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HM issues directive to set up six schools

Muscat - The Diwan of Royal Court issued a statement on Sunday stating: 'Within the context of the attention accorded by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to the education sector, he has issued a Royal directive to the Diwan of Royal Court to fund the construction of six schools to the tune of RO8.85mn on a priority basis. His Majesty Sultan Haitham is keen to provide a supportive and rewarding environment for education since it is the mainstay of nation building now and in the future. 'May Almighty Allah grant His Majesty the Sultan long life and grant him success.'

Minister of Education hails Royal directive



Dr Madiha bint Ahmed bin Nasser al Shibaniyah, Minister of Education, has applauded the Royal directive from His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to finance six schools on a priority basis. Dr Madiha said, "His Majesty the Sultan's directive supports the education sector and enhances the ministry's efforts to meet the need of more schools to

help spread the umbrella of education for our students, male and female, throughout the sultanate. This directive reflects His Majesty the Sultan's faith in education and its role in building the nation's present and future. The directive gives due importance to providing all the means to carry out the ministry's mission of education for all."



PCR test mandatory for all incoming passengers, quarantine for 7 days

Our Correspondent Muscat

All passengers to Oman will need to get a PCR test for COVID-19 done not more than 96 hours before arrival and a second one on landing here. Those arriving must be in quarantine for seven days after landing. These procedures will apply to all arrivals through airports and land borders, the Supreme Committee tasked with the COVID-19 situation announced

on Sunday. In addition to reducing the 14-day quarantine period to seven days, a PCR test must be done on the eighth day in Oman, the Supreme Committee stated. It also said that in response to requests for community participation in the nation's efforts to combat the COVID-19 pandemic, the Supreme Committee has now approved voluntary work. All those interested can register in the Wali's Office in their wilayat.



Transit passengers will pay RO3 from January 1

Our Correspondent Muscat

Transit passengers at Oman's airports will have to pay RO3 from January 1, 2021. This is as per decision No 669/ 2020 issued by H E Eng Said bin Hamoud bin Said al Ma'awali, Minister of Transport,

Communications and Information Technology, and chairman of the Board of Directors of the Civil Aviation Authority. The decision, issued on October 15 and announced on Sunday, has amended the Civil Aviation Law to introduce the fee for transit passengers at sultanate's airports.



Ministry announces fiscal balance plan for 2020-24

Muscat - The Ministry of Finance on Sunday announced its mid-term fiscal balance plan (2020-2024) which was approved by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, according to a statement issued by the Council of Ministers on October 22.

The plan is aimed at achieving sustainable levels of fiscal balance by the end of 2024 and preparing conditions that are supportive of the Oman Vision 2040.

The mid-term fiscal balance plan involves a set of initiatives some of which have entered the implementation stage while others will be enforced according to priority and preparedness taking into account the necessity of gradual implementation of these procedures

The fiscal balance plan will be published on the Ministry of Finance's website in both Arabic and English to be available for local stakeholders

in consideration of its economic and social effects. For that purpose, a comprehensive social protection system has been set up to help limited-income segments cope with the impact of some financial policies. The announcement of the

plan comes within the context of continued fall in oil prices in addition to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic which affected the global economy and lowered the energy demand thereby affecting various economic sectors.

The fiscal balance plan will be published on the Ministry of Finance's website in both Arabic and English to be available for local stakeholders both from the sultanate and outside.

By implementing the initiatives and policies, the sultanate seeks to avert a continuation of financial deficits as well as avoid the decline in Oman's credit ratings and improving it in order to achieve safe levels that are attractive to investors. ONA

Oman advances six places in Environmental Performance Index

Many areas still need improvement as sultanate not among best performers

Our Correspondent Muscat

Oman has advanced six places to 110th rank in the Environmental Performance Index 2020, according to researchers at Yale and Columbia universities who produce the biennial scorecard of national results on a range of sustainability issues. Oman was ranked 116th in the 2018 Index.

The sultanate may have improved its overall ranking but it is still placed 110th among 180 countries analysed in the Index on 32 performance indicators across 11 issue categories covering environmental health and ecosystem vitality.

EPI 2020 features new metrics that gauge waste management, carbon dioxide emissions from land cover change and emissions of fluorinated gases - all important drivers of climate change.

Israel (first in the region, 29th globally) and the UAE (second



OMAN RANKINGS

GOOD PERFORMANCE

Grassland loss	1
SO2 growth rate	1
Species Habitat Index	2
Biodiversity Habitat Index	7
Fish Stock Status	9
Fisheries	17

POOR PERFORMANCE

Greenhouse gas intensity growth rate	152
Greenhouse gas emissions per capita	168
Particulate matter 2.5 (PM2.5) exposure	171
Protected areas representativeness index	171
Nitrogen dioxide growth rate	172
Black carbon growth rate	172

in the region, 42nd globally) rank above their MENA counterparts in EPI 2020. Other EPI leaders in MENA include Kuwait (47th globally), Jordan (48th), and Bahrain (56th).

The lowest rankings in MENA go to Saudi Arabia (90th), Oman (110th), Qatar (122nd) and Sudan (130th).

The sultanate has done well when it comes to its ranking in Fisheries (17th globally), Fish Stock Status (ninth), Sulfur dioxide growth rate (first), Grassland loss (first), Species Habitat Index (second

and Biodiversity Habitat Index (seventh).

Oman is among the worst performers when it comes to Ecosystem Vitality (150th), Biodiversity & Habitat (159th), Protected Areas Representativeness Index (171th), Nitrogen dioxide growth rate (172nd), Black Carbon growth rate (172nd), Greenhouse gas intensity growth rate (152nd), and Greenhouse gas emissions per capita (168th) among others.

Denmark is ranked No 1 which reflects strong performance across nearly all issues

tracked by the EPI. Other nations in the top tier include Luxembourg, Switzerland, the UK and France.

India, with notably poor health outcomes from air quality and other environmental risks, comes in near the bottom of the rankings. China's recent pollution controls have helped it climb to 120th place, 48 places ahead of India (168th).

The lowest scores of the report go to countries that are struggling broadly with weak governance, including Liberia, Myanmar and Afghanistan.

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YOUR SAY

LEARN ANYHOW

Do you prefer blended education to distance education in the new academic year? Why?

Bhaskara Rao S
Attorney

With no reprieve from COVID-19 and fears of more infections, close monitoring is the need of the hour. Oman's well thought out plan for a graded blend appears most ideal, like in-school study for 12th class on alternate weeks, 50-50 blend for middle classes and total online for primary classes. But most parents seem to prefer online study. Periodical review needed.

Dr Zainab Ansari
Investor

Blended education is good as students get exposure to the formal environment of a classroom as well as the easy mode of studying from home.

Mbarak al Araimy
Entrepreneur

I would prefer blended education. I personally feel distance education is a simple bandage; what is needed is a permanent solution. COVID-19 is real and looks like it is here to stay. We have to learn and teach our children to live with it. Keeping school children home longer may affect their future.

Reema Bhatia
Teacher

Since COVID-19 has disrupted everyone's lifestyle, the virtual world has come to the rescue. I think distance education is better and safe in the current scenario. The system offers a wide range of technologies, including web-based courses, live videos and conference calls. These can be used to support traditional education settings. Several institutions have started to adopt this.

Mohan Anandan
Banker

Blended education includes the traditional way of learning and well as the use of modern technology in transferring knowledge. Under the current new norms, where technology is being used in hitherto unknown ways, a blended approach would ensure that there is a proper balance between tradition and modernity and students are not overly exposed to the highway of technology.

A R Srinivasan
Government employee

I would strongly advocate blended education as it is a combination of traditional classroom-based learning with usage of technology for online education. It would definitely help in preparing for tomorrow.

Ruskeen S
Sales manager

Blended education will help students understand the real concepts and value of education. I prefer blended education. Students need direct communication with fellow students and teachers. Interacting with teachers directly is more effective.

Ahmed Khalaf
Private sector employee

I prefer blended education because I feel distance education will give our children more play time than study. Keeping school children home longer will definitely affect them.

Saji Uthuppan
Lecturer

Online time cannot provide many of the informal social interactions students have at college, but how will online courses do in terms of moving student learning forward? Research gives us some clues and also points us to what we could be doing to support students who are likely to struggle in the online setting. Online classes aren't as effective as in-person classes for most students.

?

NEXT ON YOUR SAY

With the resumption of most activities, is it time to reopen places of worship and parks?

The views stated here are those of the respondents and not endorsed by Muscat Daily. If you feel strongly about the issues discussed here, you can email your comments to muscatdaily@apexmedia.co.om Log on to our Facebook page or tweet us your comments on the issue

1,300 new COVID-19 cases, 38 deaths in last four days

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Health (MoH) on Sunday confirmed 1,300 new cases of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) in four days, taking the total to 115,734. The number of deaths reported during the same time was 38.

The number of those who have recovered is 2,640. 'The total number of recoveries has increased to 105,700 while the number of deaths has reached 1,246,' an MoH statement said. As of Sunday, a total of 389 patients were admitted in health institutions including 175 in ICUs.

MoH calls upon all to adhere to the isolation procedures by staying in an isolated room with an attached toilet and serving the isolated person from outside the room as instructed. It said that social distancing also helps curb the spread of the virus.

MoH advises all citizens and

CASES FROM OCT 23 TO NOV 01	
Oct 23 to Oct 25 (Average of 365)	1,095
Oct 26	422
Oct 27	466
Oct 28	614
Oct 29 to Nov 1 (Average og 325)	1,300

residents to continue washing hands with water and soap, avoid touching the face, nose, mouth and eyes, and following healthy habits when coughing and sneezing.



Our Correspondent
Muscat

Abdullah Saeed al Hattali, a 30 year old entrepreneur from the wilayat of Rustaq, uses his skills in recycling waste to produce something useful.

From a small home factory, Hattali has been churning out gift items from recycled plastic waste since 2018.

He recently made 21 trophies from plastic waste for the Environment Authority to honour the winners of a competition for the best environmental initiative to reduce plastic pollution.



Speaking to *Muscat Daily*, Hattali said he used 150 plastic bottles to make the trophies.

He said, "I make all kinds of things such as chairs, tables, fountains and gift items."

Hattali has taken part in a number of competitions and also displayed his works at places like Sultan Qaboos University and

You need money to buy waste from scrap dealers. It then requires a lot of hard work. A part of my house has been converted into a manufacturing unit. I promote my products on social media

ABDULLAH SAEED AL HATTALI

Higher College of Technology.

"I promote my products on social media platforms."

He said recycling plastic is not easy. "You need money to buy waste from scrap dealers. It then requires a lot of hard work. A part of my house has been converted into a manufacturing unit."

Hattali said he also makes

beehives from palm fronds.

The prices of his products range from RO5 to RO25.

"I'm working on a cutting machine to make more items from palm fronds. I want to preserve the Omani heritage."

Hattali dreams of building a furniture factory and selling his products to international markets.

HOTLINES

24-hour pharmacies
Scientific Pharmacy: Qurm 24566601, Ruwi 24702850
Muscat Pharmacy: Ruwi 24702542, Salalah 23291635
Al Hashar Pharmacy: Ruwi 24783334

Hospitals and Clinics
Al Hayat International Hospital, Al Ghubra- 22004000, 94267068 / 97049520
94442000 (Emergency)
Al Raffah Hospital: Muscat - 24618900/1/2/3
Sohar - 26704639/49/50
Apollo Hospital Muscat, Hamriya: 24787766, 24782666, 24787780
Abeer Hospital, Ruwi, Muscat 24770800, 90999335, 90999334 (Emergency)
Starcare Hospital: 24557200
Emergency number: 24558333
Dr Harub's Clinic: 24563217, 2456381, 99254940 (Emergency)
Emirates Medical Center: 24604540
KIMS Oman Hospital: 24760105
Lama Polyclinic: CBD 24799077, 24788881, 24788577, 24707566, 24799655, Al Khuwayr 24478817, 24478818, Sohar 26751128

Thousands of students go back to classes amid COVID-19

Shaddad al Musalmay
Muscat

As Oman continues to battle COVID-19, thousands of students started the new academic year 2020-21 on Sunday after months of vacation. As many as 676,943 students including 334,889 girls embarked on the blended approach to education.

Speaking on the occasion of new school year, H E Dr Madiha bint Ahmed bin Nasser al Shibaniyah, Minister of Education, congratulated teachers and all members of the educational sector on the start of the 2020/21 academic year and extend her gratitude and appreciation for their sincere efforts and dedication to fulfilling the educational mission.

"I also want to congratulate our male and female students on this occasion, asking God Almighty that this school year - in which the blended education approach was adopted with a focus on distance learning - will be a year full of seriousness and activity. I hope they will make the



most of the educational platforms and resources that have been made available," she added.

H E Dr Madiha also called on the parents of students to continue their children's education, and urged them to invest their time in a way that benefits the children.

The Ministry of Education (MoE) is taking all steps to guarantee the safety of students and teachers after the Supreme

Committee announced that the school year can begin on November 1 that will see thousands of them embarking on on-line education.

"The ministry continues to work with telecommunications companies to provide Internet packages for schools," H E Abdullah al Busaidi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Education, said.

The school hours for students in Grades 1-4 is between 11am

and 2pm, Grades 5-11 between 8am and 11am, and for Grade-12, between 8am and 2pm.

To help needy students, MoE has coordinated with the Ministry of Social Development to provide laptops and Internet packages. The packages are from RO90 to RO500 and can be paid in 12 monthly instalments.

The health protocols include clear precautionary measures

provided by MoE such as checking temperature, using sterilisers, wearing face masks and maintaining physical-distancing in classes.

For some parents, the first day of school meant taking the day off from work.

"I took the day off from work just to make sure my children get acquainted with blended education and also to know exactly what needs to be done," said Khalfan al Obaidani, a father of four school going children.

For some students, there is a sense of excitement in shifting to blended education.

"I am ready with my laptop and ready to start my classes. We will come to know how things go as we move towards the end of the week. I am exited to engage in this new way of study," said Isaam al Khaldi, a Grade 8 student.

"MoE has reduced the percentage weights of exam marks and increased the percentage in the continuous evaluation tests," a ministry official said.

@shadadm



Dr Abdullah bin Ali al Omari, chairman of Environment Authority, plants a sapling in the premises of the authority on Sunday (Supplied photo)

Virtual symposium to boost 10mn tree planting drive

Our Correspondent
Muscat

As part of its efforts to spread awareness on the importance of the national initiative to plant 10mn trees, the Environment Authority (EA) will hold a virtual seminar on November 4 from 11am to 1pm.

An official at EA said natural sites are subjected to various forms of degradation due to many factors such as urban development, random logging, overgrazing and climate change.

"So the Environment Authority launched the initiative to plant 10mn trees in January 2020," he said.

The symposium aims to promote community participation in the initiative and will shed light on the importance of innovation and smart afforestation.

"The symposium will discuss a number of topics such as the objectives of the national initiative, the use of modern technology and plants suitable for afforestation in cities. The event will also discuss the contribution of the government and pri-

The symposium aims to promote community participation in the initiative and will shed light on the importance of innovation

vate sectors in afforestation and the contribution of NGOs, volunteers and various groups of society."

It will be attended by some specialists from EA, Petroleum Development Oman, Haya Water, Omani Sidr Association, and local community contributors to the programme.

Meanwhile, Dr Abdullah bin Ali al Omri, chairman of the EA, planted seedlings in the garden of the authority's building on Sunday, in celebration of the Omani Tree Day.

EA has produced seedlings of alalan, sumr, sidr, shue, ghaaf and talh trees, which can withstand difficult climatic conditions, at its nurseries.

AL KHOUDH PARK INAUGURATED



Muscat Municipality, in cooperation with Bank Muscat, inaugurated the Al Khoudh Park on Sunday (Supplied photos)

Passengers at Muscat airport fall by 68.5% to 3.41mn

Muscat - The total number of passengers at Muscat International Airport fell by 68.5 per cent - to 3.41mn - at the end of August 2020 compared to same period the previous year. The total number of flights at Muscat International Airport also fell by 64 per cent - to 28,129 flights - at the end of August from 78,171 flights during the same period of 2019.

The total number of passengers travelling through airports in Muscat, Salalah, Sohar and Duqm at the end of August was 3.79mn. The number of flights landing and departing from Muscat, Salalah and Sohar International Airports was 27,325 during the same period, according to the latest data released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI). The number of



international flights at Muscat International Airport was 25,681 flights at the end of August, dropping by 63.9 per cent of the number over the same period of 2019.

Meanwhile, the total number of international passengers at Muscat International Airport declined by 68.6 per cent at the end of August, reaching 3.16mn passengers. This included 1.51mn arrivals, 1.63mn departures, and

6,632 transit passengers.

Domestic flights at Muscat International Airport fell by 65.5 per cent to 2,448 flights at the end of August, against 7,098 flights during the same period of 2019. The arrival and departure of domestic flights also dropped by 65.8 per cent and 65.2 per cent respectively. The total number of domestic passengers at Muscat International Airport declined by 67.1 per cent to 255,179

passengers at the end of August, against 776,018 passengers during the same period of 2019. This included 126,884 arrival passengers and 128,295 departing passenger, the NCSI report showed.

According to the report, the total number of passengers at the Salalah International Airport fell by 69.3 per cent to 295,540 passengers at the end of August compared to 962,778 passengers during the same period of 2019. The total number of flights at Salalah International Airport dropped by 68.9 per cent to 2,526 flights compared to 8,120 flights in August 2019.

The total number of international flights at Salalah International airport fell by 66.7 per cent to 1,110 flights at the end of August while the number of domestic flights declined by 70.4 per

cent to 1,416 flights. The total number of international passengers fell by 66.8 per cent to reach 122,258 passengers, while the number of domestic passengers dropped by 70.8 per cent to 173,282 passengers.

Meanwhile, the total number of passengers at Sohar International Airport fell by 66.3 per cent to 68,714 passengers for the period under study compared to 203,647 passengers during the same period of 2019. The total number of flights at Sohar International Airport also declined by 68.1 per cent to 534 flights at the end of August compared to 1,673 flights in August 2019.

Duqm Airport also saw a drop in the total number of domestic passengers by 60.5 per cent to 14,539 passengers. ONA



Call to make Tamil a language option for Indian schools in Oman

Our Correspondent
Muscat

A section of parents have called for the inclusion of Tamil as a second language option in Indian schools in Oman. The Dravidian language, natively spoken by the Tamil people of India and Sri Lanka, should be offered alongside Hindi, Sanskrit and Malayalam, feel some parents and members of the Tamil community.

Govind Arjan, a Tamilian who works as a corporate communications specialist, said he would love to see Tamil offered as a second language in Indian schools as Tamil is not only recognised as a classical language in India but is also one of the oldest languages in the world.

"Widely spoken and recognised as an official language in India, Singapore and Sri Lanka, Tamil is considered as a minority language in Malaysia, Mauritius, South Africa and Canada," he said.

"However, there should be a prescribed minimum number of students opting for Tamil as their second language to justify its in-



(Photo for illustrative purpose)

clusion in schools," he added.

Around 50,000 students study in grades 1 to 12 in 21 Indian schools in different parts of Oman, including almost 7,000 students of the Tamil community. The schools are managed by a Board of Directors (BoD), an elected body. The Indian Embassy plays a major role in policy decisions of the school operations as it nominates an official and two non-officio members as part of the 15-member BoD.

The COVID-19 pandemic made several jobless and a good number of them were Tamilians. One issue is when they return home with their families, their children find it difficult to continue their studies in Tamil Nadu, as they haven't studied Tamil as a second language in Oman.

Venkatesh P, an accountant in Muscat, said one of his Tamil colleagues faced the predicament. "My colleague lost his job and had to go back. Now in India, his

children are finding it tough to adjust as they don't know the language, which is compulsory in state board schools there," he said.

Venkatesh said children studying in the schools here are given the option of learning Hindi, Sanskrit and Malayalam as a second language but not Tamil despite the fact that the number of Tamils in the country is next only to those from Kerala.

A senior member of the Board

I would love to see Tamil offered as a second language in Indian schools as Tamil is not only recognised as a classical language in India but is also one of the oldest languages in the world

GOVIND ARJAN

of Directors for India Schools in Oman said they welcome any changes in schools that benefit the students, but including subjects in curriculum is totally in the hands of school management.

"It depends on the number of students and the availability of resources in schools as well. We are keen and co-operative to extend any help for education; however with the pandemic everything needs to be on hold for sometime," he said.



Z-Corp distributes masks, sanitisers in Musandam

Muscat - Within the framework of strengthening community partnership, The Zubair Corporation's (Z-Corp) 'collaboration team' recently distributed masks and sanitisers in the Musandam governorate.

Saleh al Amri, DGM, HR and Admin, Oasis Water Company collaboration team said, "We have a long history of supporting our communities and this time too we wanted to do something meaningful. Our collaboration team distributed masks and sanitisers in the Musandam governorate to create awareness among people about the importance of wearing masks and use of hand sanitiser to check the spread of the virus."

Saif al Jalandani from the Director General of Ministry of Education said the health authorities in Oman have mandated the use of face masks and hand sanitisers in all the public places. The World Health Organization (WHO) too recommends wash-

ing hands frequently and wearing masks as the best way to avoid infection.

