malabar Promise, the brand also offers free lifetime maintenance at over 260 show-

rooms across 10 countries and guaranteed buyback on gold & diamond jewellery.

Another highlight of the festival is that customers can avail the best rate on gold exchange against any gemstone jewellery.

Customers can also take advantage of the 'Easy Payment Plans' in association with various leading banks through which they can convert their jewellery purchases into flexible payment options with zero interest.

Malabar Gold & Diamonds also offers exquisite and finely crafted jewellery as part of various other brands presented namely Ethnix - Handcrafted Designer Jewellery, Mine - Diamonds Unlimited, Divine - Indian Heritage Jewellery, Solitaire One - An exclusive solitaire brand, Ago Bay - Pearl jewellery and Starlet - Kids Jewellery. Each of these collections stands unique in terms of design, craftsmanship and grandeur, making them desirable for any occasion.

FULL-SIZE LUXURY SUV



Special EMI of OMR398 on SUV INFINITI QX80

MUSCAT: INFINITI Oman has announced a low EMI on the full-size luxury SUV INFINITI QX80, which is designed and engineered to allow customers to travel everywhere in luxury. Customers can benefit from a starting EMI rate (terms and conditions apply) of OMR 398 on the INFINITI QX80. Subject to credit approval.

The new INFINITI QX80 features added equipment, innovative new technologies and stylish attributes befitting its luxury status, in addition to a new 'Black Edition' grade. The INFINITI QX80 is a full-size luxury SUV - the flagship of the INFINITI range. It combines bold proportions and a commanding exterior design with a spacious, high-quality cabin with room for seven or eight passengers. Effortless performance, advanced drive-assist technologies and taut yet refined dynamics allow for a relaxing and confidence-inspiring drive.

A senior spokesperson at INFINITI Oman said, "We are pleased to announce an attractive EMI to our flagship QX80 model for our customers in Oman. The INFINITI QX80 presents drivers with style and luxury. The Black Edition grade has been designed keeping in mind the distinctive tastes and preferences of our customers."

The flagship model includes the new generation INFINITI InTouch infotainment, Premium In-Vehicle-Infotainment (P-IVI) System featuring two HD display screens, 3D maps, Apple Car Play and Android Auto capabilities. The model is equipped with the BOSE Performance Series with 17 speakers for high fidelity audio experience with surround sound technology.

The new 'Black Edition' grade features dark chrome and black exterior accents that highlight the front grille and fascia, side fender vents, door mirror caps and rear tailgate strip. The commanding stance is heightened

with the addition of dark chrome 22-inch forged alloy wheels. Three stylish interior trim colours are also available: including 'Graphite', 'Saddle Brown' and 'Wheat' with a revised Charcoal Ash Wood accent trim.

The 2021 QX80 features a range of available drive-assist technologies. Blind Spot Intervention (BSI), Lane Departure Prevention (LDP), Distance Control Assist (DCA), and an updated Intelligent Cruise Control system are all included, while Android Auto and Apple CarPlay continue to bring enhanced connectivity across the QX80 range.

With a powerful 5.6-litre V8 engine driving the rear or both axles, the QX80 is a consummate performer in all driving conditions. A smooth-shifting seven-speed automatic transmission seamlessly channels the engine's ample power and torque reserves for an assured feeling of control behind the wheel. From travelling on the highway, towing a heavy load, or traversing tough off-road passes, the QX80 brings hand-crafted luxury, utility and sophistication for up to eight passengers.

The safety features of INFINITI QX80 8S LUXE SENSORY includes Anti-Lock Braking System (ABS), Infiniti VDC, Vehicle Dynamic Control, Electronic Brake Force Distribution (EBD), B-LSD with Hill Start Assist, Driver & Assist seat & curtain Airbags & Side Airbags, Advanced Airbag, Driver seat 3 point ELR with double pretensioners and load limiters, Assist seat 3 point ELR with double pretensioners and load limiters, Rear Seat Belt RH&LH:3 point ELR, Center: 3 point ELR, 3rd Row seat belt, RH&LH:3 point ELR, Tyre pressure monitoring system, Child anchors (with ISO-FIX), High mounted stop lamp with LED in RR spoiler, Crash sensitive door unlock, and Around view monitor, Trailer Stability Assist, Predictive Forward collision warning and Remote Engine Starter.

SOHAR | BUSINESS ACCOUNT

Sohar International provides a wholesome range of banking services for your business

MUSCAT: Constantly innovating to cater to the changing needs and demands of its elite clientele, Sohar International has remained a preferred choice in the Sultanate.

With an increasing base of entrepreneurs in the Sultanate, Sohar International has introduced an enhanced proposition, 'Sohar | Business Account' to cater to such business-owner customers.

The bank has launched the account with a new direction, fresh strategies and a unique outlook to ensure an efficient, quick and seamless approach to servicing these customers, in order to address their varying banking requirements. The Sohar Business Account option will be available for companies that fall under the sole ownership category or the partnership category and will have a number of special privileges for the account holders.

Day-to-day banking

"With a deep understanding of the various businesses day-to-day banking requirements, the Sohar Business Account will undertake a more efficient approach to servicing customers in this category and assist them with their require-



ments. At Sohar International, we constantly refine and realign our account types to suit our long-term strategies. This has ultimately always proved beneficial to our customers, and serves as a testament to the bank's efforts towards premium client servicing," said Khalil Salim Al Hedaifi, Chief Retail Banking Officer at Sohar International. "Meeting the specific needs of customers who own a business, Sohar Business Account supports their enterprises with services including the ease of availing credit and access to a variety of fund management options. We believe that by doing so, it takes off major operational stress from their minds, thereby also contributing to the national economy, by help-

ing them focus on increasing their production capacity."