"We thank the collaboration team for distributing masks and sanitisers in the Musandam governorate and making a difference," he said.

The collaboration team comprises of a group of employees of Z-Corp and its subsidiaries who participate in community initiatives which are planned and conducted by them. The team undertakes projects that bring to focus Z-Corp's continued and evolving socially relevant strategy to make a positive difference in the society.

Faisal al Manthri, communication manager, said, "We are happy that our collaboration team has taken up an important initiative. An important strategy at Z-Corp is that it encourages employees to get involved in their local communities by actively contributing their time for worthy causes and projects."

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DIRECTORS' REPORT FOR THE PERIOD ENDED 30 SEPTEMBER 2020

The Board of Directors in its meeting held on 25 October 2020 approved the Company's unaudited financial results for the period ended 30 September 2020.

SUMMARY FINANCIALS

In OMR '000	Quarter			9 Months		
	Q3 2020	Q3 2019	%	2020	2019	%
Revenue	87,311	136,567	(36.1%)	276,960	389,890	(29.0%)
Gross Profit	7,271	10,216	(28.8%)	19,745	27,330	(27.8%)
Add: Other Income	1,090	1,725	(36.8%)	3,690	4,838	(23.7%)
Less: Selling, Distribution and Admin Expenses	(6,047)	(7,187)	(15.9%)	(20,153)	(21,055)	(4.3%)
Less: Financing & Taxation	(767)	(1,012)	(24.2%)	(1,840)	(2,754)	(33.2%)
Profit & Comprehensive Income	1,547	3,742	(58.7%)	1,443	8,359	(82.7%)

- Nine Months Revenues were at OMR 276,960 million, lower than the same period last year due to the continued impacts of COVID-19 on sales volumes.
- Nine Months Gross Profit was at OMR 19,745 million, lower than the same period last year mainly due to reduction in sales volumes across all businesses during the pandemic and the decline in petroleum product prices which account for a year to date stock loss of 1.039 million.
- Nine Months Profit and Comprehensive Income is OMR 1,443 million, lower than the same period in 2019 mainly due to the drop in Gross Profit.
- As the Company strives to navigate the COVID-19 pandemic and the parallel economic challenges, it has been proactively focused on safeguarding the interests of all its people, shareholders and stakeholders. With that in mind, priorities have been set with emphasis on people's safety, effective business continuity and cash preservation. Strategies and measures have been developed and are continuously evolving while maintaining utmost commitment to HSSE and Ethics & Compliance.

BUSINESS PERFORMANCE

Retail Business remained the largest segment of the Company and resilient despite a continued downward impact on volumes due to the lockdown in August and limited commercial activities through most of the quarter. The business focus remained on the safety of our customers and frontliners, including touchless payments and adopting best practices to minimise the spread of COVID-19; reassuring our "Commitment for Care" towards our customers and community at large. The Government eased the lockdown restrictions in September for major business activities, resulting in an increase in mobility and increased fuel demand. The business remains wary of the situation and continues to serve its customers, providing a safe and hygienic experience; with our frontline service champions leading on ground operations in these unprecedented times. The growth of Non-Fuel Retailing (NFR) segment continues to be a key focus area with additional Shell Select Stores, Car Care Centers and Co-Locators commissioned during the quarter. In addition, the expansion of our fresh food range and online delivery continued at Shell Select Stores in collaboration with local Omani SMEs. In addition to the coffee offers in Shell Select, we have also extended the coffee experience through an international coffeehouse chain by launching a pilot outlet at our prime location in Muscat.

Fleet Solutions Business remains challenging as business customers continue to face multiple issues due to the COVID-19 lockdown and economic downturn impacting volumes. The focus remains to adapt to the new realities and support our customers through accelerating the transition to digitalisation, automation and addressing evolving customer landscape, leveraging the Cards Management System to enable a superior experience for customers.

Commercial Fuels Business environment remains challenging with the current macroeconomic issues mainly due to COVID-19 and lower oil prices impacting overall commercial activities across major industries. However, the focus continues primarily on new opportunities, operational excellence and quality service to retain key customers.

Marine Business volumes remain impacted as a result of COVID-19 restrictions with limited activity due to cancellation of scheduled commercial and tourist vessels in key ports of the Sultanate. However, we continue to serve our local Marine customers without disruption, ensuring our customers continue their operations smoothly despite COVID-19 restrictions.

Lubricants Business: The impact of COVID-19 continued to cause challenges in the sector, due to lockdown restrictions in August. The automobile industry, in particular, has suffered more due to full or partial closure of major franchise workshops, independent workshops and high streets shops which represent the major drive for lubricants' consumption. Despite that challenge, we continued to maintain close relationships with our key customers in Oil/Gas/Power/Government and construction sector, and continued to supply quality Shell lubricants from the Shell ISO 9001-certified lubricant blending plant located in Mina Al Fahal. In addition, the business is focused on reinforcing its market leadership by maintaining a strong customer base, seeking new accounts, expanding new revenue streams in different sectors and enhancing the product portfolio. We also continue working closely with our partners and distributors to observe and adapt to the new realities and explore various digital platforms that will be available in the sector to serve our customers and maintain competitive advantage in the market.

Aviation Business: In Q3, the business continued facing a lot of challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic and the lockdown. This situation has significantly impacted sales and created a very challenging operations environment due to uncertain flight schedules and demand. Despite the challenges, with airports reopening in October, the business expects some recovery beginning Q4.

HEALTH, SAFETY, SECURITY AND ENVIRONMENT

The Company ended the quarter without a recordable Last Time Injury (LTI) incident, which is a testament to our strong commitment to HSSE. It has also continued its efforts towards building up people's competencies and getting assurance on the effectiveness of its risk management policies associated with day-to-day operations. Promoting and driving the culture of safety through caring for one's self and others, as well as adopting an intervention mindset, continue to be key pillars in this area. During the third quarter, the Company carried out a number of virtual training sessions for SOM staff, Contractors and Partners, focusing on promoting the culture of HSSE and raising awareness on Life-Saving Rules (LSR), and emergency response. In addition to that, and in line with the repercussions of the current health pandemic, COVID-19, the Company has been proactively dealing with it, closely monitoring the local situation and placing precautionary measures to reduce the risk of COVID-19 spread, in line with the decisions of the Supreme Committee. The Company's Head Office remained closed as a precautionary measure, enabling employees to work from home and reducing the number of shifts in other locations while maintaining effective business continuity. The Company has also continued using its social media channels and Shell Service Stations to raise awareness on COVID-19 and engage the general public on these Health and Safety messages. In addition, Personal Protection

Equipment such as masks, gloves, and sanitisers as well as enhanced and strict safety protocols along with improved cleaning measures have been introduced in our sites and offices.

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

The last nine months have been unprecedented in terms of events and challenges. The Company had proactively been taking steps to mitigate the impact of these conditions on its people while working together with stakeholders in public and private sectors to extend support and ensure effective business continuity so essential mobility and energy continues to be available. The Company has also been sensing the changing needs of the different segments of society that have been most affected by the pandemic and the developments resulting from it, and continues to plan various initiatives to provide help during the coming period.

Shell Oman Marketing Company is committed to working with all stakeholders to reinforce its role and do its part in serving Oman and its people under the leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tark and to support his vision for the Sultanate.

Walid Hadi

Chairman, Shell Oman Marketing Company SAOG

Muscat, 25th October 2020

Unaudited Financial Statements for the 9 months ended 30 September 2020			
STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE 9 MONTHS ENDED 30 SEP 2020			
	Unaudited 9 months ended 30 Sep 2020	Unaudited 9 months ended 30 Sep 2019	Audited 12 months ended 31 Dec 2019
	OMR'000	OMR'000	OMR'000
Revenue	276,960	389,890	524,826
Cost of sales	(257,215)	(362,560)	(488,318)
Gross profit	19,745	27,330	36,507
Other income	3,690	4,838	6,582
Selling, distribution and administrative expenses	(20,153)	(21,055)	(28,444)
Operating profit	3,282	11,113	14,646
Interest expense	(1,585)	(1,260)	(1,780)
Interest income	21	37	47
Profit before income tax	1,719	9,890	12,913
Income tax expense	(276)	(1,531)	(1,926)
Profit and comprehensive income for the period	1,443	8,359	10,987
Basic and diluted earnings per share (OMR)	0.014	0.084	0.110

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AT 30 SEP 2020			
	Unaudited At 30 Sep 2020	Unaudited At 30 Sep 2019	Audited At 31 Dec 2019
	OMR'000	OMR'000	OMR'000
ASSETS			
Non-current assets			
Property, plant and equipment	55,544	51,571	57,097
Right-of-use assets	29,531	20,356	25,249
Intangible assets	75	137	177
Deferred tax assets	125	-	-
Total non-current assets	85,275	72,064	82,523
Current assets			
Inventories	5,691	6,256	7,202
Receivables and prepayments	38,571	52,868	60,296
Cash at bank and in hand	9,454	16,093	7,513
Total current assets	53,717	75,217	75,011
Total assets	138,992	147,281	157,534
EQUITY			
Share capital	10,000	10,000	10,000
Legal reserve	3,587	3,587	3,587
Retained earnings	35,161	37,690	40,318
Total equity	48,748	51,277	53,905
LIABILITIES			
Non-current liabilities			
Long-term loans	10,000	6,000	6,000
Long-term lease liabilities	26,809	18,265	22,463
Deferred tax liabilities	-	67	120
Employee terminal benefits	295	295	271
Total non-current liabilities	37,104	24,628	28,853
Current liabilities			
Short-term loans	12,000	14,000	11,000
Short-term lease liabilities	2,891	1,852	1,923
Payables and accruals	37,838	53,890	59,851
Income tax payable	241	1,404	1,746
Provisions	170	230	255
Total current liabilities	53,140	71,376	74,776
Total liabilities	90,244	96,004	103,629
Total equity and liabilities	138,992	147,281	157,534
Net assets per share (OMR)	0.487	0.513	0.539

* The complete financial statements are available from the Muscat Securities Market (MSM).
* The complete accounts will be sent by mail to any shareholder on request, in either Arabic or English, within 7 days of receipt of the request. The request should be sent to the Chief Financial Officer at the address shown above.
* The previous year's figures have been reclassified to conform to the presentation adopted in the current year.

Oman Tourism College signs pact with US campus

Muscat - Oman Tourism College (OTC) recently signed a MoU (Memorandum of Understanding) with Washington State University (WSU).

As part of the agreement, OTC students and faculty members can engage in collaborative virtual learning, joint research and industry projects, as well as faculty exchange and study abroad programmes. It also allows Omani students looking to obtain a PhD in Tourism and Hospitality to apply for the Doctoral Degree Programmes at Washington State University.

Commenting on the signing of the MoU, Dr Abdulkarim Sultan al Mughairi, dean of OTC, said, "We are delighted to collaborate with Washington State University since it opens up broad prospects for us to further develop our programmes. Moreover, we can benefit from their extensive and valuable ex-



Dr Abdulkarim al Mughairi



Dr Robert Harrington

perience in the fields of academics, teaching, training and scientific research.

"We look forward to

strengthening our cooperation and relationship with WSU, to achieve even more growth and success."

From his side, Dr Robert Harrington, director, School of Hospitality Business Management at Washington State University Carson College of Business, said, "We are excited to launch this partnership with Oman Tourism College. This MoU is an important step towards our engagement with the MENA region and it will create opportunities for joint research, study abroad programmes, and faculty collaboration in teaching and learning."

WSU was founded in 1890 and hosts one of the top ten hospitality business programmes in the world. The School of Hospitality Business Management is part of the Carson College of Business which consistently ranks among the top business schools in the US.

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MEDRC awards \$90,000 in funding for bio-inspired desalination system



Muscat - Middle East Desalination Research Center (MEDRC) has announced the recipient of a US\$90,000 grant under its USAID-backed pathway research grants in desalination. Planet, an Italian startup, has secured the funding to develop their Mangrove Still - a bio-inspired, modular, low-cost easy-to-use, solar desalination system.

The funds are part of MEDRC's five-year strategic programme launched in 2018 with a goal of driving innovation in small-scale desalination.

The programme, known as the Desalination Challenge, has two tracks of funding - pathway research grants supported by USAID and a US\$700,000 global challenge prize known as the Oman Humanitarian Desalination Challenge, led by MEDRC and Oman's The Research Council - TRC (now under the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation), and funded through the Sultan Qaboos Higher Centre for Culture and Science.

MEDRC's centre director Ciaran O Cuinn announced the award and met the grant recipients during a kick off meeting held online.

Speaking at the meeting, he

If desalination is to become a viable alternative to fresh water we need to find ways to reduce the costs and environmental impacts of the process

CIARAN O CUINN

said, "If desalination is to become a viable alternative to fresh water we need to find ways to reduce the costs and environmental impacts of the process. Every day all around us, nature conducts this complex task efficiently with no cost or impact. MEDRC is proud to collaborate with USAID to support Planet as they work to develop bio-inspired transformational solutions to fresh water scarcity."

The project's goal is to double the Mangrove Still's current daily fresh water output of 3.9lt per sqm per day. Planet will combine the grant with US\$90,000 in matching funds bringing the total project investment to

US\$180,000.

Planet co-founder and principal investigator, Alessandro Villa said, "This grant is hugely important as it will enable us to thoroughly test new materials and processes in a scientific environment, allowing our team to work on increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of our solar desalination system."

The Mangrove Still desalination system could become a modular, low-cost, easy-to-use substitute to energy intensive reverse osmosis desalination units.

The project will focus on investigating five different research paths; efficient materials, energy management, user centred design, zero brine discharge and will look to research and identify emerging technologies and materials that could boost productivity.

The Desalination Challenge Pathway Research Grant programme is a joint initiative led by MEDRC and the US Agency for International Development in co-operation with Oman's TRC.

MEDRC expects to issue a further call for research proposals before the end of this year, details of which will be on available on its website - www.medrc.org

PRAYER TIMINGS

Fajr	4.56am
Sunrise	6.13am
Duhr	11.55am
Asr	3.09pm
Maghrib	5.33pm
Isha	6.44pm

REGIONAL WEATHER

ABU DHABI Max 32°C Min 21°C	DUBAI Max 31°C Min 21°C	MANAMA Max 31°C Min 23°C
DOHA Max 33°C Min 22°C	KUWAIT CITY Max 31°C Min 21°C	RIYADH Max 32°C Min 15°C



شركة خزف عمان ش م ع ع
OMAN CERAMICS COMPANY (SAOG)
PO Box 46, Sohar Industrial Estate, P.C. 327, Sultanate of Oman
Tel. 26751317, 26751350 Fax: 26751280, E-mail: ceosce@occoman.com



Board of Directors' Report for the period from January to September 2020

Financial Results:

Financial results for the period from January to September 2020 are as follows:

	Jan. - Sep 2020 (R.O.)	Jan. - Sep 2019 (R.O.)
Revenue / Turnover	1,279,151	1,548,221
Net Profit / (Loss)	(462,616)	(705,006)

Marketing and Future Outlook:

The company is trying to increase the volume in markets that are remunerative to improve its performance.

Acknowledgement:

The Board of Directors and the Management of the Company wish to extend their heartfelt gratitude to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq Al Said, whose exemplary vision and dynamic leadership has put this country on a fast track of development and prosperity.

Saleh Nasser Al Riyami
Chairman of the Board

Un-audited statement of financial position at 30th September 2020

	30-Sep- 2020 RO	30-Sep- 2019 RO
ASSETS		
Non-current assets		
Property, plant and equipment	1,590,418	1,848,932
Intangible assets	10,994	18,558
Right-of-use asset	235,743	181,992
Total Non Current Assets	1,837,155	2,049,482
Current assets		
Inventories	1,049,961	1,200,479
Trade and other receivables	540,863	897,169
Cash and cash equivalents	21,510	11,524
Total current assets	1,612,334	2,109,172
Total assets	3,449,489	4,158,654
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES		
Equity and reserves		
Share capital	1,892,196	1,892,196
Legal reserve	88,463	88,463
Special reserve	21,769	21,769
Accumulated losses	(2,595,001)	(1,795,891)
Net equity	(592,573)	206,537
LIABILITIES		
Non-current liabilities		
Borrowings and deferred Government grant	2,252,632	2,900,632
End of service benefits	67,385	85,987
Non-current portion of lease liability	242,799	167,679
Total non-current liabilities	2,562,816	3,154,298
Current liabilities		
Borrowings	1,001,213	337,572
Trade and other payables	463,025	442,337
Current portion of lease liability	15,008	17,910
Total current liabilities	1,479,246	797,819
Total liabilities	4,042,062	3,952,117
Total equity and liabilities	3,449,489	4,158,654
Net assets per share	(0.313)	0.109

Unaudited Profit and Loss Account for the 9 months ended 30th September 2020

	30-Sep- 2020 RO	30-Sep- 2019 RO
Revenue	1,279,151	1,548,221
Cost of Sales	(1,219,621)	(1,604,169)
Gross Profit	59,530	(55,948)
General and administrative expenses	(394,683)	(544,077)
Other income	25	405
Operating (Loss)/Profit	(335,128)	(599,620)
Interest Income	16	119
Interest cost and other finance charges-net	(127,504)	(105,505)
Total comprehensive (Loss)/ income for the period	(462,616)	(705,006)
(Loss)/Earnings per share -basic and diluted	(0.244)	(0.373)

Note:
The complete financial statement of the Company would be made available to any Shareholder or interested party on request in Arabic or in English within 7 days from the date of request. The request for the applications can be sent on the above mentioned address.



Al Mouj marina leisure operators win accolade

Our Correspondent
Muscat

A duo of Al Mouj Muscat's marina leisure operators are celebrating the news that they have been recognised as the 'best of the best' having scooped Traveler's Choice Award status for 2020 on Trip Advisor.

Daymaniat Shells and Mola Mola Diving Center are the two marina-based small and medium enterprises (SMEs) whose reputations have been buoyed by this latest accolade, reflecting the hard work and dedication of their staff coupled with the package of business support provided by Al Mouj Muscat.

"We are delighted with the award particularly given it is granted to only ten per cent of attractions worldwide and has been achieved during difficult

circumstances owing to the restrictions brought about by COVID-19 lockdown," said Nasser bin Masoud al Sheibani, CEO of Al Mouj Muscat.

"The award reflects the fact that both of these enterprises have remained focused throughout, choosing to be agile and thinking laterally by introducing alternative product offers such as whale shark trips for example. They have as well made the most of the guidance, training and financial support given to them by the Al Mouj Marina SME programme, an ongoing initiative available to all of our SMEs that we are extremely proud of."

The scheme was launched in 2018 to help SMEs working in marine tourism to deliver signature customer experiences at a consistently high level.

In addition, they benefit from

marketing exposure across a number of digital platforms and in some cases, financial support.

Al Mouj Muscat is Oman's leading integrated tourism complex (ITC) and a public-private venture between the UAE-based Majid al Futtaim Properties, Omran and Tanmia. Its 400-berth marina is a key focal point and leisure facility, providing residents as well as visitors from all over the world top quality ocean-based activities.

Al Mouj Marina is the largest yachting facility in the sultanate and holds the 5 Gold Anchor Award from the Yacht Harbour Association, a community which has evaluated marinas across the globe for over 25 years. It is committed to preserving the environment of the sultanate having collaborated with numerous environmental initiatives and world-leading research projects.



UNITED GCC FUND



المملكة المتحدة للأوراق المالية
UNITED SECURITIES

Chairman's Report

Dear Investors,

I am glad to present the United GCC Fund's financials for the first 9 months of 2020. Your fund returned (3.28) % for the period versus a return of (7.03) % for its benchmark, the S&P GCC index, implying an outperformance of 3.75%.

Oil prices have been on the receiving end amid concerns over the second wave of virus infections resulting in challenging demand prospectus. In addition to that, OPEC supplies have increased by 160,000 barrels per day in September, mainly from Libya and Iran. Therefore, we anticipate that OPEC's supply management and compliance would assume greater importance in the coming months.

Globally, given the positive backdrop provided by central banks, signs of macro re-acceleration along with better than expected earnings, equity markets continued to climb the wall of worry and rebounded from the yearly low witnessed in March of this year. In Q3 2020, S&P 500 yielded 8.5% positive returns while the tech index NASDAQ ended the third quarter up 11.5%. US fed's intent to let average inflation trend above its 2% target suggests that rates are likely to remain low for quite some time and that in turn is generally good for equities, especially growth names. Furthermore, Apple Inc. became the first listed stock in the world to touch \$ 2 trillion Valuation on August 4th; it was a massive milestone for the maker of iPhones, Mac computers, and Apple Watches. Moreover, in the coming days, as the presidential campaign heats up in USA, we expect markets to remain choppy with mixed signals.

GCC equity markets witnessed a substantial recovery in the latter part of 3Q20, reversing a large part of yearly losses brought by the COVID19 along with lockdowns and restrictions. The rally was underpinned by the gradual reopening of economies which helped boost optimism. Despite quarterly gains, regional benchmark S&P GCC remained in red and at the end of 3Q 2020 at -7.03%.

On the regional news front, Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Finance released the pre-budget document for 2021, for the year 2020 fiscal deficit is estimated to be at 12% of GDP. Also, Saudi is said to reopen its mosques in Mecca and Medina, seven months after the nation suspended visits to prevent the spread of COVID19. This is expected to be positive for non-oil revenue of the government. Saudi Arabia's Tadawul recently introduced the kingdom's first exchange-traded derivatives, we believe that, this is a significant step in creating a trading environment that is attractive to local as well as international investors. In Bid to attract foreign investment, Dubai has launched a retirement program for resident expats and foreigners over the age of 55. Moving on to Kuwait, much awaited MSCI EM upgrade is expected to be announced on Nov-20 review, with potential inflows of USD3.3bn. Region also mourned the untimely demise of Kuwait's Emir His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah, who was regarded as the architect of modern Kuwait's foreign policy and regional peacemaker.

Once again, I take this opportunity to thank all our patrons, investors, and other stakeholders for their invaluable support and commitment. It is this support that motivates us, and we strive to do better in the future.

Yours sincerely

(Signature)

Mustafa Ahmed Salman

Chairman



مجلس إدارة الصندوق
United GCC Fund

Unaudited condensed interim statement of Comprehensive Income for the nine-month period ended 30th September 2020

	Nine months ended 30th September 2020 RO	Nine months ended 30th September 2019 RO
Income		
Interest income	5,985	52,132
Dividend income	275,518	359,819
Fair value change on financial assets at fair value through profit or loss	773,372	491,291
Realised gain/(loss) on sale of financial assets at fair value through profit or loss	(1,177,239)	647,642
Foreign exchange (loss)/gain	(61,755)	(3,313)
Other income	2301	-
Net investment income/(loss)	(182,198)	1,547,571
Expenses		
Management fees	(87,761)	(102,046)
Custody and administration fees	(21,347)	(23,842)
General and administrative expenses	(158,321)	(148,887)
Incentive fees	-	(5,722)
Total expenses	(267,429)	(280,497)
Profit and total comprehensive income/(loss) for the period and increase/(decrease) in net assets attributable to the unit holders	(449,627)	1,267,074
Profit/(loss) per unit	(0.037)	0.103

Unaudited condensed interim statement of Financial Position at 30th September 2020

	As at 30th September 2020 RO	As at 31st Dec 2019 RO
ASSETS		
Cash and cash equivalents	273,876	1,470,469
Financial assets at fair value through profit or loss	12,309,574	12,428,461
Other receivables	17,568	61,826
Total assets	12,601,018	13,960,756
LIABILITIES		
Payables and accruals	70,831	129,450
Total unitholder's funds	12,530,187	13,831,306
Net assets attributable to unitholders	12,601,018	13,960,756
Net assets attributable to the unitholders per unit	1.022	1.129

To get the complete financials kindly contact us on : 24763300
Or email us on : info@usoman.com

For subscription details please contact Rajiv Pachat
@ 24763348 or email Rajiv@usoman.com

OAB announces names of winners of its Sept draw

Oman Arab Bank (OAB) has announced the names of the 132 winners of its monthly Hasaad Savings Scheme for September 2020. This included 94 winners of the monthly branch draws of RO1,000 each, ten winners of the Children's Account draw (RO100 each), 20 winners of the Youth Account draw (RO100 each), five winners of RO500 of the bank's Salary Transfer draw, two winners of RO10,000 of the Elite draw from the Rustaq and Buraimi branches and one winner of RO25,000 from Big Prize draw for the third quarter from Barka branch.

Commenting on the results of the September draw, Rashad al Shaikh, acting head of the Retail Banking Division at OAB, said, "We are delighted to see even more lucky people who have joined the long list of Oman Arab Bank winners in the Hassad Savings Scheme, since the beginning of the year. We look forward to the start of the fourth and final quarter of the draw, which will see our valued customers receive 50 prizes of RO500 each in the National Day draw, in addition to the remaining monthly draws."

The Hasaad scheme sees 94 lucky winners, with a minimum of one winner per month per branch, receiving a prize of



RO500 and RO1,000 at the quarterly draws. In addition, ten winners are selected from the Children's Account holders (aged 18 and below) and receive RO100 each. Twenty winners are selected from the Youth Account holders (aged between 18 and 27), each receiving a prize of RO100. There are also two Elite winners of RO10,000 each per month.

The monthly Elite draw is replaced by a Grand Prize draw of RO50,000 for one lucky Elite customer, and occurs twice a year, in June and December. Oman Arab Bank also conducts

a special 'Big Prize' draw of RO25,000 for one winner across its expansive branch network at the end of every quarter.

The Salary Transfer draw was introduced in 2020, which sees five winners per month receiving a prize of RO500 each, as well as a guaranteed gift to both children and youth (up to 27 years old) once a year. Oman Arab Bank is the only bank providing a guaranteed gift to its youth customers.

"On behalf of OAB, I would like to extend my warmest congratulation to all of the winners of our latest draw. I encourage

everyone else to continue saving so that they can maximise their chances of winning in the upcoming months. I wish everyone the best of luck for the remaining draws of 2020," Shaikh added.

Oman Arab Bank has a rich and proud history as one of the first financial institutions to be established in the sultanate. Today, the bank operates a nationwide network of 55 branches and representative offices with 160 ATMs spread across Oman. OAB provides a complete range of financial products and services for personal banking, corporate banking and investment clients.

Al Maha celebrates National Day with special campaign for its prepaid card users

To celebrate the glorious 50th National Day of the sultanate, Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Company launched a campaign on Sunday for its prepaid card customers, which will continue throughout the glorious month of November.

This comes out of its keenness to strengthen the relationship with the community and as pride due to choosing Al Maha filling stations and various products.

The campaign allows Al Maha customers who buy their fuel from Al Maha filling stations, spread across the sultanate, for RO5 or more using prepaid cards, to enter the weekly draws. Twenty winners will be selected every week with a total of 80 winners throughout the month of November.

This is in addition to 50 winners in the draw of November 18. Every winner will receive fuel worth RO50. The more you buy fuel, the chances of winning the raffle draws increase, which enhances the opportunity for Al Maha customers at all its 220 filling stations.

Eng Hamad bin Salem al Maghdari, CEO of Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Company, expressed his great happiness with this campaign



launched by Al Maha to celebrate the 50th glorious National Day. He said that the campaign reflects the great joy on this occasion in terms of participating in the country's celebrations of the Golden Jubilee and loyalty for Al Maha customers.

He added that the company is always keen to participate in national events with the aim of introducing joy and pleasure to the hearts of community members.

Eng Maghdari said that the campaign comes within the framework of encouraging the use of prepaid Al Maha cards

that provide holders with many advantages, especially with regard to regulating fuel consumption and safe use of alternative of cash in light of the precautionary measures taken to prevent the infection with coronavirus.

He said that the company also made the campaign on the occasion of the glorious National Day an opportunity to honour 50 good-performing employees of the company in appreciation of their efforts and as a motivation to do more, and that the honour will be an incentive for their colleagues to increase their efforts during the coming period.

'Everyone wins' with Malabar Gold & Diamonds collection

Malabar Gold & Diamonds, one among the largest jewellery retailers globally with a strong retail network of over 250 outlets spread across ten countries, has unveiled their latest collection of jewellery in gold, diamond and precious gems, specially designed for the festive season.

The Festive Jewellery collection from Malabar Gold & Diamonds features the most eye-catching and unique trends in gold, diamond and precious gem jewellery, bound to captivate jewellery lovers, at the best prices. The brand also gives customers the opportunity to win assured gold coins with their gold or diamond jewellery purchases.

"From mid-October begins the auspicious period when we have a lot of festivals as well as celebrations like weddings and

get-togethers. The next six months is all about celebrations. This year our main focus for the upcoming season has been to showcase jewellery that is appealing to our customers, both functionally and aesthetically to complete the trousseau for the festivities as well as for celebrations like weddings, etc," said Shamlal Ahamed, MD - International Operations, Malabar Gold & Diamonds.

"We have taken immense efforts to source and create the best of designs, both traditional and contemporary, in 18K and 22K gold, diamond and precious gem jewellery, and make it available to our customers at the best prices."

He added that the festive collection has been designed to cater to the diverse tastes of the brand's multicultural and multi-

national customers and create a lasting impression while they adorn them.

While also serving as an adornment, gold being a reliable investment is one of the intrinsic reasons for people buying gold jewellery.

It is the ease to liquidate the metal for cash without losing much value during these difficult times that further increases its dependability. Considering this, Malabar Gold & Diamonds also offers customers with the gold rate protection offer, which has been designed in such a way that their customers are protected from any increase in gold rates, by providing them with an option to block the gold rate.

They can just pay 10 per cent of the value as advance and get gold rate protection until November 15.

Suhail Bahwan Automobiles receives 'Safe & Clean' certification

Suhail Bahwan Automobiles has received the coveted 'Nissan Safe & Clean' certification from Nissan Middle East FZE (NMEF) for complying with the sales and service protocols established as per the programme.

Designed to maintain high levels of health and safety measures across authorised Nissan dealers in the region, Nissan Middle East FZE (NMEF) 'Safe & Clean' certification programme requires partners to abide by set preventive and safety measures. Keeping in mind that the safety of its customers, associates, employees and community is of upmost priority, NMEF had prepared a set of guidelines in the region on safety procedures which covers customer safety, employee safety at workplace and facility network.

A spokesperson for Nissan Oman said, "The Nissan 'Safe and Clean' certification is an important acknowledgement for us.

Following safety procedures remains a key priority for us at Nissan Oman. We are committed to our pledge to enabling a safe environment as we welcome customers to our showrooms, service and after sales centres. The 'Safe & Clean' certification indicates that we follow best practices, while offering confidence to our customers. These protocols along with operating procedures set by the Supreme Committee have been adhered to meticulously at all our facilities in order to ensure Safe Environment for all our discerning customers."

Nissan Middle East FZE 'Safe & Clean' programme extends the precautionary measures put in place in response to the developing COVID-19 pandemic in the region earlier this year with all Nissan dealers required to complete a Facility Audit Checklist to get certified. The checklist includes implementation of various

health check system for customers and employees, adoption of COVID-19 service and sales standard operating procedures, effective implementation of the vehicle sanitisation process, and more.

Nissan Oman facilities have been abiding by all the mandated safety procedures set by Supreme Committee and Nissan Middle East FZE. As part of the protocol, customers, visitors and employees mandatorily wear a mask and go through thermal screening as per regulation recommendations. Employees are encouraged to perform tasks alone and only one employee can be present per workstation.

Not only are the common areas cleaned after use, but all workstations are sanitised between corresponding customer interaction. The staff adheres to the two metre distance rules and minimise the use of external services as much as possible.



NATIONAL ALUMINIUM PRODUCTS COMPANY S.A.O.G

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BOARD OF DIRECTORS' REPORT FOR THE THIRD QUARTER ENDED 30 SEPTEMBER 2020

Dear Shareholders,

On behalf of the Board of Directors of National Aluminium Products Company SAOG (NAPCO), I am pleased to present you the unaudited financial reports for the third quarter ended 30 September 2020 and an overview of the performance of the Company.

Economic environment:

Global economic activity started slowing notably since last two and half years, reflecting a confluence of factors affecting major economies where global financial conditions have tightened, and industrial production has moderated. COVID-19 Pandemic around the world deteriorated world economies with a significant financial market stress. Downside risks have become more acute with visible disorderly financial market movements. The escalation of trade disputes continued among world major economies, further denting global activity and along with deteriorating oil prices resulting in decrease in government spending. Emerging market and developing economies have no sign of recovery in near future. Further, the global economy is climbing out from the depths to which it had plummeted during the Great Lockdown.

The aluminum industry in the GCC region is one of the major non-oil industrial sector and contributor to the economic growth of the region. GCC is now a major economic contributor to a growing global demand for aluminium. The drop of aluminium prices has put a direct impact on the profitability of downstream industries. The unfortunate event of COVID-19 worldwide resulted a further sever drop not only in the prices of oil but also the price of commodities and its demand especially the nonferrous metals like aluminium. The aluminium prices were going down caused by the global market uncertainty.

Performance Review:

The financial performance of the company during the third quarter ending 30 September 2020, as compared to third quarter ending 30 September 2019, is summarized in the table below:

Summary of Income Statement		
	9-months 2020 Unaudited	9-months 2019 Unaudited
	RO in 000's	
Sales and other income	25,037	33,198
Net (loss) before tax	(1,038)	(442)
Net (loss) after tax	(882)	(376)

The Company realized revenue and other income of RO 25.04 million as compared to RO 33.20 million during the previous period which is RO 8.16 million (24.58%) reduction.

The COVID-19 Pandemic has brought various challenges to the Company in the form of less demand, dropdown of aluminium prices, regulatory restrictions, logistic issues etc., which has resulted a severe drop in revenue and loss to the Company. The average LME prices have decreased from RO 695 to RO 627 as compared to previous period which has put a negative impact on the aluminium producers in GCC and worldwide. Further, increasing cost of energy, higher financing rates, increase in tariffs, scrap devaluation, increased competition and overall economic slowdown resulting a direct impact on the inventory and metal margin. Since the Stock market drop is higher than the margin, the downstream companies are suffering from losses resulting a drop-in margins. However, despite the difficult economic environment, the Company endeavor to maintain its business activities by continuing to implement its business strategy to minimize the COVID-19 impact which has been realized in the enhanced results of the third quarter of 2020.

Future outlook:

The aluminum extrusion industry in Oman shall continue facing a challenging environment particularly COVID-19 impacts on the economy for an uncertain period of time along with other factors, intense competition due to additional capacities in the neighboring countries, fluctuation in LME prices, cheaper supplies from abroad and absence of regulations to control the low-quality imports of aluminium profile. The LME price fluctuation to remain major uncontrollable external factor and larger GCC players continue to be extremely aggressive in terms of pricing strategies. Challenges are also upfront, in the form of continued increase in energy prices, unseen corporate taxes, tariffs and high financing rates putting pressure on the margins.

The Company expecting gradual recoveries in economy as the COVID-19 related restrictions are relaxed which is enabling the company to revive its normal operational activities. Further, to compete effectively, the company is quite vigilant on effective utilization of resources, cost curtailment initiatives and improving efficiencies to sustain operating margins. Company focus will remain on to reduce its exposure, limit its sales to only high end and high margins, concentration on value added products & project-based customers in Oman and GCC. NAPCO will remain keen to meet all the challenges ahead to enhance the Company's image and financial strength to generate returns on the shareholder's funds.

Compliance with internal regulations and control system:

The Company is committed to maintain a high standard of internal regulations and control system commensurate with the size and nature of the operations. A manual of financial authorities approved by the Board is in place, which specifies authority levels for various day to day operations. The system of internal control is monitored regularly by the Board, its Committees, Management, and Internal Audit for its compliance.

Acknowledgement and Appreciation:

I would like to extend my deep thanks to our honorable shareholders and to all my colleagues on the Board of Directors for their valuable contributions. I would also like to thank the Management and staff for their loyalty, hard work, dedication, and contribution in the achievement of our goals and acknowledgments, with sincere gratitude, the support extended by all the investors, clients, vendors, banks, regulatory and government authorities, MSM and CMA and look forward to having the continued support from all of them.

I wish to place on record, personally and on behalf of the Board of Directors and employees, our sincere gratitude to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq bin Taimour and his wise government for continued support, encouragement, and guidance for industrial sector.

Saud Sulaiman Al Riyami
Chairman

Condensed interim statement of financial position for the period ended 30 September 2020

	Unaudited period ended 30 September 2020 RO	Audited Year ended 31 December 2019 RO
ASSETS		
Non-current assets:		
Property, plant and equipment	10,656,296	11,023,477
Right-of-use asset	269,663	282,154
Investment properties	500,000	500,000
Deferred tax asset	171,872	16,143
Total non-current assets	11,597,831	11,821,774
Current assets:		
Inventories	4,370,319	4,582,086
Trade and other receivables	16,922,675	19,031,798
Cash and bank balances	267,917	438,435
Total current assets	21,560,911	24,052,319
Total assets	33,158,742	35,874,093
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES		
Shareholders' equity:		
Share capital	3,357,145	3,357,145
Legal reserve	1,119,048	1,119,048
Retained earnings	1,899,764	2,782,229
Total Shareholders' equity	6,375,957	7,258,422
Liabilities:		
Non-current liabilities:		
Lease liability	312,251	322,068
Borrowings	350,071	750,071
Employees' end of service benefits	337,026	342,622
Total non-current liabilities	999,348	1,414,761
Current liabilities:		
Lease liability	13,088	12,491
Trade and other payables	6,288,804	3,401,041
Borrowings	19,481,545	23,787,378
Total current liabilities	25,783,437	27,200,910
Total liabilities	26,782,785	28,615,671
Total equity and liabilities	33,158,742	35,874,093
Net assets per share	0.190	0.216

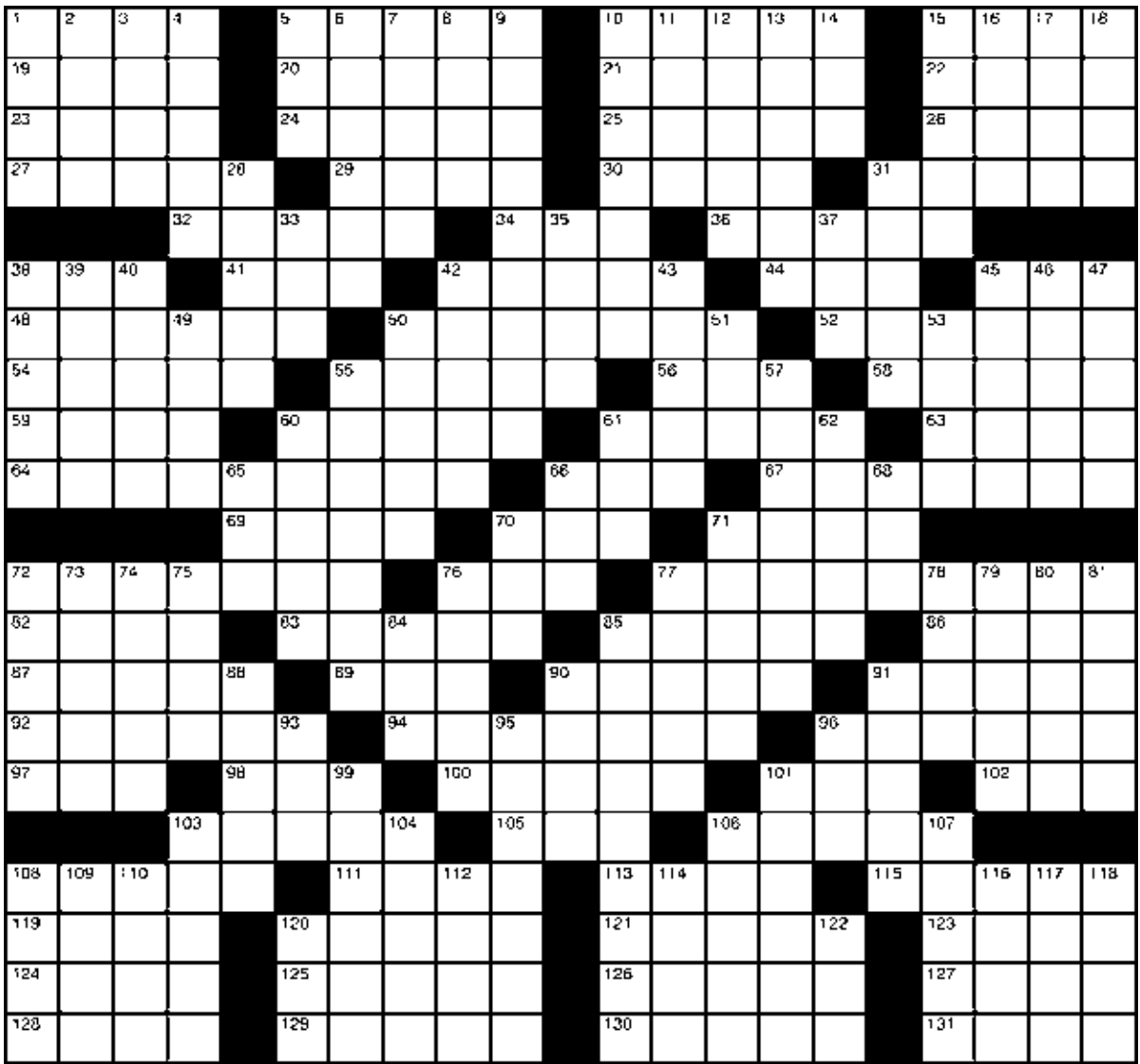
Condensed interim statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income for the period ended 30 September 2020

	Unaudited period ended 30 September 2020 RO	Unaudited period ended 30 September 2019 RO
Revenue	21,528,091	28,692,997
Scrap sales	3,349,333	4,378,260
Cost of sales	(23,260,486)	(30,626,384)
Gross Profit	1,616,938	2,444,873
Other income	159,023	127,064
Expenses:		
General and administrative expenses	(750,756)	(780,162)
Selling and distribution	(930,911)	(1,029,550)
Allowance for credit losses	(100,191)	(128,303)
Net finance costs	(1,032,297)	(1,076,294)
Loss before tax	(1,038,194)	(442,372)
Other Comprehensive Income	-	-
Total Comprehensive loss	(1,038,194)	(442,372)
Income tax credit	155,729	66,298
Total comprehensive loss for the period after tax	(882,465)	(376,074)
Basic loss per share	(0.035)	(0.015)

NOTE

- The Company does not have items under other comprehensive income.
- Certain comparative figures have been reclassified to conform to presentation adopted in these financial statements.
- The complete accounts will be sent to any shareholder who requests them either in Arabic or English as required within 7 days of receipt of the request.