The Sohar Business Account offer a slab based call account with an interest rate of up to 2 per cent p.a. Bringing together the flexibility of a current account and the interest potential of a savings account, customers can opt for a call account that can be easily opened in the name of the establishment on the basis of current account documents already provided.

The thoughtfully created Business Account also has several advantages for cash transactions. It ensures there are no restrictions on the number of cash deposits and withdrawals, allowing 24/7 cash deposits through Cash Deposit Machines. To ensure that the basic operations of a business flow seamlessly, the payments and remittances feature enables bulk payment facility through Internet Banking, RTGS and ACH and also offers free of charge-standing instructions for bill payments like water, electricity, telephone and the like, as well as local fund transfers. In fact, accounts with a minimum average balance of OMR2,000 (or its equivalent in foreign currency) are also eligible for personalised cheque books with

the name and logo of the establishment printed on them.

As part of the Employee Payroll Services, all Employee Salary Accounts have the advantage of a zero-balance savings account facility with no account maintenance charges. This feature is being offered by the bank for a limited period until December 31, 2021 Salaries can be disbursed through various channels which include standing instructions, direct account debit and bulk payment via the e-Banking platform. Employees also get special employee remittances services and credit cards.

Special privileges

Furthermore, the Sohar Business Account has a host of special privileges on their debit and pre-loaded cards, offering global acceptability, and usage for e-payment in all Ministries. With a keen focus on security, all Sohar International cards are equipped with the latest chip technology and have additional security for internet transactions (Verified by Visa). With the rise in the preference for digital payments, the account also offers hassle-free internet banking for the convenience of its customers.

T

TRAVEL



Toledo cityscape

After the addition of Madrid’s Paseo del Prado and Retiro Park to UNESCO’s World Heritage list, Spain’s world heritage sites reach an impressive 49 sites.

EXPLORE SOME OF THE MOST ICONIC UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITES IN SPAIN

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) World Heritage Committee has recently added Madrid’s Paseo del Prado and Retiro Park to UNESCO’s World Heritage list alongside other outstanding sites across the globe. The committee highlighted the park’s introduction of nature into Madrid, as well as the influence the properties within had on the design of other cities in Latin America. Next to the park is the Paseo del Prado which is a pedestrian boulevard that connects Madrid’s art centres, bringing together the Prado Museum with the Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum and the Reina Sofia Art Centre.

This new addition further establishes Spain as home to one of the largest collections of UNESCO World Heritage sites around the world, with an impressive total of 49 sites. To mark this recent accomplishment, it is time to go back and look at Spain’s most iconic sites that have been added to UNESCO’s list throughout the years, including some considered as the most popular tourist attractions.

Starting off with the Archaeological Ensemble of Mérida, the capital of Extremadura that was founded in 25 BC by the Emperor Augustus and was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1993. The site contains the most significant number of Roman ruins in all of Spain and is considered as one of the best-preserved extensive examples of Roman architecture outside of Italy. Some of the Roman landmarks include an amphitheatre, the Trajan’s arch, the bridge over the



The Roman Amphitheatre in Mérida



Alcázar of Córdoba

river Guadiana and several others. Some of the ancient dams built by the Romans are still functional of the city, which is a great example of the prowess of Roman engineering. This is one of the most important heritage sites in Spain and is perfect for travellers interested in Roman history.

Originally founded in the 2nd century BC, Córdoba’s period of glory peaked in the 8th century after the Moorish conquest, when a huge number of marvellous mosques, palaces and buildings were built to rival the architectural wonders in Constantinople, Damascus, and Baghdad. The Historic centre of Córdoba has been listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1984 and it is



The casas colgadas (hanging houses) of Cuenca

one of the best representations of Andalusian grandeur in Spain. This ancient city has been home to various cultures and people, each leaving their artistic traces on the city’s architecture and landscape. Visiting this melting pot of cultures offers a unique outlook on the different histories of different civilizations. Some of the must-see landmarks in the city include the Great Mosque of Cordoba, Alcázar of Córdoba and Calahorra Tower.

The historic walled town of Cuenca, originally built by the moors in a defensive position at the heart of the Córdoba Caliphate and was later conquered by the Castilians in the 12th century. Cuenca is a beautiful example of a well-preserved medieval fortified town, famous for being home to Spain’s first Gothic cathedral Nuestra Señora de Gracia and the remarkable casas colgadas (hanging houses) that overlook the beautiful Huécar. The town offers an exclusive look at life in medieval times and exceptional military architecture as well as beautiful natural scenery overlooking a magnificent countryside.

Finally, the historic city of Toledo, a land of more than 2,000 years

of history, was inscribed by the UNESCO World Heritage Committee back in 1986. This ancient city has been occupied by several distinct cultures, from Romans to Visigoths to Moors, and its architectural masterpieces are the product of a diverse environment where the co-existence of three major religions Islam, Judaism, and Christianity played a huge role. The city boasts numerous synagogues, mosques, and cathedrals, each built in a distinct design presenting unique traits of the prevailing culture at the time. Toledo was also considered a centre of arts during the Renaissance period, and it is home to countless renowned pieces from legendary artists.

These 4 sites are just the tip of the iceberg considering the number of UNESCO World Heritage Sites that Spain boasts. There are 45 more heritage sites that are just as amazing as these, and one visit to Spain is definitely not enough to discover them all. Spain is finally open to travellers from the GCC, it is time to explore the endless possibilities and plan your next trip to this beautiful destination.

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