DAILY CROSSWORD



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ACROSS

- 1 Asian nurse
5 Roasting fowl
10 Male voice
15 Speaker's platform
19 "Game Of Thrones" Headey
20 Senseless
21 Performer
22 ___ of Wight
23 Press
24 Sand hills
25 Blackbird
26 Fencing movement
27 Male voice
29 Light rain
30 A nail
31 Fen
32 Order of architecture
34 Hawaiian garland
36 Sweet nut pie
38 Teresa is one: abbr.
41 Size of coal
42 Natives of Helsingfors
44 Beam
45 College cheer
48 It discolors cloth
50 Excuse
52 Tractable
54 Famous mountain chain
55 Werewolf feature

- 56 Blunder
58 Wanderer
59 Appear
60 Stops
61 Confines
63 Part of speech
64 Wood hyacinths
66 Tibetan ox
67 Abandons
69 Consumes
70 Proscribe
71 Farm animal
72 Setting for plays
76 Drone
77 Asserting
82 Precipitation
83 Educate
85 Hebrew prophet
86 Great Lake
87 Assistants
89 Envy or gluttony, e.g.
90 Styles of walking
91 Adopts food regimen
92 Boiled slowly
94 Vigor
96 Is unable
97 Title of respect
98 Play on words
100 Cant of thieves
101 American editor
102 Compass direc- tion: abbr.
103 Skeletal parts

- 105 Abstract being
106 Bank examination
108 Medium of exchange
111 Inferior sheepskin
113 Small children
115 New
119 Russian city
120 Dunce cap-shaped
121 "Confirmation" main character
123 Anti-oxidant veggie
124 American cartoonist
125 Kind of a cigar
126 Cede
127 Being
128 Pismires
129 Alarm signal
130 Twists
131 Close

DOWN

- 1 Dismounted
2 Simple
3 Soon
4 Beleaguered city
5 Spanish Christian champion
6 Blood disorder
7 Unreasoning fear
8 Single units
9 Young birds
10 Italian child
11 Genus of maples
12 Purse holder
13 To cement
14 Native metal
15 Low couch
16 Hebrew instrument
17 Diseases
18 Green or Rogen
28 Strong cords
31 City official
33 Unused
35 Concludes
37 Bounder
38 Shatter
39 Skin disease
40 A shrub
42 Type cases
43 Move furtively
45 Large stream
46 Wide awake
47 Flavorful plants
49 Township of Attica
50 Summons
51 Unit of energy
53 Sheltered inlet
55 Hesitates
57 Lessens
60 Of gold or stone?
61 A dance doubled
62 Vends
65 Wager
66 Sweet potato
68 Ocean
70 Sweet roll
71 Perle ___
72 Volcanic tuff

- 73 West Indian island
74 Sea duck
75 Over again
76 Suggestions
77 Accomplishing
78 Check
79 Goddess of peace
80 Radon
81 Exploit
84 Three-toed sloths
85 Chief supports
88 Native policeman
90 Government agent
91 Actor Matthews
93 Press for payment
95 French city
96 Food fish
99 Oil of orange flowers
101 Busy commotion
103 Karate honors
104 Underwater detecting device
106 Farewell: Fr.
107 Sign of good faith
108 daVinci's painting ___ Lisa
109 Algerian city
110 Cozy place
112 French river
114 Indigo dye
116 Ornamental vessel
117 Lohengrin's bride
118 Look askance
120 Liquid measures: abbr.
122 Paid notices

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

Today's cosmos pose little stress to contend with. The moon abandons Taurus and moves forward into glib Gemini, intensifying your need for movement in your environment and meaningful conversations. Luna's smooth connection to lover Venus in the evening creates an ideal atmosphere for any kind of romantic outing, as it's easy to keep exchanges free-flowing and playful.



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

Part of being a Leo is learning how to unabashedly embrace your potential. Monday's skies have you daydreaming about that personal shine in light of your long-term goals, as the moon moves forward into Gemini. It's a socially forward day, ideal for meeting up with friends and verbalising future plans to get them on paper, as magnetic Venus and the moon unite.



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

It's easy to form the right relationships. Any constructive social interactions you involve yourself in are likely to run as smooth as ever, as the Gemini moon aligns with Venus. Your focus primarily revolves around one-on-one relationships (whether they be business, romantic, or platonic). It's easy to bring people over to your side today, so don't be afraid to speak out and speak up.



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

Monday's skies make it easy to relax into your workflow. The moon departs from your sign and slides forward into Gemini, guiding your attention towards the current state of your finances and the underrepresented skills in your repertoire. Your ruling planet, Venus, receives a visit from the moon, creating favourable circumstances around your work life.



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

You tend to unconsciously gauge your self-worth on how productive you can be, which is exhausting. Monday's skies allow you to lean into that habit with ease, as the moon ploughs forward into Gemini. You're at your most visibly elevated career point, and with Luna's link to attractor Venus, it's easier than usual to bring positive results to your workflow.



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

Monday's skies help you hit the ground running with your to-do list. The moon departs from the self-indulgent realm of Taurus and moves forward into Gemini, turning your attention away from play and back towards your workload. Luna's link with Venus brings positive circumstances that boost your reputation, thus it's a good day to apply for jobs.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

After a few days in hiding, you're ready to re-emerge on the scene. Luna transitions out of Taurus and dances forward into your sign, intensifying your awareness of your physical body, appearance, and self-experience. The moon's smooth rendezvous with Venus in the evening primes helps you to feel at peace with yourself and primes you for creative activity or charming romantic interludes.



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

Monday's skies are uplifting. The moon abandons Taurus and leaps forward into playful Gemini, significantly brightening your mood as you pull away from relationship dramas of the past. Luna spends the day gallivanting with your ruling planet, Venus, making your self-expression seamless. Set your sights on finding new adventures and changing up routine to feel your best.



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

Things are starting to brighten back up this week. The moon departs from Taurus and moves forward into excitable Gemini, redirecting your attention from things at home towards your personal creative projects. It's an ideal day to pour energy into your unique abilities and find a way to embrace your shine, as Luna's union with Venus makes what you do hard to miss.



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

Monday's skies comfortably place you in 'homebody withdrawal' mode, in order to recharge and recenter yourself. You want to be away from the static of energy-draining screens and tiresome conversations. It's easy to fall into total relaxation mode today, as Luna pairs off with pleasure-seeking Venus. It's a priority to unwind however you see fit in your humble abode.



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

It's commonly known that Scorpions require ample amounts of privacy. Monday's cosmic landscape makes it simple to pull away from taxing social interactions and to sink into some peace with an S.O, as the moon slides into Gemini. Your focus is likely to revolve around deeper intimacy. With Luna's link to warm Venus, that's likely to be comfortable territory to sink into.



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

It's not exactly off to the races. Monday's skies feel akin to a Sunday, as the moon slides forward into Gemini. Your energy is best devoted towards home-bound activities. You're not likely equipped for tiresome social interactions. Luna's warm link to Venus makes it an ideal day to cozy up to a lover or make moves if you're single and have someone special on your mind.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. Kemal Ataturk was

- a. the first President of Independent Kenya
b. the founder of modern Turkey
c. revolutionary leader of Soviet Union
d. None of the above

2. Kathakali, Mohiniatam and Ottamthullal are the famous dances of

- a. Kerala
b. Karnataka
c. Orissa
d. Tamil Nadu

3. Modern football is said to have evolved from

- a. England
b. India
c. France
d. Spain

Answers: 1: b 2: a 3: a

KIDS COLOURING



DO YOU SUDOKU?

LEVEL EASY: Fill in the grid so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9 and only one instance of each number

6	7			8	9		4	1
3								2
		4		3	5			
2			4		8			
5		6				8		4
			1		7			3
		5		2		1		
1								5
4	9		8	1			2	6

BOGGLER

O	U	R	Y
R	E	I	N
A	A	L	M
S	L	R	N

Each game will present you with a matrix filled with letters. The objective is to form words by linking adjacent letters - to the left, right, on top, bottom, or diagonal to each other. The Boggles Classic game uses a 4 x 4 matrix. Words are valued at one point for each letter in excess of two letters. A three letter word is worth one point, a four letter word is worth two points, and so on. Valid words must be at least three letters long.

Solution 20-25 words: Excellent, 15-20 words: Very good, 10-15 words: Good, 5-10 words: Average

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

9	2	7	5	1	8	6	4
5	6	4	3	9	8	2	1
8	3	1	4	2	6	9	7
3	9	2	7	9	1	6	4
4	7	8	2	6	5	9	1
6	1	9	5	8	4	7	3
7	9	5	1	3	2	4	8
2	8	6	9	4	7	1	5
1	4	3	6	8	5	2	7

DAILY CROSSWORD ANSWERS (NOVEMBER 01)



WORD BUILDER

You have three minutes to find all the words contained in this word.

Rules: Words should be at least four letters long, proper nouns and duplicates don't count



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BIRTHDAY WISHES

JANVI SREEKANTH
November 02

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Hamilton on top at Imola to secure record for Mercedes



Mercedes' British driver Lewis Hamilton in action during the Formula One Emilia Romagna Grand Prix in Imola, Italy, on Sunday. Photo right: Hamilton celebrates his victory on the podium



RESULTS [TOP TEN]

- 1 Lewis Hamilton (1hr 28min 32.430sec)
- 2 Valtteri Bottas (+5.783sec)
- 3 Daniel Ricciardo (+14.320)
- 4 Daniil Kvyat (+15.141)
- 5 Charles Leclerc (+19.111)
- 6 Sergio Perez (+19.652)
- 7 Carlos Sainz Jr (+20.230)
- 8 Lando Norris (+21.131)
- 9 Kimi Raikkonen (+22.224)
- 10 Antonio Giovinazzi (+26.398)

DRIVERS' STANDINGS

[TOP TEN]:

- 1 Hamilton (282 points)
- 2 Bottas (197)
- 3 Max Verstappen (162)
- 4 Ricciardo (95)
- 5 Leclerc (85)
- 6 Perez (82)
- 7 Norris (69)
- 8 Sainz (65)
- 9 Alexander Albon (64)
- 10 Pierre Gasly (63)

CONSTRUCTORS STANDINGS:

- 1 Mercedes-AMG (479 points - champions)
- 2 Red Bull-Honda (226)
- 3 Renault (135)
- 4 McLaren-Renault (134)
- 5 Racing Point-Mercedes (134)
- 6 Ferrari (103)
- 7 AlphaTauri-Honda (89)
- 8 Alfa Romeo Racing-Ferrari (8)
- 9 Haas (3).

Tandel's six-for in Al Turki's victory; Renaissance and Muscat triumph

Muscat - Hemalkumar Tandel's devastating spell of six for 13 guided Al Turki NMC to a seven-wicket win over AER in an Oman Cricket Premier Division T20 game at Al Amerat in Saturday. This was the first win of the season for Al Turki after they lost to IT Works in their opener.

AER was restricted to 121 for nine with Ghazanfar Iqbal top-scoring with 53. Al Turki surpassed the target in 18 over, thanks to knocks from Akshay Patel (38), Twinkal Bhandari (35) and a quickfire unbeaten 31 off 16 by Gustav Burger.



Hemal Tandel



Sandeep Goud

Earlier on Friday, Sandeep Goud powered Muscat CT past IT Works for their second successive win. Muscat had opened their season with a win against Renaissance last week.

Also on Friday, a solid 65 by opener Prithvikumar Machhi guided Renaissance CT to a 39-run victory over Arm Alpha.

Brief scores: AER 121-9 (Iqbal 53; Tandel 6-13) lost to Al Turki NMC 123-3 in 17.5 overs (Patel 38, Bhandari 35, Burger 31 n.o.; Muzahir Raza 2-23).

Muscat CT 158-9 (Naseem Khushi 42, Goud 41; Imran Muhammed 3-16, Shakeel Ahmad 2-25) beat IT Works 133 all out in 19.5 overs (Khawar Ali 50; Rajesh Ranpura 3-12, Goud 3-29, Ayaan Khan 2-20).

Renaissance CT 147-4 (Machhi 65, Abdul Rauf 31; Nalinda Prasad 2-31) beat Arm Alpha 108-7 (Parth Trivedi 28; Jerome Faizal 2-11, Syed Muzammil 2-16).

FORMULA ONE

EMILIA ROMAGNA GP

Imola, Italy - Lewis Hamilton made the most of his luck to lead teammate Valtteri Bottas home in Sunday's Emilia Romagna Grand Prix as Mercedes sealed a record seventh consecutive constructors' championship triumph.

The six-time champion capitalised on pole-sitter Bottas' ill fortune in picking up a debris-damaged floor to win with

a near-flawless tactical drive and the fastest lap of a dramatic and incident-filled race at Imola.

Hamilton recovered from a poor start, when he dropped to third, to fight back with a long first stint and the aid of a timely Virtual Safety Car (VSC) intervention to grab the lead on a memorable day for the 'silver arrows'.

Daniel Ricciardo finished third for Renault ahead of Daniil Kvyat of Alpha Tauri and Ferrari's

Charles Leclerc after Max Verstappen had crashed out of the race in his Red Bull in the closing stages. He was unhurt.

Sergio Perez was sixth for Racing Point, Carlos Sainz finished seventh ahead of his McLaren teammate Lando Norris and the two Alfa Romeos of Kimi Raikkonen, in his 325th Grand Prix race, and Antonio Giovinazzi.

It was Hamilton's record-increasing 93rd victory in a race

that saw him complete 5000 laps as a race leader.

The Mercedes one-two finish also not only secured the teams' title, but also ensured that a Mercedes driver will take the drivers' championship.

"That was an exhausting race," said Hamilton.

"The speed we had to go after a poor start - it's just overwhelming now because there are so many people in the team who are unsung heroes.

"I'm forever grateful to be a part of it and it always feels like the first time."

Mercedes team boss Toto Wolff said, "I'm not so much into the numbers, but this is something to be proud of - as long as we can stay energised and motivated, I think we can push it for ever.

We are looking forward to a new challenge."

Bottas said, "The damage had a big effect for me today -

suddenly out of Turn Seven on lap two there was debris. I tried not to run over it, but it made the car tricky to drive."

Ricciardo said it had been "a bizarre one. I thought fourth was the best I could do!"

Formula One takes a break next weekend before returning for the Turkish Grand Prix on November 15 where Hamilton could wrap up a record-equalling seventh drivers' crown.

AFP

England clinch Six Nations title

London, UK - England won their first Six Nations title for three years after Ireland lost to France as a coronavirus-delayed Championship finally came to an end on Saturday.

Almost a year to the day since they were beaten by South Africa in the World Cup final, England climbed to the summit of the northern hemisphere's showcase tournament with a 34-5 win away to Italy during the second of the day's three games.

Ireland, top of the standings heading into the final round, kicked off in Paris knowing they needed to beat fellow title contenders France by seven points and/or win with a bonus point, achieved by scoring four tries or more, to take the title.

But such calculations became irrelevant as France won 35-27 to hand England the title on points difference ahead of next month's Autumn Nations Cup.

England captain Owen Farrell is now set to receive the Six Nations trophy on Sunday after France put paid to the hopes of an Ireland side coached



England players celebrate after their win over Italy during their Six Nations game on Saturday night

by his father, Andy.

"It got to a point like it seemed it was going our way and thankfully it did," Owen Farrell told the BBC after watching events in Paris from England's hotel in Rome.

The COVID-19 pandemic halted the tournament for more than seven months and England were especially rusty, after

breaches of health protocols involving Barbarians players saw last week's warm-up fixture at Twickenham cancelled.

England coach Eddie Jones, in a Rugby Football Union statement, praised his side for reacting 'superbly to the changing situations in the past couple of weeks' to remained focused on winning the title.

Jones also paid tribute to England's absent fans by saying: "It's strange not having fans in the stadium and we know it is a tough time for the country but we felt your support throughout the campaign and it does make a difference."

Ben Youngs marked his 100th England cap with tries at the start of either half but the visi-

tors, who've yet to lose a Test against Italy, only led 10-5 at the break after Azzurri flanker Jake Polledri, who plays his club rugby in England for Gloucester, scored a try.

Scrum-half Youngs got England going again, with Jamie George, Tom Curry and Henry Slade adding three more tries.

France, required a seemingly improbable winning margin of more than 30 points to take their first Six Nations title in a decade.

Under new coach Fabien Galthie, they had been on course for a Grand Slam until a surprise fourth-round defeat by Scotland in which prop Mohamed Haouas was sent off.

France had with four tries, including a penalty try, as Antoine Dupont, Romain Ntamack and Virimi Vakatawa all scored.

Ireland prop Cian Healy marked his 100th Test with a try, with late scores from Robbie Henshaw and Jacob Stockdale not enough to deny France.

AFP

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IPL 2020



QUOTE OF THE DAY
It is disappointing. We had a lot of games in our pockets and we couldn't get over the line and we only have ourselves to blame. That short run game too, looks like it has come back to bite us.

KL Rahul
Punjab skipper, after the team's loss, on Sunday



TODAY'S MATCH

ABU DHABI, 6PM



SCOREBOARD

KINGS XI PUNJAB			
KL Rahul	b Ngidi	29	(27)
M Agarwal	b Ngidi	26	(15)
C Gayle	lbw b Tahir	12	(16)
N Pooran	c Dhoni b Thakur	2	(6)
M Singh	b Jadeja	14	(15)
D Hooda	not out	62	(30)
J Neesham	c Gaikwad b Ngidi	2	(3)
C Jordan	not out	4	(5)
Extras	(b 1, w 1)	2	
TOTAL: 153 for six			
Fall of wickets: 1-48, 2-62, 3-68, 4-72, 5-108, 6-113			
Bowling: D Chahar 3-0-30-0, S Curran 2-0-15-0, S Thakur 4-0-27-1, L Ngidi 4-0-39-3, I Tahir 4-0-24-1, R Jadeja 3-0-17-1			
CHENNAI SUPER KINGS			
R Gaikwad	not out	62	(49)
F du Plessis	c Rahul b Jordan	48	(34)
A Rayudu	not out	30	(30)
Extras	(lb 7, w 7)	14	
TOTAL: 154 for one in 18.5 overs			
Fall of wickets: 1-82			
Bowling: J Neesham 3-0-26-0, M Shami 4-0-29-0, C Jordan 3-0-31-1, R Bishnoi 4-0-39-0, M Ashwin 4-0-17-0, C Gayle 0.5-0-5-0			

Gaikwad, du Plessis knock out Punjab

Abu Dhabi, UAE - After messing with the playoff chances of the Royal Challengers Bangalore and the Kolkata Knight Riders, the already-ousted Chennai Super Kings knocked off a target of 154 and knocked out the Kings XI.

The 23 year old Ruturaj Gaikwad, the second-youngest member in the Super Kings squad, provided another glimpse into their future with his third successive match-winning half-century in a chase. He calmly batted on around the more experienced Faf du Plessis, who was back from injury, and Ambati Rayudu, as the Super Kings knocked off a target of 154 and knocked out the Kings XI.

The Knight Riders, the Sunrisers Hyderabad, the Delhi Capitals, and the Royal Challengers will tussle for the three playoff spots that are still up for grabs.

It was the Super Kings' bowlers who had set up the victory on a slow, low Abu Dhabi track that might have reminded them of Chepauk. Lungi Ngidi had the returning Mayank Agarwal chopping on with a cross-seamer and then knocked over KL Rahul with a slower dipping yorker that was straight out of Dwayne Bravo's playbook.

Imran Tahir and Ravindra Jadeja squeezed the Kings XI so much that they went nearly eight



Chennai Super Kings' Ruturaj Gaikwad plays a shot against Kings XI Punjab in Abu Dhabi on Sunday

Ruturaj Gaikwad
62*
49 BALLS

Dhoni vows to keep going for Chennai

Dubai, UAE - Cricket icon MS Dhoni on Sunday vowed to be back for Chennai Super Kings in next year's IPL Twenty20 tournament, despite predictions of a shake-up after the team crashed out of the play-offs race.

Three-time IPL winners Chennai were the first of the eight teams to drop out of contention, raising doubts about captain Dhoni's future with the

franchise. But the 39 year old wicketkeeper-batsman, who ended his international career in August, assured fans ahead of Chennai's last game this season that he would return in the yellow jersey.

"Definitely not," Dhoni said at the toss when he was asked by former New Zealand pace-man Danny Morrison if the game against Kings XI Punjab was his last for Chennai.

The comment set Twitter alight with the hashtag #DefinitelyNot trending in India.

"Definitely Not! We are not going to miss our champion next year," wrote one Twitter user.

The 13th edition of the virus-hit tournament ends on November 10 and the next season is scheduled to start in April 2021.

AFP

overs without a boundary following the powerplay. Deepak Hooda then got on top of the conditions and the Super Kings attack, cracking an unbeaten 62 off 30 balls, but it wasn't enough in the end for the Kings XI.

Rahul, Agarwal open

Agarwal, who had been sidelined for the last three games with injury, marked his comeback with a first-ball four off Deepak Chahar. He hit four more fours off his next 13 balls before Ngidi foxed him. With Agarwal back, Rahul took more chances in the power-play, swishing Chahar, Shardul Thakur and Ngidi for boundaries. The powerplay ended with Kings XI at 53 for one, with Rahul and Agarwal scoring 26 each.

Ngidi then took pace off and removed Rahul as well, with the Kings XI slipping into a mid-innings comatose. Thakur hit a hard length and had Nicholas Pooran nicking off for two off six balls in the 11th over and Tahir trapped Chris Gayle for 12 off 19 balls with a skiddy leg-break.

After the two big-hitting left-hand batsmen Gayle and Pooran were dismissed, MS Dhoni drafted Jadeja into the attack, and he dismissed Singh. When Ngidi had Neesham holing out, the Kings XI innings was crying out for a finishing kick at 113 for six in 17.1 overs.

CSK sign off on a high

Du Plessis claimed 31 of the 57 runs the Super Kings made in the powerplay. He finally fell for 48 off 34 balls when Jordan ditched his on-pace balls for cutters and had the batsman scooping a catch behind to Rahul.

Gaikwad was given out caught at point by Singh on 20, but TV umpire Chris Gaffaney overturned the on-field call after

checking that the ball had momentarily touched the ground before Mandeep grabbed it. It was Gaikwad who finished another chase, along with Rayudu, leaving the UAE with scores of 62*, 72 and 65* that gave him an average of 51, the best for a Chennai player this season.

Cricinfo

OUTSIDE IPL

Ahmed, Babar shine as Pakistan clinch series

PAKISTAN VS ZIMBABWE SECOND ODI

Rawalpindi, Pakistan - Spinner Iftikhar Ahmed grabbed a maiden five-wicket haul while Babar Azam notched a half-century as Pakistan thumped Zimbabwe by six wickets to win the second one-day international (ODI) in Rawalpindi on Sunday.

Ahmed spun a web around Zimbabwe's batsmen with figures of five for 40 to wreck them for a paltry 206 before Azam knocked an attractive 74-ball 77 not out to chase down the target in 35.2 overs.

Zimbabwe needed early wickets, but a solid opening stand of 68 between Imam-ul-Haq (49) and Abid Ali (22) ensured Pakistan were set up nicely. The win gives Pakistan an unassailable 2-0 lead after they won the first game by 26 runs on Friday. Left-arm spinner Tendai Chisoro (2-49) removed both the openers while Sean Williams dismissed debutant Haider Ali (29) but Azam and Ahmed (16 not out) completed the victory during their unbroken fifth-wicket stand of 46 runs.

It was 30 year old Ahmed who rocked Zimbabwe after the tourists won the toss and opted to bat but could never cope with the spin and were bowled out in 45.1 overs.

Left-hander Williams, who top-scored with a 70-ball 75 and Brendan Taylor (36) were repairing the innings from 59 for three during a fourth-wicket



Iftikhar Ahmed celebrates after dismissing a Zimbabwe batsman

stand of 61 before Ahmed struck. Ahmed, who had only one wicket from his previous five ODIs, had Taylor caught off a miscued sweep at the boundary to start the slide, which saw tourists lose their last seven wickets for 86 runs.

Ahmed then removed Wesley Madhevere (10), Sikandar Raza (two) and Chisoro (seven) to leave Zimbabwe struggling at 150 for seven.

Williams, who completed his 32nd half-century off 47 balls, holed out to Ahmed at long-off, to end his lone fight. He smashed ten boundaries and a six.

Debutant paceman Musa Khan finished with 2-21.

The series is part of the One-Day Super League, the first qualifying round for the 2023 World Cup to be held in India.

With Sunday's match, Pakistan's Aleem Dar set a new record for umpiring in most ODIs with 210, beating South African Rudi Coertzen's 209 matches as umpire. Dar already holds the

SCOREBOARD

ZIMBABWE			
B Chari	c H Ali b Ashraf	25	
C Chibhabha	c Rizwan b Rauf	6	
C Ervine	b Musa	3	
B Taylor	c Imam b Ahmed	36	
S Williams	c Afridi b Ahmed	75	
W Madhevere	c sub (F Zaman) b Ahmed	10	
S Raza	c & b Ahmed	2	
T Chisoro	lbw b Ahmed	7	
C Mumba	b Musa	11	
B Muzarabani	b Wasim	17	
R Ngarava	not out	1	
Extras	(b 4, lb 1, w 8)	13	
TOTAL: 206 in 45.1 overs			
Fall of wickets: 1-18, 2-27, 3-59, 4-120, 5-138, 6-142, 7-150, 8-171, 9-198, 10-206			
Bowling: S Afridi 10-1-36-0, H Rauf 7-0-31-1, M Musa 6-1-21-2, F Ashraf 7-1-30-1, I Wasim 5-0-43-1, J Ahmed 10-2-40-5			
PAKISTAN			
Imam-ul-Haq	c Taylor b Chisoro	49	
A Ali	c Ervine b Chisoro	22	
Babar Azam	not out	77	
H Ali	lbw b Williams	29	
M Rizwan	b Raza	1	
I Ahmed	not out	16	
Extras	(b 4, lb 2, w 8)	14	
TOTAL: 208 for four in 35.2 overs			
Fall of wickets: 1-68, 2-100, 3-137, 4-162			
Bowling: R Ngarava 4-0-25-0, C Mumba 1-0-12-0, B Muzarabani 8-0-48-0, T Chisoro 10-0-49-2, W Madhevere 2-2-0-14-0, S Williams 5-0-31-1, S Raza 5-1-23-1			

records for officiating in the most Test matches with 132.

AFP



Pat Cummins of Kolkata Knight Riders celebrates with his teammates after dismissing Ben Stokes of Rajasthan Royals in Dubai on Sunday

Kolkata keeps hopes alive

Dubai, UAE - Both the Kolkata Knight Riders and the Rajasthan Royals had come into this game knowing it was not just must-win, but they needed to win it with a big margin to get some playoff security.

Both teams showed the intent to go hard, and maximise their chances, but it was the Knight Riders who came out smiling at the end, having romped to a 60-run victory that vaulted them from last place in the points table to fourth.

The margin of the win on Sunday meant their net run rate (NRR) had lifted to -0.214, within touching distance of the Royal Challengers Bangalore and the Delhi Capitals, with all three teams on 14 points.

A big enough loss for either of those two, when they face off on Monday, could see the losing team slip below the Knight Riders,

an important cushion should qualification come down to net run rates.

Intent was shown before the game itself, when the Knight Riders included a still not fully fit Andre Russell for this match. The thinking was evident: with the season on the line, you need one of T20's best players in the XI.

Eoin Morgan led the way with the bat, while Pat Cummins was devastating with the ball, as the Knight Riders won crucial passages of play handsomely. Morgan had come in at 74 for three, after a double-wicket over, and paced his innings to a nicety. He expertly picked the bowlers to target, and bludgeoned his way to his highest IPL score. The unbeaten 68 off 35 was also his first half-century of IPL 2020.

The Morgan blitz took the Knight Riders to 191 for seven, a total well in excess of what they

looked like getting more than halfway into the innings.

The Royals innings began at breakneck speed but their unravelling was equally swift. The first five legal balls brought 19 runs, the next 4.1 overs produced 18 for five - four of those wickets going to Cummins.

It was only the fourth time ever that a bowler had taken four or more wickets in an IPL powerplay.

In seven of their last eight games, the Knight Riders had gone wicketless in the power-play, and as if to revert to the mean, they got five on Sunday. Morgan took the aggressive option and bowled Cummins for three overs in the powerplay, and was amply rewarded for it. Cummins shrugged off those 19 runs he conceded first up to eventually end with four for 34.

Cricinfo

SCOREBOARD			
KOLKATA KNIGHT RIDERS			
S Gill	c Buttler b Tewatia	36	(24)
N Rana	c Samson b Archer	0	(1)
R Tripathi	c Uthappa b Gopal	39	(34)
S Narine	c Stokes b Tewatia	0	(2)
E Morgan	not out	68	(35)
D Karthik	c Smith b Tewatia	0	(1)
A Russell	c sub(D Miller) b Tyagi	25	(11)
P Cummins	c Samson b Tyagi	15	(11)
K Nagarkoti	not out	1	(1)
Extras	(lb 5, w 2)	7	
TOTAL: 191 for seven			
Fall of wickets: 1-19, 2-27, 3-74, 4-94, 5-99, 6-144, 7-184			
Bowling: J Archer 4-0-19-1, V Aaron 2-0-22-0, S Gopal 3-0-44-1, B Stokes 3-0-40-0, R Tewatia 4-0-25-3, K Tyagi 4-0-36-2			
RAJASTHAN ROYALS			
R Uthappa	c Nagarkoti b Cummins	6	(2)
B Stokes	c Karthik b Cummins	18	(11)
S Smith	b Cummins	4	(4)
S Samson	c Karthik b Mavi	1	(4)
J Buttler	c Cummins b Varun	35	(22)
R Parag	c Karthik b Cummins	0	(7)
R Tewatia	c Karthik b Varun	31	(27)
S Gopal	not out	23	(23)
J Archer	c Mavi b Nagarkoti	6	(9)
K Tyagi	c & b Mavi	2	(3)
V Aaron	not out	0	(8)
Extras	(lb 1, w 4)	5	
TOTAL: 131 for nine			
Fall of wickets: 1-19, 2-27, 3-32, 4-32, 5-37, 6-80, 7-105, 8-125, 9-129			
Bowling: P Cummins 4-0-34-4, S Mavi 4-1-15-2, C Varun 4-0-20-2, S Narine 4-0-37-0, K Nagarkoti 4-0-24-1			



SEEB ARE CHAMPIONS

- ◆ Muscat-based club clinch maiden Omantel League title with a win over Saham on final day
- ◆ Dhofar finish second, Al Nahda third as curtains come down on 2019-20 top-flight league

Ashok Purohit
Muscat

'The wait is finally over. A dream come true. We have waited for long. We deserved it. It is a reflection of the hard work put in by the players and the board.'

These were the words and remarks expressed by the celebrating fans soon after Seeb Club scripted a new chapter in their history by claiming the first-ever top-flight domestic league football title on Sunday.

The wait for 44 years ended when Seeb defeated Saham 2-0 at the Seeb Sports Stadium to earn the 2019-2020 Omantel League title. The victory meant that the winners garnered 57 points to dethrone defending champion and 11-time champions Dhofar, who finished second with 52 points, after they drew 0-0 with arch-rivals Al Nasr in a Salalah derby on Sunday.

Watching Seeb claim the elusive title at the Seeb Sports Stadium were Seeb Club board member H H Sayyid Melek bin Shihab al Said, H E Rashad al Hinai, Undersecretary at the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, Jassim al Shukaili, OFA vice-president, Said al Balushi, CEO and general secretary of OFA, Sheikh Shabib al Hosni, Omantel League head, and other officials.

Later Seeb captain Saud al Farsi received the newly-designed Omantel League winners' shield from H E Rashad al Hinai as curtains came down on the COVID-19 disrupted league.

Amid the chants of 'Seebawi, Seebawi, Seebawi', the players then celebrated the title on the pitch with each player having a photo shoot with the glittering winner's shield.

Al Nahda clinched the third spot as they recorded a 4-1 win over relegated Mirbat to finish with 40 points.

Party time

The season belonged to Seeb. The club ended their fantastic campaign with just one defeat in the 26 matches played. With 16 wins and nine draws, the team

under Portuguese coach Bruno Pereira, fulfilled the ambitions and dreams of their thousands of fans.

Ahead of the final round game against Saham, Seeb just needed a draw to clinch the title as they had a three-point lead over Dhofar with a round to spare. But the players seemed to be determined to finish the campaign in style and started aggressively in a hunt to score early goals.

Seeb found success near the half-hour mark as Issam al

to the coronavirus pandemic.

"And most importantly a big thanks to our fans. Their support has been invaluable."

A delighted coach Pereira said, "This win is for our fans who stood by us throughout the season. I thank the Seeb board for their trust in me."

"We deserve the title as we were consistent throughout the season with only one loss. It was a tough campaign as all teams wanted to defeat us. It is time to celebrate. I am very happy for my

The players and the coaching staff showed great character and determination despite the challenges posed by the disruption of the Omantel League

YOUSUF AL WAHAIBI

Makhzoumi scored and Seeb doubled the lead when experience Younus al Mushaifri found the target off a cross minutes before the interval.

Seeb then held on to the lead to emerge as deserving winners.

Speaking after the title victory, an emotional Seeb Club vice-chairman Yousuf al Wahaibi said, "It is a dream come true. I would like to thank our club chairman H H Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said for his strong support for the past many decades."

"The players and the coaching staff showed great character and determination despite the challenges posed by the disruption of the Omantel League due

players as they did their best during the long season."

It has been an extraordinary story for the three-time His Majesty's Cup champions under the leadership of H H Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said. The club had returned to the top-flight in 2018-19 season and in their first year since gaining promotion, the club have achieved their long-cherished dream.

Seeb had been relegated from the top-flight in 2014-15 season and after spending three years in the OFA First Division, the club's fairytale comeback ended on a glorious note on Sunday.

Seeb, once a heavyweight in domestic football, had the



Seeb's Issam al Makhzoumi celebrates after scoring the first goal against Saham during their concluding 2019-20 Omantel League game on Sunday

honour of achieving hat-trick of HM's Cup titles – only two other clubs have this record to their names.

The other clubs that have achieved the feat are record nine-time winners Fanja and five-time champions Ahli-Sidab.

Seeb achieved the remarkable feat when it won from 1996-1998 and it was during this time that the club came closest to winning the domestic title.

It was in the 1994-95 season when Seeb ended up as runner-up to Sur.

Seeb have strived for allround sports development and excellence, and are considered to be a role model for clubs in the

sultanate. The club to their credit have won domestic league honours on multiple occasions in hockey, volleyball, basketball, handball, table tennis.

However, the one trophy that has been missing from their cabinet was the top-flight football league trophy and having now claimed it, the club can boast of all major sporting honours in the sultanate.

Seeb's allround excellence has been underlined by the fact that they have won 12 times the coveted HM's Cup for Youth since the award was instituted in 1998. The HM's Cup for Youth is the symbol of club supremacy in Oman.

Nahda appeal upheld

Ahead of their final round game on Sunday, Al Nahda got a boost when the Oman Football Association (OFA) disciplinary panel upheld their appeal against already-relegated Al Arouba and awarded them a 3-0 win.

Al Arouba was punished for the second time in recent days for fielding a foreign player who had broken the quarantine rules. They had got a similar decision after Suwaiq had protested.

The three points catapulted Nahda to the third spot and a win against Mirbat on Sunday helped them finish with 40 points.

Eight-time champions Fanja ended their season at fourth spot

with 39 points following their 2-1 win against Sohar. Al Nasr's finished fifth with 37 points.

In the other matches on the final day of the season, relegated Oman lost to Muscat 0-1, Bahla defeated Al Suwaiq 2-0 and Arouba bowed out with a thrilling 3-2 win over Al Rustaq.

Bahla ended sixth with 35, edging Muscat on goal-difference as the latter too garnered 35 points.

Suwaiq despite the loss came eighth with 35 points while Rustaq ended ninth with 33. Saham and Sohar finished tenth and 11th while Oman, Al Arouba and Mirbat, were relegated.

@ashokmuscat



Seeb's Younus al Mushaifri (centre) celebrates with his teammates



Seeb Club captain Saud al Farsi (right) and club officials hold aloft the Omantel League winner's shield on Sunday

2019-2020 OMANTEL LEAGUE FINAL STANDINGS

1	Seeb	57 points
2	Dhofar	52
3	Al Nahda	40
4	Fanja	39
5	Al Nasr	37
6	Bahla	35
7	Muscat	35
8	Al Suwaiq	35
9	Al Rustaq	33
10	Saham	33
11	Sohar	32

RELEGATED

12	Oman	27
13	Al Arouba	26
14	Mirbat	12



FACEBOOK PROFIT JUMPS

Facebook's profit jumped 29 per cent to US\$7.8bn in the recently-ended quarter as the leading social network benefitted from a rebounding online ad market despite a boycott

BUSINESS

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BRIEFS

IMF more pessimistic on UK economic recovery

Britain's economic recovery will be weaker than expected with Europe suffering from a second coronavirus wave and the country's post-Brexit trade deal with the EU unresolved, the IMF said.

The UK economy will contract by 10.4 per cent this year and grow by 5.7 per cent in 2021, the International Monetary Fund forecast.

Just two weeks ago, the IMF predicted a 9.8 per cent contraction this year and growth of 5.9 per cent next.

'The outlook is for a muted recovery with risks weighted to the downside,' the Fund said in a statement.

'The sharp summer rebound in activity faces strong headwinds from a second wave of COVID-19 infections, Brexit-related uncertainty, rising unemployment, and stress on corporate balance sheets.'

BP shutting largest oil refinery in Australia

UK oil giant BP announced it would shut down one of its last oil refineries in Australia.

In a statement, the BP said it will 'cease fuel production at its Kwinana Refinery and convert it to an import terminal, helping to ensure ongoing security of fuel supply for Western Australia'.

Located in Perth, Western Australia, the 65 year old Kwinana is Australia's largest refinery with capacity of 150,000 barrels of oil per day and one of the last four oil refineries owned by BP in the country.

Its shutdown has triggered concerns of job losses and increasing reliance on imported fuel in Australia.

'The continued growth of large-scale, export-oriented refineries throughout Asia and the Middle East has structurally changed the Australian market,' BP argued.

'Regional oversupply and sustained low refining margins mean the Kwinana Refinery is no longer economically viable. Having explored multiple possibilities for the refinery's future, BP has concluded that conversion to an import terminal is the best option,' the statement added.

Sony first-half net profit doubles, forecast revised up

Sony said that its net profit doubled in the April-September period and revised up its full-year forecast, citing growth in key sectors including gaming, which has been boosted by coronavirus lockdowns worldwide.

The results beat analyst expectations and came as the Japanese tech giant gears up to launch its much-anticipated PlayStation 5 console, setting up a holiday season head-to-head with the new Xbox.

The gaming sector has been one of the few beneficiaries of the pandemic, with people forced indoors sending title downloads and streaming soaring.

Sony said net profit leaped 103.8 per cent to 692.89bn yen (US\$6.65bn) for the first half, and forecast annual net profits of 800bn yen - up from an earlier 510bn yen forecast.

BankDhofar's profit rises to RO26.6mn in nine months

Our Correspondent
Muscat

BankDhofar reported a year-on-year increase of 2.78 per cent in its net profit for the nine months period ended September 30, 2020.

The bank's net profit rose to RO26.64mn for the first nine months of this year compared with RO25.92mn reported in the same period of 2019, according to BankDhofar's financial report submitted to the Muscat Securities Market.

BankDhofar said its net interest income and income from Islamic financing activities came at RO79.4mn for the January-September period of 2020 against RO83.64mn earned during the same period of last year, a decrease of 5.07 per cent. However, non-funded income such as fees and commissions, foreign exchange profit, investment income etc. increased by 7.35 per cent year-to-date in September 2020 reaching RO16.07mn compared to RO14.97mn in the same period of 2019.

The bank achieved a total operating income of RO95.47mn for the nine months period ended September 2020 as against RO98.6mn in the same period of 2019, a decrease of 3.17 per cent.

BankDhofar's loan-book grew



The bank achieved a total operating income of RO95.47mn for the nine months period ended September 2020 as against RO98.6mn in the same period of 2019, a decrease of 3.17 per cent

by 7.9 per cent this year as net loans, advances and financing to customers increased to RO3.28bn as of September 30, 2020 from RO3.04bn a year ago. Customer deposits (including Islamic deposits) decreased by 3.3 per cent at RO2.64bn as of September 30, 2020 compared with

RO2.73bn a year ago.

The bank said its net provisions (expected credit loss) for the first nine months of 2020 dropped to RO11.74mn compared to RO16.38mn for the same period of 2019. 'The 2019 net provisions included the classification of certain large ac-

counts reflecting the market conditions. The 2020 net provisions include management overlay of precautionary provisions considering the economic impact due to the COVID-19 pandemic and continued pressure on oil prices.'

BankDhofar's Islamic window Maisarah Islamic Banking Services continued to report strong growth in earnings, assets, financing and the operating profit. Maisarah's gross financing portfolio increased from RO452.73mn as of September 30, 2019 to RO481.13mn as of September 30, 2020, registering a growth of 6.27 per cent.

Bank Muscat ranks as 'Safest Bank in Oman'

Muscat - Bank Muscat has been ranked as the 'Safest Bank in Oman' by *Global Finance* magazine. The ranking was released by *Global Finance* as part of its rankings for the Safest Banks in 112 countries worldwide.

The 29th annual list of 'Safest Banks by Country' was selected through an evaluation of long-term foreign currency ratings - from Moody's, Standard & Poor's and Fitch - and the total assets of the 1,000 largest banks worldwide.

The annual rankings of the World's Safest Banks have been a recognised and trusted standard of financial counterparty safety for more than a quarter-century.

In a press statement, Saleh Nasser al Habsi, deputy general manager - investment banking at Bank Muscat, said, "Bank Muscat is delighted to be ranked as the Safest Bank in Oman. For over 38 years, the bank's success has been the result of understanding the consumer better and presenting them with innovative services and products. In line with the vision 'To serve you better, everyday', the Bank



Saleh Nasser al Habsi

Muscat brand is synonymous with innovation, reliability and trustworthiness. This highly-acclaimed award is a well-deserved tribute to the largest banking family in Oman."

The announcement of the top ranking for safety continues Bank Muscat's long list of achievements throughout 2020 during which the bank was selected as the Best Bank in Oman by *EMEA Finance*, *Global Finance*, *Euromoney* and *Asiamoney*. The bank was also listed on the *Forbes Middle East* listing of Top 100 Companies in the Middle East. Its different lines of business have won over 20 local and international awards so far this year.



Saudi's Red Sea Development awards contracts worth \$2bn

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia - The Red Sea Development Company (TRSDC), the developer behind Saudi Arabia's flagship international regenerative tourism initiative The Red Sea Project, on Sunday announced it had awarded to date more than 500 contracts to international and local firms.

Collectively worth around SAR7.5bn (US\$2bn), these contracts include awards for the design, build and operation of state-of-the-art accommodation and facilities at the destination.

"This significant landmark underscores the scale of our project and the remarkable progress made to create the destination of the future. TRSDC is a contributing factor to the growth of the Saudi Arabian economy and is playing a pivotal role in its Vision 2030 plan," John Pagano, CEO of TRSDC, said in a press statement.

Since the company's inception in 2017, over 70 per cent of the total value of contracts has been awarded to Saudi Arabian companies.

NBO hosts virtual event to discuss economic impact of US elections

Muscat - Continuing to raise awareness on topics that affect the global finance industry, National Bank of Oman (NBO) and Principal Global Investors (PGI) teamed up for an exclusive online conference to discuss the economic impact of the upcoming US presidential elections.

Led by PGI's chief strategist, Seema Shah, the hour-long Web-Ex event offered an expert's viewpoint on the expectations of the highly-anticipated elections, whose results may potentially affect financial markets, foreign and trade policies across the world.

In a press release, Yaseen Hassan al Lawati, head of investment banking division at NBO, said, "Our vision is to be the bank of choice and as such, our approach to customer relationship management centres on how we



can add value to their lives beyond financial products and services. Since the COVID-19 pandemic started, we have conducted several online events that provide unique opportunities for knowledge exchange, helping our customers and stakeholders to meet their financial goals."

"There is high anticipation surrounding the US presidential elections all over the world and, in the past, markets have reacted to varying degrees. So this event was a timely one, offering partic-

"This event was a timely one, offering participants valuable insight into the potential implications and allowing them to consider their investment decisions accordingly"

YASEEN HASSAN AL LAWATI

ipants valuable insight into the potential implications and allowing them to consider their investment decisions accordingly," Lawati said.

The conference discussed several key topics including the historical perspective on US elections, short-term and long-term impact on financial markets, expected policy changes in case of a change in leadership and trade tariff wars and the USA's relationship with China going forward.

Cementing itself as a thought-leader in Oman, National Bank of Oman has organised a line-up of similar events on a wide range of topics from post-COVID-19 economic scenarios to bond markets and real estate, aiming to support its clients' financial decision-making. Through such initiatives, the bank aims to promote knowledge dissemination throughout the industry and contribute to the continued development of the sultanate's economy.

OPEC oil export revenues set to fall to lowest level since 2002

Istanbul, Turkey - The oil export revenues of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) members are expected to decline to the lowest level since 2002 to US\$323bn for 2020, the US Energy Information Administration (EIA) said in a report.

The expected decrease in export revenues compared with last year is driven by lower crude oil prices and lower export volumes, the agency said.

Crude oil prices have fallen as a result of lower global demand for petroleum products because of COVID-19 and associated mitigation efforts. Export volumes have also decreased as a result of high production disruptions

in Libya, Iran, and Venezuela and OPEC agreements to limit crude oil output in response to low crude oil prices.

OPEC earned an estimated US\$595bn in net oil export revenues in 2019, a decrease of 17 per cent compared with the estimated 2018 net export revenue and less than half the estimated record high of almost US\$1.2tn earned in 2012, the agency said.

Similar to the factors driving the decrease in net oil revenues in 2020, the estimated 2019 revenues fell as a result of lower crude oil prices, higher crude oil production disruptions, and voluntary curtailment of crude oil output among OPEC members.

The EIA forecast that 2020



per capita net oil export revenues will fall to US\$638 from US\$1,201 in 2019, down 19 per cent from 2018. The Brent crude spot price fell from an annual average of US\$71 per barrel in 2018 to US\$64 in 2019, and the EIA

expects it to average US\$41 per barrel in 2020.

Heavier crude oils are typically priced lower than lighter crude oils. As the global slate of crude oil changed with increased light crude oil production, some

OPEC members benefited from a narrowing price discount for their heavier crude oils.

Sanctions targeting Iranian and Venezuela crude oil sales as well as a combination of mismanagement and general deterioration of the oil sector in Venezuela affected total OPEC revenues in 2019 and 2020, EIA reported.

'Combined crude oil production in Iran and Venezuela fell by 1.9mn barrels per day (bpd), or 37 per cent, in 2019 and then by more than 600,000 bpd between January and September 2020,' the agency said adding that both countries' net oil export revenues halved from 2018 to 2019.

Venezuela's net oil revenues continued to fall in the first half of 2020 as a result of falling oil prices and US sanctions that affected country's ability to sell its oil. The agency estimated that from January to July 2020, Venezuela received an estimated US\$3bn in net export revenues, down from an estimated US\$8bn during the same period in 2019.

'Iranian export revenues fell to a low of US\$50mn in April 2020,' the EIA said estimating that country's export revenues from January to July 2020 stood at a total of US\$9bn in, compared with US\$20bn during the same period in 2019.

Anadolu Agency

MSM falls 0.15% on weak activity

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The benchmark index of the Muscat Securities Market (MSM) fell 0.15 per cent to close at 3,552.4 points on Sunday.

While turnover increased 11.89 per cent to RO1.13mn, volumes fell 29.11 per cent to 4.83mn shares.

All the sectoral indices closed in red territory. Financial index fell 0.07 per cent, Industrial index declined 0.29 per cent and Services index fell 0.34 per cent. The MSM Shariah Index closed down by 0.44 per cent at 515.48 points.

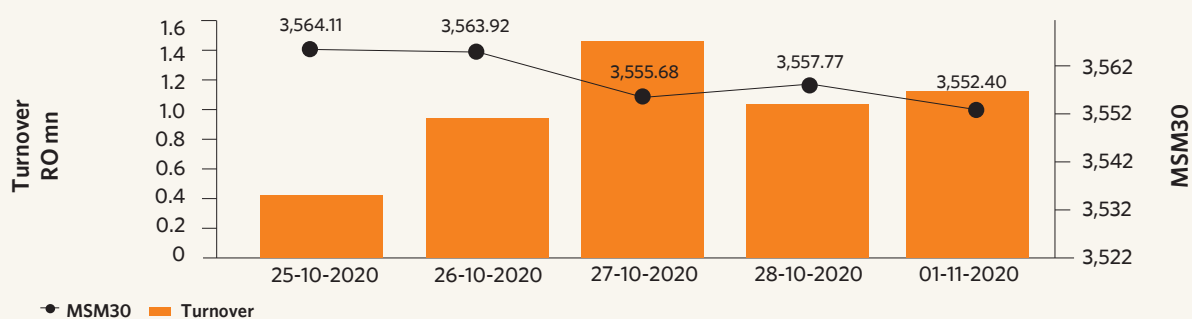
Market breadth remained highly negative as only two companies closed up, while six companies closed down. The rest 19 traded stocks closed flat for the day.

The two gainers were Al Madina Takaful (1.37 per cent) and Al Omaniya



Financial Services (1.37 per cent). Top losers were Oman Flour Mills (-3.23 per cent), Muscat Finance (-2.5 per cent), Phoenix Power (-1.82 per cent) and Al Jazeera Services (-1.45 per cent).

MSM INDEX AND TURNOVER OF FIVE TRADING DAYS



UK extends scheme to pay 80% of wages during new lockdown

London, UK - People and businesses across the UK are being provided with additional financial support as part of the government's plan for the next phase of its response to the coronavirus outbreak, Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced on Saturday.

According to an official press statement, Johnson said the government's Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme - also known as the Furlough scheme - will remain open until December, with employees receiving 80 per cent of their current salary for hours not worked, up to a maximum of £2,500.

The Prime Minister on Saturday announced a new four-week coronavirus lockdown in England.

Under the extended scheme, the cost for employers of retaining workers will be reduced compared to the current scheme, which ended on Saturday. This means the extended Furlough scheme is more generous for employers than it was in October.

In addition, business premises forced to close in England are to receive grants worth up to £3,000 per month under the Local Restrictions Support Grant. Also, £1.1bn is being given to local authorities, distributed on the basis of £20 per head, for one-off payments to enable them to support businesses more broadly.

UK's Chancellor of the Exchequer Rishi Sunak said, "Over the past eight months of this crisis we have helped millions of people to continue to provide for



Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson (AFP)

As restrictions get tougher, we are taking steps to provide further financial support to protect jobs and businesses

RISHI SUNAK

their families. But now - along with many other countries around the world - we face a tough winter ahead. I have always said that we will do whatever it takes as the situation evolves. Now, as restrictions get tougher, we are taking steps to provide further financial support to protect jobs and businesses. These changes will provide a vital safety net for people across the UK."

Employers small or large,

charitable or non-profit, are eligible for the extended Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, which will continue for a further month, the statement said.

Businesses will have flexibility to bring furloughed employees back to work on a part time basis or furlough them full-time, and will only be asked to cover National Insurance and employer pension contributions which, for the average claim, accounts for just 5 per cent of total employment costs.

Under the extended Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, all employers with a UK bank account and UK PAYE schemes can claim the grant. The government expects that publicly funded organisations will not use the scheme, as has already been the case for, but partially publicly funded organisations may be eligible where their private revenues have been disrupted.

Profits at India's Reliance slump amid virus

Mumbai, India - Indian conglomerate Reliance Industries reported a 15 per cent fall in its quarterly profits, as the coronavirus pandemic slowed demand, hitting its crucial oil refinery business.

The Mumbai-based behemoth - which is owned by Asia's richest man, Mukesh Ambani - said its consolidated net profit for

the July-September period dipped to ₹95.67bn (US\$1.29bn) from ₹112.62bn a year earlier.

But the company beat estimates, with a Bloomberg survey of analysts forecasting profits of ₹90.17bn.

"Retail business activity has normalised with strong growth in key consumption baskets as lockdowns ease across the coun-

try," Ambani said in a statement.

The oil-to-telecoms giant said its operating revenues fell 24 per cent to ₹1.16tn for the quarter, while refining revenues plunged 36 per cent.

Its gross refining margin, the profit earned from each barrel of crude, was down to US\$5.70 in the quarter ending in September, from US\$6.30 in the

previous quarter.

But its telecom arm Jio saw revenues increase by 33 per cent, offering investors some relief.

"With large capital raise in the last six months across Jio and Retail business, we have welcomed several strategic and financial investors into the Reliance family," Ambani said.

AFP

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Alphabet profit rises to \$11.2bn as Google ad spending rebounds

San Francisco, US - Google-parent Alphabet said that its profit climbed to US\$11.2bn in the latest quarter, beating expectations, as ad spending rebounded after being hit by the pandemic.

Money made from cloud computing offerings and from its Google Play shop for smartphones powered by its Android software also helped fuel the 42 per cent jump in revenue to US\$46.2bn in the quarter, the company said.

"We had a strong quarter, consistent with the broader online environment," said chief



executive Sundar Pichai.

Blockbuster revenue in the quarter was led by an increase in ad spending at Google's search engine and video streaming platform YouTube, according to chief financial officer Ruth Porat.

Alphabet has spent years evolving YouTube from its roots as a free video-sharing to an on-line television platform competing with titans such as Netflix and Amazon Prime.

"We expected Google's ad

revenues to recover across search, YouTube, and Network Members (in the quarter), and all three segments outperformed our expectations," said analyst Nicole Perrin of eMarketer.

She said the gains were especially true of YouTube and pointed to 'notable increases in political ad spending during the quarter'.

Google's cloud computing business revenue grew nearly 50 per cent to US\$3.4bn as the pandemic boosted a trend toward working, playing, shopping and learning online.

AFP

UBGCFCF Inception Date*		17-Nov-09
NAV Date		Oct 29, 2020
NAV (OMR)		0.984
Adjusted NAV** (OMR)		1.297
Cash Dividend paid since inception (OMR)		0.03
Unit Dividend paid since inception		28%
YTD Performance		(3.00)%
Performance since inception		35.12%
* First NAV was issued on 4th March 2010 ** Adjusted for cash and bonus dividends For more information please contact: Tel: 00968 24 949 031/030, Email: ubhargocfund@u-capital.net		

EU unemployment rises further

Istanbul, Turkey - The EU's unemployment rate rose to 7.5 per cent in September, up 0.9 percentage point year-on-year, the bloc's statistical office reported.

The eurozone unemployment rate was also up by 0.8 percentage point to 8.3 per cent in the last month on a yearly basis, Eurostat said in a press release.

Eurostat said nearly 16mn men and women in the EU27, including 13.6mn in the euro area, were unemployed as of September. The number of unemployed people was up by 42,000 on a monthly basis, and 1.8mn on a yearly basis in September, across the 27-member bloc.

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Mazda salutes Oman's women for their spirit of excellence

Muscat – The Oman Women of the Year Awards recently recognised the great achievements of 30 women who excelled in their respective line of work and felicitated them for their contributions in the Sultanate of Oman.

As a partner for the Oman Women of the Year Awards for the second year in a row, Mazda endeavours to identify with the spirit of excellence found in Oman's people, who in their reflective, celebratory and confident selves set themselves apart in their distinctiveness, the same way Mazda's vehicles do so in theirs.

Mazda's 'You have the drive' campaign focuses on this spirit of achievement and inspires them to reach for the sky, to achieve greatness in whatever they put their hands to, and in the process, continue to set benchmarks in excellence.

The Oman Women of the Year Awards recognises the extraordinary contributions and achievements of women who are shaping Oman's social-cultural and economic scenario across 30 different sectors of industry. In line with the awards, Mazda, through their 'You have the drive' campaign, have taken the opportunity to recognise the pioneering spirit of Oman's women as well, and encourages them in their respective pursuits by highlighting their achievements and spurring them on to reach their full potential.

Widad Sultan who works in the marketing department at Towell Auto Centre (TAC) said, "In celebration of Mazda's 100th year and the Oman Woman of the Year Awards, Mazda has not only developed vehicles that match the ambitions and aspirations of its drivers but also endeavoured to relate to the women that 'have the drive' by embodying and encouraging their spirit of excellence. I have been working with TAC for over nine years and I always look forward to Mazda's global practices, learning and growth opportunities and new challenges to further enhance my career. I play an important role in working as a bridge between existing customer experience and communicating their unique experiences with potential new customers, among other things."

With its unique design philosophy and constant quest for excellence, Mazda has moved its customers worldwide with the spirit of driving and the soul of motion. Woven into the fabric of Mazda's DNA is the fighting spirit founded in Hiroshima. With over hundred years of excellence in innovation and the uniqueness of co-creating with others for which Mazda is so well known for, it is in the very nature of the Japanese automotive giant to identify, inspire and be inspired by the excellence found in individuals and society as a whole.

Be it finding commercial success with Rotary engines, winning World Design Awards multiple times based on the Kodo - Soul of Motion or for that matter ensuring incredible driving pleasure with its *Jinba Ittai* philosophy, Mazda has embodied the pioneering spirit of innovation consistently with each and every vehicle they design. Looking back at the milestones Mazda has achieved over the decades, it's clear to see that the Japanese Automotive giant has continuously reinvented itself by adding to an already elegantly designed and technology driven

range of vehicles.

A series of significant launches like that of the Mazda 6 in 2002, the CX-5 in 2012 with the new KODO design and Mazda's full suite of SKYACTIV

“More than 50 per cent of our workforce across the company's supporting functions comprises Omani women, with an average of over six years spent working with Towell Auto Centre

RIYADH ALI SULTAN

technologies and more recently in 2019 with the all-new future ready 7th generation Mazda 3 that has ushered in Mazda's premium status; Mazda's journey to excellence continues with the dawn of a new decade.

Epitomising the philosophy of IKIGAI, which is to find one's purpose in life, Mazda's cars are designed for the journey within. Based on this purpose driven thought, Mazda has sought to associate with the entrepreneurial and pioneering spirit of Oman's people to ensure that irrespective of what background they come from, their destiny is in their own hands and greatness is there for the taking.

Mazda in this regard, has developed a range of exceptional vehicles that reflects this challenging spirit, and helps drivers to identify with and move on together to the next level of achievement. A partner that



“Mazda has not only developed vehicles that match the ambitions and aspirations of its drivers but also endeavoured to relate to the women that 'have the drive' by embodying and encouraging their spirit of excellence

WIDAD SULTAN



matches the driver's ambitions with every mile, Mazda celebrates people who have achieved remarkable success and shown great strength of purpose in their chosen fields and is always ready to encourage and inspire others to live up to their potential as well.

Mazda as a brand has also looked at women as buyers and co-buyers in particular. This is reflected in the fact that the 2019 Mazda 3 model won the Women's World Car of the Year award. Mazda's KODO design which involves Takumi master craftsmanship of both men and women designers and engineers showcases their sharp minds and meticulous hands that shape the future of tomorrow's Mazda vehicles.

Mazda and TAC identify with Oman's strong, smart and determined women who change the status quo on a day to day basis by achieving the impossible and breaking the norms persistently. With future ready vehicles,

Mazda has ensured its place as the choice of champions. With campaigns like 'You have the drive', Mazda aims to establish a special bond with its customers by offering products, technologies and services that appeal to them and match their dreams and aspirations every step of the way.

Speaking about TAC's women workforce, Riyadh Ali Sultan, general manager of Towell Auto

Centre, said, "More than 50 per cent of our workforce across the company's supporting functions comprises Omani women, with an average of over six years spent working with Towell Auto Centre. In Oman, TAC is recognised as a trusted name in customer service and a pioneer in the automobile business since 1972. A group company of the W J Towell Group, TAC takes off from the principle of its parent

company and ensures the easy availability of high quality motor products coupled with the highest standard of service to its esteemed customers."

Mazda has brought quality to the roads of Oman, and TAC has made owning a Mazda an absolute joy, thanks to their excellent after-sales service, availability of genuine parts for all Mazda models, their efficient staff, amazing promotions and innovative solutions for a better customer experience.

Mazda is committed to its mantra 'Celebrate Driving' and to designing and building vehicles with outstanding dynamics that make customers experience the authentic joy of driving, while beaming with pride. Every Mazda is built with passionate dedication by our engineers, and everyone involved with the Mazda production process pays attention to every single detail, and comes up with ingenious ideas for making ongoing improvements.

In countries around the world - including Oman - new-generation Mazda models featuring the manufacturer's innovative and ground-breaking SKYACTIV technology are being embraced by automotive critics and publications, and have been showered with awards, including car-of-the-year honours. The new breed of cars is getting the thumbs-up from drivers, the enthusiasm of car lovers, as well as the passion of our engineers, who continue to rev up Mazda's engine of innovation.

To find out more about Towell Auto Centre's showrooms and servicing centres, customers can log on to www.mazdaoman.com, or just walk into any one of Towell Auto Centre's 9 Mazda showrooms situated across the sultanate. Now people can also download the revamped Mazda Oman mobile app to get easy access to everything related to Mazda in Oman.



Moldova elects president amid ‘tug of war’

Chisinau, Moldova - Voters in ex-Soviet Moldova went to the polls on Sunday to elect a president under the watchful eye of Moscow which wants the polarised country to remain in its orbit amid political crises on Russia’s borders.

Pro-Moscow president Igor Dodon is seeking a new four year mandate, with his biggest challenge coming from longtime pro-Western rival Maia Sandu who wants Moldova to join the European Union.

Experts predict a second-round runoff on November 15, as neither Dodon nor Sandu are expected to secure an outright majority on Sunday. The impoverished country of 3.5mn has long been divided between those favouring closer ties with the EU and those who cling to Soviet-era relations with Moscow.

Although part of the Soviet Union until its collapse in 1991, the tiny country between Ukraine and Romania has close historic ties with Romania and its main language is Romanian.

Many voters expressed disappointment with politicians as they cast their ballots in capital Chisinau.

AFP

Turkey quake death toll rises to 51

The 7.0-magnitude quake also injured 896 people, says Turkish emergency authority

Bayraklı, Turkey - Rescue workers were searching eight wrecked buildings in Izmir on Sunday despite dwindling hope for survivors as the death toll from a powerful magnitude earthquake which hit western Turkey rose to 51.

The 7.0-magnitude quake also injured 896 people, the Turkish emergency authority AFAD said, after it struck on Friday afternoon near the west coast town of Seferihisar in Izmir province.

More than 200 people were in hospital, AFAD said.

Vice President Fuat Oktay said later Sunday the death toll had risen by two to 51 during a visit to Izmir, adding that nearly 300 buildings were damaged although most were only lightly affected.

Overnight, 33 hours after the quake, a 70 year old man was pulled out from underneath the rubble to the applause of onlookers and taken to hospital.

The worst affected Turkish town was Bayraklı, where anxious families in thick blankets spent a second night in tents.

Others watched nervously as rescue workers went through the debris for a second day.

Some privately expressed concern that hopes of finding more survivors were fading as the hours pass by.

But a worker at the site of one collapsed building, who did not wish to be named, told AFP they believed at least ten people could still be under the rubble.

Nearly 6,000 rescuers have been working all day and all night



Parents with children at a makeshift kindergarten in an emergency tent camp for displaced people after a powerful earthquake, at the Eski Bornova stadium in Izmir on Sunday (AFP)

since Friday, mechanical diggers helping them remove blocks of concrete.

Intermittently, rescue work has been halted and everyone kept silent to listen to any sound of someone trapped in the rubble.

“It will be a miracle if they are found alive,” a woman waiting to

hear news of a family friend was overheard telling another.

Thousands of tents have been set in the since officials warned residents to avoid returning to their homes.

Hurriyet daily, citing local district reports, said two of the buildings where rescue efforts are concentrated were in poor

shape in 2012 and 2018 respectively, with ‘low quality concrete’ used to build them.

The newspaper said the ‘damning’ report on one building clearly assessed it was ‘at risk’ based on earthquake safety requirements and advised that ‘necessary measures’ be taken to increase safety.

The second building had apparently had work undertaken to strengthen the structure, the daily added.

Turkey has reported more than 800 aftershocks following the quake, including 40 that were above four in magnitude.

Two teenagers on their way home from school were also

killed in Greece, as the quake caused a mini-tsunami on the Greek island of Samos and a rush of water from the sea that turned streets into rivers in one Turkish town.

Friday’s earthquake was so powerful it was felt as far away as Istanbul and Athens.

AFP

No reason for Russia to intervene: Azerbaijan

Baku, Azerbaijan - Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev said on Sunday there was no reason for Russia to intervene in the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh because Baku is not threatening Armenian territory.

Fighting has been raging over Karabakh - an ethnic Armenian region of Azerbaijan - for more than a month and on Saturday Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan asked Moscow for ‘urgent consultations’ on how Russia could come to its aid under a defence treaty.

Hosting Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu in Baku, Aliyev said Pashinyan’s request was an ‘admission of defeat’ and that the treaty did not apply because Karabakh is internationally recognised as part of Azerbaijan.

“Azerbaijan is conducting military operations on its territory and has no military plans for the territory of Armenia,” Aliyev’s office quoted him as saying.



The Armenian community in Uruguay with a sign reading ‘Stop attacking Armenia’ take part in the ‘South American Convoy for Peace in Artsakh’, outside the Legislative Palace in Montevideo on Saturday (AFP)

Hundreds of people have been killed since new fighting erupted on September 27 over

Karabakh, which broke from Azerbaijan’s control during a war in the 1990s.

International attempts to se-

cure a ceasefire have repeatedly failed.

Aliyev said his country would agree to a truce only if Armenian

separatists stopped trying to win back territory recently retaken by Azerbaijani forces.

“This is the main reason for continued fighting,” he said.

Cavusoglu re-asserted Ankara’s support for Azerbaijan and said Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan had told him it was ‘unacceptable’ to leave Azerbaijan without assistance.

Fighting continued overnight and Sunday morning, the warring sides said.

The Karabakh leadership accused Azerbaijan of striking civilian settlements including the strategic town of Shusha. “In the morning the enemy forces renewed offensive operations,” the Karabakh army said.

The Azerbaijani Defence Ministry accused Armenian forces of targeting its army and civilian settlements on Saturday and overnight.

AFP



Slimane Chenine, the President of Algeria’s National People’s Congress, casts his ballot at a polling station in the capital Algiers on Sunday (AFP)

Algeria votes on constitution aimed at ending protest

Algiers, Algeria - Polls opened in Algeria on Sunday for a vote on a revised constitution the regime hopes will neutralise a protest movement which at its peak last year swept long-time president Abdelaziz Bouteflika from power.

Bouteflika’s successor Abdelmadjid Tebboune, currently hospitalised overseas, has pitched the text as meeting the demands of the Hirak, a youth-led movement that staged vast weekly demonstrations for more than a year until the coronavirus pandemic stopped rallies.

But despite a determined government media campaign for a resounding ‘yes’ vote to usher in a ‘new Algeria’, observers say the document offers little new.

“Nothing has changed. The ultra-presidential regime will stay,” said Massena’s Cherbi, a constitutional expert at Sciences Po university in Paris.

Tebboune has placed Sunday’s referendum at the forefront of efforts to turn the page on the Hirak movement.

And after a campaign that saw the ‘yes’ camp dominate state-backed media coverage and supporters of a ‘no’ vote banned from holding meetings, few observers doubt that the text will pass. “I

voted ‘yes’ so my country doesn’t collapse,” said Djillali Bouazza, a 78 year old retiree.

The key question is how many people will vote.

Tebboune said on Saturday that Algerians will once again ‘have a rendezvous with history’ to bring in a ‘new era capable of fulfilling the hopes of the nation and the aspirations of our people for a strong, modern and democratic state’.

The 74 year old president is hospitalised in Germany amid reports of COVID-19 cases among his staff, and few details have been released on his condition.

Seen by opponents as an old-school regime insider, Tebboune came to power following a December 2019 presidential poll marred by record abstentionism.

The Hirak movement led calls for a boycott of that election, and even official data put the turnout at less than 40 per cent.

Experts say the referendum is partly a bid by Tebboune for a more convincing validation at the ballot box. Rather than attacking the Hirak, Tebboune has ostensibly reached out to it, describing it as a ‘blessed, authentic popular movement’.

AFP

Glasgow artist launches plastic bag museum

Glasgow, UK - Katrina Cobain unwraps a parcel and removes its precious contents, slowly and delicately as if she were handling an ancient scroll of papyrus.

But the items she places on the table of a makeshift studio in an old tobacco pipe factory in the east end of Glasgow are rather more mundane - plastic carrier bags.

Yet, to many, they are considered historical items, representing the consumer excesses of the 20th and 21st centuries.

For Cobain (24), every plastic bag tells a story of the modern age and so, two years ago, she became a collector and plans to start a museum.

“The original idea started because I felt that landfill sites could be archaeological digs of the future and for our civilisation they would be filled with plastic,”



Katrina Cobain poses with some of her collection of plastic bags from which she intends to start The Plastic Bag Museum in Glasgow (AFP)

she told AFP. “They reveal so much about our lifestyle in the last 60 years in terms of consumerism and social history.”

“They can document or reveal

key shifts in our lifestyles, key historic events and also changes in graphic design styles.”

When Cobain put the word out that she intended to start a

museum she was inundated with bags from around the world.

Her growing collection includes ones from New York and the old Soviet Union.

Others commemorate the supersonic passenger jet Concorde, and even the marriage of Queen Elizabeth II’s eldest son and heir Prince Charles to Lady Diana Spencer in 1981.

“Why they were making bags commemorating the royal wedding, I don’t know,” said Cobain. “It shows you the level of production of plastic bags at that time that such events were being printed onto bags.”

Cobain’s most prized bag is one she bought from a Woolworths store where as a child she would buy CDs.

She remembers ‘Woolies’, which once had more than 800 stores in the United Kingdom,

completely disappearing after the credit crunch in 2008 and classes it as a key moment in her life. Cobain’s plans to hold an exhibition were scuppered by the coronavirus pandemic, prompting her to move online.

The lockdown proved an ideal time to photograph her collection, build a website and to launch plasticbagmuseum.com. A physical exhibition is still in the pipeline.

Despite her affection for plastic bags, which are increasingly attracting charges for use, Cobain is looking forward to a time when they are consigned to history.

“They are obviously very damaging for the environment,” she said. “Photographs show how many bags there are in the oceans and how disruptive they are for other natural habitats.”

AFP



Residents (left) walk with their belongings as rescue workers (right) carry a child to a waiting rescue vehicle, during an evacuation of informal settlers living along coastal areas in the Philippines' capital Manila on Sunday (AFP)

7 dead as Typhoon Goni hits Philippines

Manila, Philippines - At least seven people were killed as Typhoon Goni pounded the Philippines on Sunday, ripping off roofs, toppling power lines and causing flooding in the hardest-hit areas where hundreds of thousands have fled their homes.

The strongest typhoon of the year also triggered deadly landslides that buried a number of houses in the southern part of the most populous island of Luzon, officials said.

Goni was a 'super typhoon' when it made landfall on Catanduanes Island before dawn, packing maximum sustained wind speeds of 225km per hour.

It was downgraded a few hours later as it swept across Luzon and reduced intensity as it

headed towards the capital Manila, where the sprawling city of 12mn was bracing for strong winds in the evening.

"Destructive winds and intense rainfall" were affecting areas in the typhoon's path, including provinces near the capital, the state weather forecaster warned in its latest update.

Goni comes a week after Typhoon Molave hit the same region of the natural disaster-prone archipelago, killing 22 people.

At least seven people were killed in Albay province, Civil Defense said in a statement.

Several of the victims died in rain-induced landslides of volcanic ash that police said engulfed numerous houses in two adjacent villages near the active

Our roads have a lot of debris from the mountains such as branches and sand, some of which came from Mayon (volcano). Some roads are unpassable

CARLOS IRWIN BALDO

Mayon volcano in the province.

"We have recovered three bodies and are looking for three more," said Major Domingo Tapel, chief of police in Guinobatan town.

The roofs of at least two evacuation centres were torn off by the force of the wind, while floods inundated some villages.

"The winds are fierce. We can hear the trees being pummelled. It's very strong," Francia Mae

Borras (21) told AFP from her home in the nearby coastal city of Legazpi.

Nearly 400,000 people have fled their homes, most of them to evacuation centres, Civil Defence said.

Various officials in affected areas have reported power cuts, which are disrupting telecommunication services and hampering efforts to assess the extent of the damage.

"Our roads have a lot of debris from the mountains such as branches and sand, some of which came from Mayon (volcano). Some roads are unpassable," said Carlos Irwin Baldo, the mayor of Camalig, near Legazpi.

In Manila, the airport was closed and residents were evacuated from low-lying slum areas at risk of being inundated by several-metres-high storm surges.

"It's better to be safe," Arman Atuel (33) said as he sat with his wife in a vehicle taking people to shelters. The couple do not own a television or radio so were not aware of the typhoon's strength.

The weather service has warned of flooding and landslides as Goni dumps heavy rain across the already-soaked region. Thou-

sands of soldiers and police were on standby to help with evacuations and rescue efforts.

Virus complications

Schools, which have been empty since the start of the coronavirus pandemic, are being used as emergency shelters, as are government-run evacuation centres and gymnasiums.

COVID-19 patients being treated in tent facilities have been evacuated, officials said. The Philippines has recorded more than 380,000 infections, including more than 7,200 deaths, which has stretched its resources and complicated evacuations.

Mary Ann Echague, 23, and her family fled their home in Legazpi on Saturday to an inland

primary school where they were sheltering in a classroom with several other families.

"We fear the wrath of the typhoon," said Echague, who was with her two children, parents and siblings.

They had carried with them a portable stove, tinned meat, instant noodles, coffee, bread, blankets and pillows.

The Philippines is hit by an average of 20 storms and typhoons every year, which typically wipe out harvests, homes and infrastructure, keeping millions of people perennially poor.

Its deadliest on record was Super Typhoon Haiyan that left more than 7,300 people dead or missing in 2013.

AFP

Hong Kong opposition politicians arrested for legislature protest

Hong Kong, China - Seven pro-democracy Hong Kong politicians were arrested on Sunday over protests and scuffles that broke out in the legislature earlier this year, the latest prosecutions targeting Beijing's opponents in the deeply divided city.

The seven politicians - four of them sitting lawmakers - were arrested on charges of 'contempt' and 'interfering' with members of the city's Legislative Council in early May, police said.

The chamber passes semi-autonomous Hong Kong's laws, but only half of its seats are directly elected and a complex appointment system ensures the city's pro-Beijing establishment is all but guaranteed a handsome majority.

Scuffles and protests routinely break out, with the pro-democracy minority often resorting to filibustering, chanting and obstruction to try and halt bills they oppose.

On May 8, confrontations broke out in a committee that decides which bills come up for



This file photo shows legislator Andrew Wan Siu-kin being taken away by paramedics after scuffles with security and pro-China legislators at the Legislative Council, in Hong Kong on May 8 (AFP)

debate.

The opposition had used months of filibustering to stop the appointment of the committee's leader. The pro-Beijing camp responded by forcibly installing one of their politicians to the committee chair.

That prompted angry scenes and protests in the chamber with lawmakers from both sides displaying placards amid boisterous heckling and physical obstruction.

Security guards and pro-Beijing lawmakers eventually

dragged most of the pro-democracy politicians from the chamber and the installation of the committee chair went ahead.

One pro-Beijing politician was seen on a live broadcast dragging an opponent out by his shirt collar - an incident which has

sparked an ongoing private prosecution.

Sunday's police action singled out the pro-democracy politicians for arrest and is the latest in a string of prosecutions launched against Beijing critics.

"Some lawmakers dashed towards the security guards surrounding the rostrum and made it impossible for the meeting to go on," chief inspector Chan Wing-yu told reporters.

Asked why only pro-democracy politicians faced prosecution that day for their actions, Chan declined to comment.

The arrested politicians could face up to a year in jail if convicted.

Democratic Party leader Wu Chi-wai, who is among the seven held, said the arrests showed the government was concocting pretexts to suppress resistance within the legislature.

"The allegation of contempt now is trying to criminalise the lawmakers' expression of criticism," Wu said.

AFP



The lamp that was sold for US\$93,000 with the claim that it had magic powers as described in the folk tale 'Aladdin's lamp' (AFP)

Indian medic duped into buying 'Aladdin's lamp'

New Delhi, India - Two men who allegedly duped a doctor into buying an 'Aladdin's lamp' for US\$93,000 - and even conjured up a fake genie - have been arrested in India, an official said on Sunday.

Laeek Khan approached police in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh after he realised the lamp did not have any magical powers, as described in the popular folk tale about Aladdin and his wish-granting genie that appears when it is rubbed.

"The cheats had struck a deal for much more but the doctor had paid about ₹7mn (US\$93,000 approx)," Amit Rai, a senior officer said. He said the

men were arrested on Thursday and were remanded in custody ahead of charges being filed.

"The wife of one of these men was also involved in the fraud. She is on the run," Rai added.

In his complaint filed last Sunday, Khan said one of the men pretended to be an occultist and made a 'jinn' appear from the lamp, local media reported.

But when Khan asked if he could touch the genie or take the lamp home, they refused, saying it might cause him harm, the complaint stated.

Eventually they sold the lamp to him, promising it would bring health, wealth and good fortune.

AFP

China starts once-a-decade census of world's largest population

Shanghai, China - Millions of census-takers began knocking on doors across China on Sunday for a once-a-decade head count of the world's largest population that for the first time will use mobile apps to help crunch the massive numbers.

Around seven million community workers and volunteers will drive the two-month data-collection effort, visiting homes ranging from residential skyscrapers in

downtown Shanghai to remote Tibetan mountain villages.

China conducts the census every ten years to determine population growth, movement patterns and other trends, using the findings to apportion resources for education, health, transportation, labour, elderly care and other services.

The previous tally in 2010 counted 1,339,724,852 persons, an increase of 5.83 per cent, or



Census workers use an app to collect information from a resident in Qingdao, in China's eastern Shandong province on Sunday (AFP)

73,899,804 people - equal to adding more than the population of France over ten years.

Much of the attention of this year's census will be on whether it indicates any population bump from China's relaxation of its former 'one-child policy'.

The policy was introduced in the late 1970s to slow rapid population growth, but was relaxed four years ago to allow two children due to fears over China's

fast-ageing society and shrinking workforce.

But the change has not yet resulted in a baby boom.

The national birth rate last year was the slowest since the founding of Communist-ruled China in 1949, with many Chinese today choosing smaller families amid rising living costs.

The government estimates the 2020 census could update the population to 1.42bn, a 5.99

per cent increase.

A research institute affiliated with real estate giant Evergrande Group last week issued a study saying the government figure was an overestimate, and recommended that three children be allowed. "If adjustments are not made, it will seriously affect national rejuvenation and (China's) rise as a great power," the researchers said.

AFP

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Global coronavirus death toll touches 1.2mn

Paris, France - The novel coronavirus has killed at least 1,196,109 people since the outbreak emerged in China last December, according to a tally compiled from official sources at 1100 GMT on Sunday.

At least 46,099,440 cases of COVID-19 have been registered, of which at least 30,660,500 are now considered recovered.

The tallies, using data collected by AFP from national authorities and information from the World Health Organization (WHO), probably reflect only a

fraction of the actual number of infections. Many countries are testing only symptomatic or the most serious cases.

On Saturday, medical professionals across the world recorded 6,559 new deaths and 466,108 new cases. Based on latest reports, the countries with the most new deaths were United States with 776 new deaths, followed by India with 470 and Mexico with 464.

The United States is the worst-affected country with 230,556 deaths from 9,127,109 cases. At least 3,612,478 peo-



Activists from leftwing groups take part in a protest rally, in Italy's capital Rome on Saturday (AFP)

ple have been declared recovered. After the US, the hardest-hit countries are Brazil with 159,884 deaths from 5,535,605 cases, India with 122,111 deaths from 8,184,082 cases, Mexico with 91,753 deaths from 924,962 cases, and the United Kingdom with

46,555 deaths from 1,011,660 cases.

The country with the highest death rate is Peru with 105 fatalities per 100,000 inhabitants, followed by Belgium with 100, Spain 77, Brazil 75.

China - excluding Hong Kong and Macau - has to date declared 85,997 cases, including 4,634 deaths and 81,004 recoveries.

Latin America and the Caribbean overall has 402,164 deaths from 11,316,343 cases, Europe 278,774 deaths from 10,467,341 infections, and the United States and Canada 240,692 deaths from 9,361,542 cases.

Asia has reported 170,843 deaths from 10,573,913 cases, the Middle East 59,734 deaths from 2,558,533 cases, Africa 42,880 deaths from 1,787,176 cases, and Oceania 1,022 deaths from 34,598 cases.

As a result of corrections by national authorities or late publication of data, the figures updated over the past 24 hours may not correspond exactly to the previous day's tallies.

AFP



Funeral home employees of Spain hold signs calling for better conditions during a protest in the capital Madrid on Sunday (AFP)

Clashes in Spain over restrictions for second night

Madrid, Spain - Police in Spain made dozens of arrests during clashes with protestors for a second consecutive night as demonstrators took to the streets to denounce the new coronavirus restrictions.

In some cities, looting and vandalism broke out on the fringes of the protests.

The biggest disturbances were in Madrid where scores of demonstrators chanting 'freedom!' torched rubbish bins and set up makeshift barricades on the city's main thoroughfare, the Gran Via, images on social media showed.

When police moved in to clear the gathering, they were pelted with stones and flares.

Twelve people including three police officers were lightly injured in the clashes, emergency services said. Police said they arrested 32 people.

In Logrono, the capital of the northern wine-producing region of La Rioja, a small group of people burned garbage bins and smashed shop windows.

The trouble broke out following a peaceful protest against the closure of restaurants and

bars in the region as part of widening restriction in Spain.

Hooded youths wearing face masks ran out of a clothing shop with armfuls of items in their hand as a security alarm bared, images on local media showed.

"We earn our living working and in five minutes they destroyed our lives," the owner of the shop, Cristina Perez, told a local television station.

Police arrested six people in Logrono, a national police spokeswoman said, adding that another ten people were detained in protests in the northern cities of Bilbao and Santander.

In the southern city of Malaga a small group of demonstrators overturned rubbish bins and threw bottles at police.

Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez condemned the unrest. 'Violent and irrational behaviour by minority groups is intolerable. It is not the way,' he tweeted.

'Only from responsibility, unity and sacrifice will we be able to defeat the pandemic that is devastating all countries.'

AFP

New English lockdown could last longer than month: Govt

London, UK - A new four-week coronavirus lockdown in England will be extended if it fails to reduce infection rates, the government said Sunday, as it faced criticism over the abrupt decision to shut down again.

The second national lockdown, hastily announced late Saturday following warnings hospitals could be overwhelmed within weeks, is set to come into force from Thursday and end on December 2.

But senior minister Michael Gove said the government would maintain the stringent measures if the R rate - the number of people one person with the virus is likely to infect - remained above one.

"With a virus this malignant, and with its capacity to move so quickly, it would be foolish to predict with absolute certainty what will happen in four weeks' time," he told Sky News.

"And so therefore of course we will review what requires to be done but we have a clear plan over the next four-week (period)," he added.

Under the new rules unveiled by Prime Minister Boris Johnson, people must stay at home except in cases where exemptions apply, such as for work, education or exercise.

In contrast to the months-long UK-wide lockdown earlier this year, schools, colleges and universities will remain open.

But pubs and restaurants will shut unless serving takeaway food, while all leisure and entertainment venues and non-essential shops will close.



Shoppers walk past stores advertising sales in London as England prepares to enter into a second lockdown on Sunday (AFP)

The govt was too slow in the first phase of the pandemic and now it's been too slow again. There will be no exit unless the govt uses this time to fix test, trace, isolate

KEIR STARMER

after announcing nearly 22,000 new infections on Saturday.

The government's scientific advisors have warned COVID-19's prevalence, and resulting hospitalisations and deaths, are rising faster than their most dire predictions.

They cautioned that under the current trajectory, intensive care units and ventilator capacity could be overwhelmed by

early December while winter deaths could be double the current toll.

Britain is already among the hardest-hit countries in Europe, with total COVID-19 related deaths nearing 47,000, after another 326 fatalities were announced.

Some European neighbours and the devolved governments in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have already re-imposed partial lockdowns to try to cut their surging virus rates.

Last month, the UK government's Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) recommended a two-week national 'circuit-breaker' lockdown over the half-term school holidays this past week.

But Johnson, who is responsible for health policy in England only, resisted the move, opting to persevere with a system of localised restrictions.

Keir Starmer, the leader of the main opposition Labour party who last month backed the circuit-breaker, said the delay meant the lockdown would now be longer and harder on people.

"The government was too slow in the first phase of the pandemic and now it's been too slow again," he told the BBC.

Starmer called on ministers to improve the faltering contact tracing system to ensure the shutdown ends early next month. "There will be no effective exit on the second of December unless the government uses this time to fix test, trace and isolate," he added.

SAGE member Jeremy Farrar said the government may need to consider closing schools, amid evidence the virus is surging amongst secondary school students.

AFP

People in pandemic-hit Mexico mark somber Day of the Dead

Mexico City, Mexico - In Mexico death is usually a cause for celebration during the Day of the Dead festival, but this year parades are cancelled and cemeteries closed due to the coronavirus pandemic.

From November 1-2, people across the country normally deck their homes, streets and relatives' graves with flowers, candles and colourful skulls.

The traditional festival, which in 2003 was added to the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage list, centres around the belief that the living and the dead can commune during the brief period.

With its bright colours and cartoonish skeleton costumes, the Day of the Dead has be-



A man performs a ritual at an altar during a tribute - called 'A flower for each soul' - to the COVID-19 victims, at the National Palace in Mexico City, on Saturday (AFP)

come an internationally recognised symbol of Mexican culture.

But this year the authorities have urged people to stay at home to avoid spreading the coronavirus, which has killed more than 90,000 people in Mexico - one of the world's highest tolls.

President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador declared three days of national mourning for coronavirus victims to coincide with the festival.

Many families will remember those who have passed away in the privacy of their homes.

Janet Burgos decorated an altar with confetti, fruit and a photograph of her mother Rosa Maria who died in June aged 64 from suspected COVID-19.

"Now I begin to see what the Day of the Dead really represents," the 41 year old said, adding that her mother had asked her and her siblings not to cry when she died. "I want everyone to be happy, to have a party because I died. I don't want them to be crying, because life goes on," Burgos remembers her mother telling her.

The Day of the Dead, which is widely considered to be Mexico's most important festival, is rooted in the indigenous Mexico culture, mixed with Christian superstition brought by Spanish colonisers.

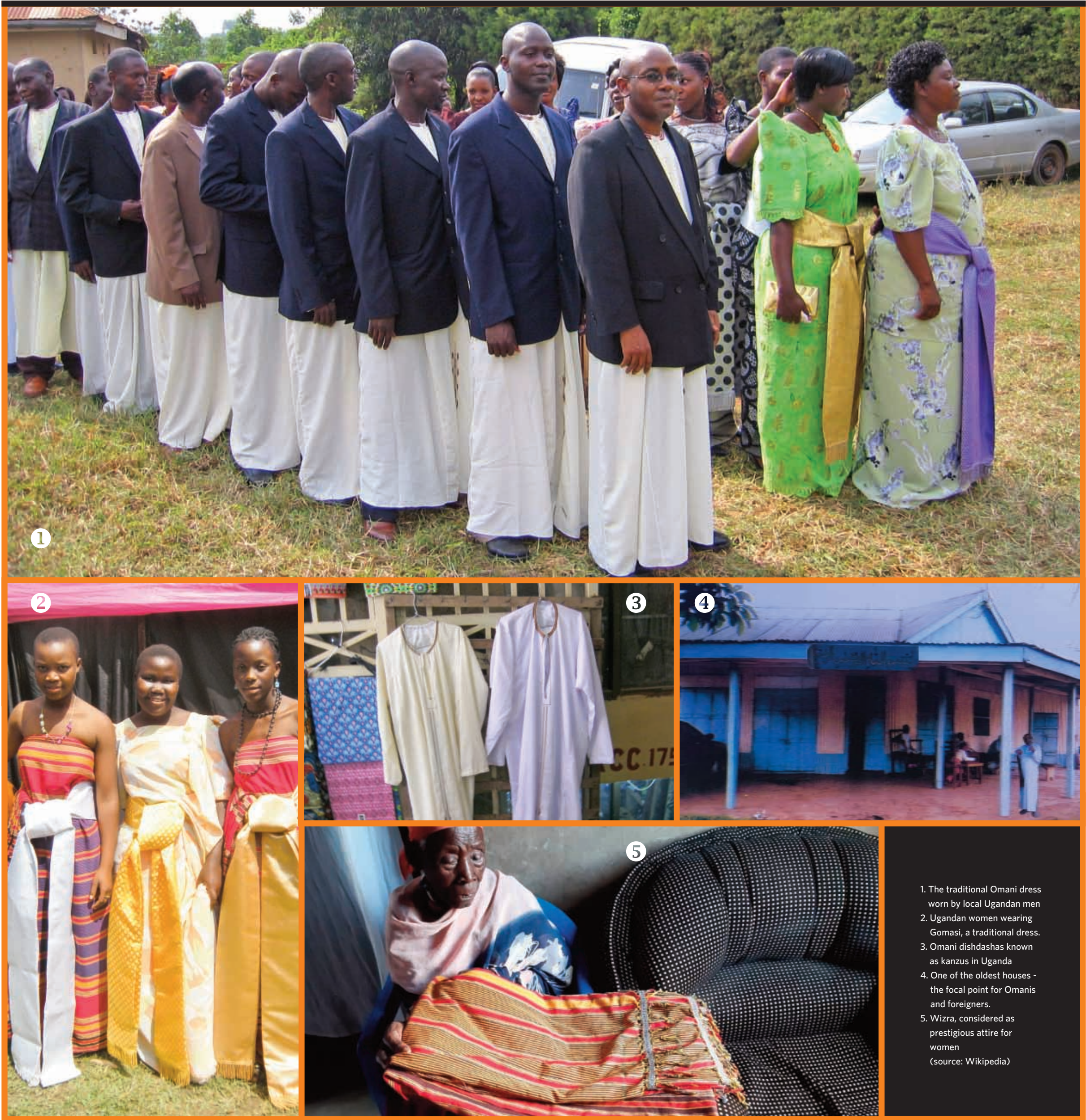
The Mexico were the dominant indigenous population in pre-Hispanic Mexico.

The modern celebration is based on a Mexico legend that after death, they travelled through the nine regions of the underworld, known as Mictlan.

Millions of Mexican families set up altars on which they place the personal belongings of the dead and adorn them with intensely orange marigold flowers and confetti in the shape of skulls.

Usually the capital hosts a parade of colourful skulls and 'Calavera Catrinas' - a famous skeletal representation of death created by cartoonist Jose Guadalupe Posada more than a century ago. But this year virtual events are replacing the usual festivities.

AFP



1. The traditional Omani dress worn by local Ugandan men

2. Ugandan women wearing Gomasi, a traditional dress.

3. Omani dishdashas known as kanzus in Uganda

4. One of the oldest houses - the focal point for Omanis and foreigners.

5. Wizra, considered as prestigious attire for women

(source: Wikipedia)

A SLICE OF OMAN IN UGANDA

Omanis in Uganda - the ambassadors of civilisation

Shaddad al Musalmy

Uganda, which may be lesser known to have historical links with Oman by the younger generation, is still a safe haven for many Omanis, and the country which hails from a diversity of rich culture, is remarkably hospitable.

According to Mohamed Nasser Ammar al Harthi, who has done research and is in the process of writing a book on Omanis in Uganda, Omanis travelled deep inside Africa from the East African Coast, and Uganda was one of the major destinations for Omanis.

“During the reign of Seyyid Said bin Sultan in Zanzibar, Omanis travelled deep inside Africa from the East African Coast and Uganda was one of the major destinations for Omanis. In 1844, Ahmed bin Ibrahim al Amri, who introduced Islam to the King of Buganda in Uganda, was the first Omani and foreigner to enter Uganda,” Harthi said.

Then, other Omanis and other foreigners - Europeans, Yemenis, Indians followed. “The Omanis in Uganda then received and encouraged and supported other Omanis arriving in Uganda in many



ways, like doing business, or in their travel to/from Uganda and other places or neighbouring countries - whatever the needs were. The Omani guests and other foreigners felt secure and encouraged because of them,” Harthi said.

“My forefathers also followed suit, some decided to marry and live in Uganda and others brought their families with them,” he added.

In Uganda, dress is determined by the region they come from. Influenced by the outside world some tribes changed their clothing. “The King of Buganda (Kabaka) who accepted Islam was the first to put on the Omani ‘dishdashas’ (locally known as Kanzu) and the ‘bisht’ (Bisuti)



The King of Buganda (Kabaka) who accepted Islam was the first to put on the Omani 'dishdasha' (locally known as Kanzu) and the 'bisht' (Bisuti) followed by his senior officials in 1844

MOHAMED NASSER AMMAR AL HARTHI

followed by his senior officials in 1844. The Kanzu was then adopted as clothing for men in Buganda region and it slowly spread to other neighbouring regions like Toro, Bunyoro and Busoga,” Harthi disclosed, adding, “The pattern and design of the original Omani dishdasha, which our ancestral women used to knit by hand is still maintained in Uganda and tailored locally.”

Interestingly, in Uganda, the men do not use the ‘wizra’ (locally known as Bikoy and Bikoyi) as Omani men do. Instead, Ugandan women put on the wizra which are considered as prestigious attire. “I wish to mention that the initial old wizra were originally from Oman and of

different patterns and types. In the old days, these wizra were manufactured from different Omani local villages, given names similar to the originating Omani villages, and exported.

In Uganda the names of the wizra which were brought in by Omanis in 1880 are known as Karyati from Quriyat, Bula from Ibra and Sumaili from Samayil.

According to Harthi, Omanis took with them Omani medicines, like subar, khali, qarfa, filfil aswad, and the luban (incense) burning tradition.

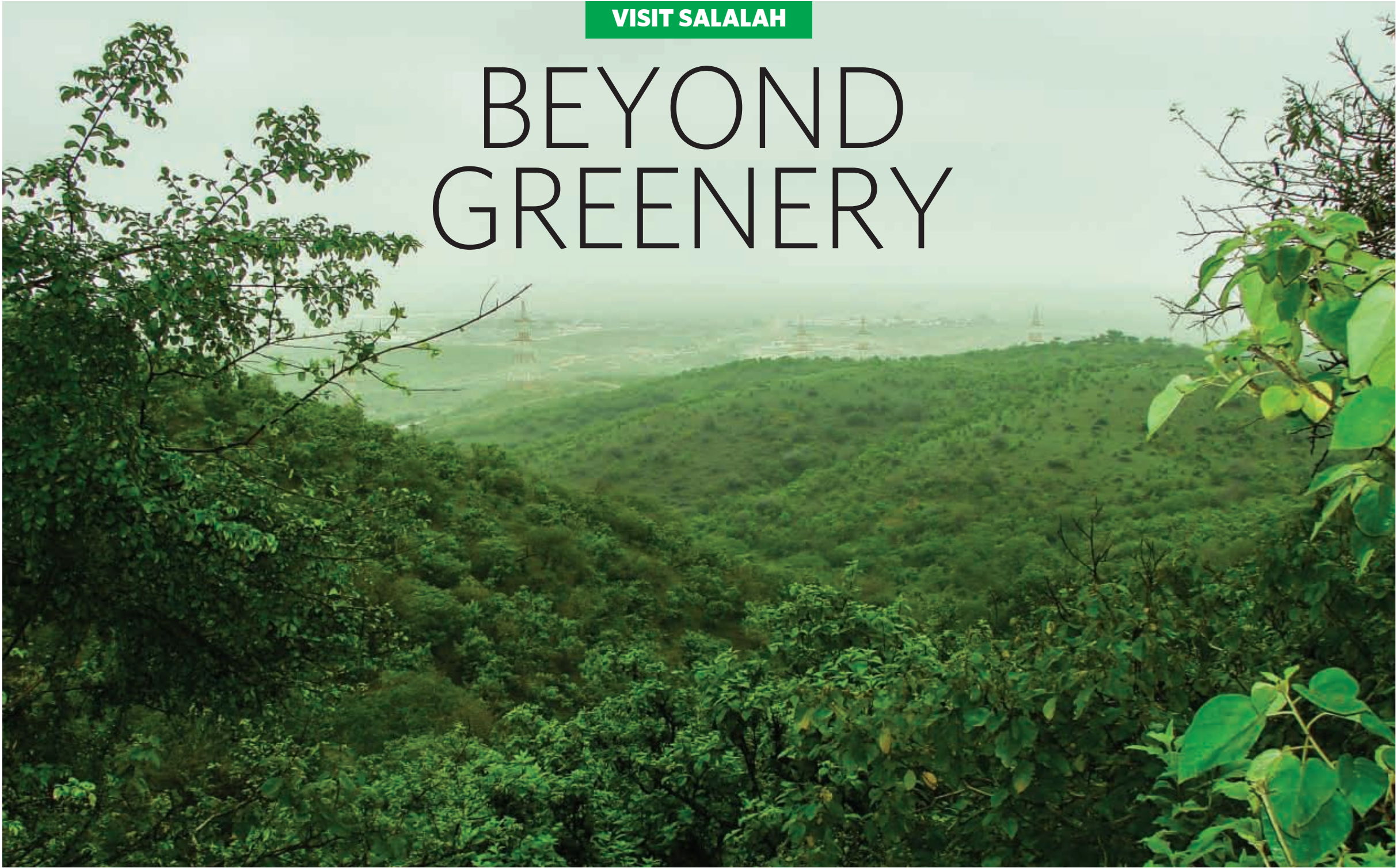
Harthi, 66, who lived in Uganda, says, he enjoyed his life there. “I was brought up in Uganda by my Omani family, and frankly, I enjoyed living and studying in

Uganda. As an Omani, I have therefore decided to write about my life experience in Uganda. The Omani customs and culture benefited us in many ways and we felt proud to be Omani. The Omanis felt responsible for each other and for the upbringing of their children.”

The locals picked up some useful cultural traditions and maintained them, and vice versa. Omanis had a tendency to speak a number of languages, he said.

He further said that his elders made it a habit to listen to BBC Arabic radio and would then discuss it when they got together for Qahwa (Omani coffee). “We always stood around to serve them and listen to their discussions. However, when the Late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos came to power in 1970, many got thrilled and decided to come back to Oman,” Harthi said.

“The Ugandan Bikoyi - wizra fashion has dramatically changed to shiny patterns. Some are used for making the traditional dress - Gomasi - as wizra fashion. This new design has also spread to other African countries. I wish to see this Omani heritage and influence recorded by UNESCO,” Harthi added.



Any time of the year is a good time to visit Salalah which provides an enriching experience for the visitor with multiple interesting sites

Hubert Vaz

If you've been in Oman for years and not yet visited Salalah, that is something unpardonable! So, before someone asks you so, and you have to spin yarn to conceal your em-

barrassment, plan a trip right away. People flock to this green paradise from different parts of the GCC during the annual khareef season (June to September) every year for some respite from the sweltering heat of the peak summer. With greenery ga-

lore, waterfalls and cool misty mornings, Salalah is as best as it can get in this part of the Arab world every year. So, how could you possibly avoid a trip to this oasis! Though the khareef season is the best time to visit Salalah, a visit to this birthplace

of the former sultan, Late Sultan Qaboos bin Said, is an enriching experience all through the year. If you've missed the khareef, you need not wait till next year to visit Salalah. And you need not go to those spots that showcase waterfalls and fresh water pools

surrounded by unique flora and fauna during the khareef, there are many other interesting spots that can give you memories to cherish for a lifetime. Consider visits to these five interesting sites after the rains have receded.



Tomb of Nabi Ayoub
Located atop a green hill – Jebel Ateen, the tomb of Nabi Ayoub (also known as the Biblical prophet Job) is a big attraction in Salalah. Ideally one should head for this destination in the morning when the hill is covered with fog and mist. It is a good 30 minute drive from the city and advisable to take a local cab to reach the destination as driving in the midst of fog can be quite tricky for visitors who are not familiar with the route. At the tomb, lies the remains of Nabi Ayoub (PBUH) and people queue up to pay a quick visit. A footprint of the prophet exists outside the building where he was said to strike the ground to unleash a spring. The tomb compound also houses a mosque.



Blowholes at Mughsayl
The pure white sands of the unending stretch of Mughsayl beach located around a 40 minute drive from Salalah city culminate near the Marneef Cave which is a big draw for visitors, especially during the Khareef season when huge number of tourists can be seen all over this place. The rocky formations around Marneef Cave have barricades to lead tourists to good viewing points of the sea. Towards one end of the beach, the popular Mughsayl Blowholes are located. One can see water gushing upwards from a series of holes in the rocks as the waves lash the shores. Depending on the tide and the intensity of the winds which bring in rumbling, foamy waves, the water can be thrust upwards upto 25 metres through these blowholes, creating fascinating sights.



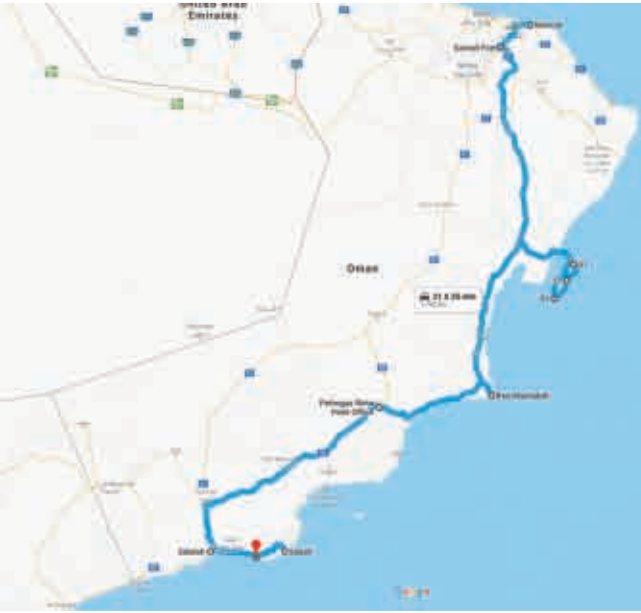
Taqah Castle, beach
Located about 40km from Salalah, Taqah is also one of the most visited tourist destinations in Oman. It is popular for the Taqah Castle and the beach where huge flocks of migratory birds flock all day long. They say, the town of Taqah is unique from any other coastal town in Oman as one can see a blend of three different topographies merging at the place. With a clean beach in the south of the town, deserts in the north and mountains in the east, Taqah offers the visitor many visual treats. It also is home to some archaeological sites recognised as World Heritage Sites by UNESCO. Also, the 19th century Taqah Castle reflects the lifestyle of Sheikh Ali bin Taman Al Ma'shani, the great-grandfather of Late Sultan Qaboos. It is now a museum with great exhibits



Anti Gravity Point
This is an amazing location in Salalah also known as Magnetic Point or Gravity Point. At this point, the road has a gradual upward inclination and vehicles move upwards in neutral gear, even over 40kmph, without any acceleration. This point is quite far flung near Tawi At-tair on the way to Mirbat, around 30 minutes drive from Wadi Darbat. You may not be able to drive and reach there on your own without proper directions. And if you take a transporter, unless you insist on visiting this spot, he might try to skip it as it is quite cut away from other destinations. A signboard at the site says 'Location of gravity'.



Al Baleed Archaeological Park
Al Baleed Archaeological Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is considered a 'jewel' in the landscape of Salalah. It is an open-air archaeological site located off the coast of the Arabian Sea, in close proximity to Al Husn Palace and the famous Haffa Souq. Al Baleed was an ancient port city in Salalah and the frankincense trade had flourished here between the eighth and 16th century. At this site, one can see the remains of an ancient mosque and a few dilapidated pillars of a courtyard which once had around 148 pillars. The nearby Museum of the Frankincense Land houses artifacts which had been excavated from the ruins of this city.



Getting there

There are only three ways for you to get to Salalah:

First, if time is a constraint, take the less than an hour flight and arrive in good shape which enables you to set out for sightseeing immediately after dumping your bags in your hotel. (A two-night stay is the minimum requirement)
Secondly, take the bus

(Mwasalat or other private services) which takes approximately 12 hours to reach Salalah. The ride is comfortable with adequate stops for meals/toilet, etc enroute.
Thirdly, choose to drive in your own car - the route is simple and easy to follow. However, it will

leave you tired, especially if you are the only driver. Also, if you are travelling with family/friends, you will stop on the way for meals/photoshoots more frequently than the bus and end up taking a longer time to reach. (14 hours?)

