



MONDAY, 08 MARCH 2021
www.muscatdaily.com
Email: muscatdaily@apexmedia.co.om
To subscribe, call toll free no: 80076000



28°C/20°C

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

GO TO PAGES 02 & 12

Five executives from Oman in Forbes' Top ME CEOs ranking

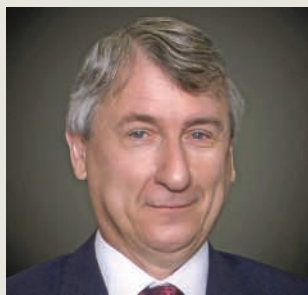
Our Correspondent
Muscat

Five Oman-based CEOs have made it to the Forbes Middle

East first annual 'Top CEOs in the Middle East' ranking, recognising the executives making significant contributions to the region's economies.



Abdulrahman Salim al Hatmi



Raoul Restucci



Talal Said al Mamari



Waleed Khamis al Hashar



AbdulAziz al Balushi

The inaugural list celebrates the visionary executives who are strategically spearheading growth, both in the workplace and their industries. 'At a time when

the only certainty is more uncertainty, these business leaders are demonstrating that agility and adaptability are key to survive and thrive. Some are scaling

large family businesses, others are responsible for government-owned companies,' stated Forbes in its report on the ranking. From Oman, Abdulrahman

Salim al Hatmi, group CEO of Asyad, is ranked 15th, followed by Raoul Restucci, managing director of PDO (25th), Talal Said al Mamari, CEO of Omantel

(45th), Waleed Khamis al Hashar, CEO of Bank Muscat (68th) and AbdulAziz al Balushi, group CEO of Ominvest (77th). Continued on Page 04

Sultanate to vaccinate 60% of its population by 2021 end

Muscat - H E Dr Ahmed Mohammed al Sa'eedi, Minister of Health, has said that the sultanate is expected to receive 200,000 doses of the Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine by the end of June or the beginning of July 2021.

New segments of society will be given priority for vaccination, according to the minister, and the age limit of target groups will be lowered gradually. He is hopeful of immunising 60 per cent of the population by the end of the year.

In a statement to Oman News Agency, H E Dr Sa'eedi pointed out that by the end of March 2021, Oman is likely to receive another batch of doses of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine.

The minister added that through COVAX - the global initiative aimed at equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines - more than 240,000 doses of different vaccines are scheduled to arrive in the sultanate between mid-March and the beginning of May 2021.

The Ministry of Health is exerting every effort to receive 1mn doses of Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine, H E Dr Sa'eedi informed. A contract will also be signed for 500,000 more doses of the Pfizer-bioNTech vaccine.

The minister pointed out that the biggest hurdle in receiving vaccines is not a financial matter but delay from vaccine producing countries. The sultanate has so far received a total of 180,000 doses, of which 80,000 were Pfizer-bioNTech and 100,000 Oxford-AstraZeneca.

Vaccine supply is a common challenge for all countries of the world, H E Dr Sa'eedi noted, adding that the sultanate has approached many international companies. However, Oman will not endorse any medicine before checking its validity, safety and efficiency.

Vaccines will be made available to the private sector after the ministry has been able to cover the target segment set by the technical team. The minister explained that the target segment, which constitutes less than 20 per cent of the population, is highly vulnerable to infection. The target group is likely to be covered before the end of April 2021. "The vaccine will then be made available in the private sector for those wishing to be vaccinated," the



Vaccines will be made available to the private sector after the ministry has been able to cover the target segment set by the technical team

H E DR AHMED AL SA'EEDI

minister said.

The minister regretted the fact that some individuals avoid getting immunised with the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine. He reaffirmed that the sultanate will not receive any vaccine or medical drug before checking if it is safe.

"The delay in receiving doses of the Pfizer-bioNTech vaccine is beyond the will of the Ministry of Health. It is a global delay that occurred when the company opted to expand one of its European factories," said H E Dr Sa'eedi.

He exhorted citizens, residents and health workers to come forward and take vaccines which, he reiterated are effective and secure. He reaffirmed that no serious side effects of COVID-19 vaccines have been registered in the sultanate or anywhere else in the world.

The minister deplored the unfounded rumours and misinformation in circulation via social media about vaccines. He also expressed his dismay at some health workers favouring one vaccine over others, noting that such preferences are not based on scientific evidence.

He referred to the experience of one country that administered the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine to 140,000 people and found out that it gives extra protection from acute infection and contributes to shorter hospitalisation, besides reducing death rate by more than 94 per cent compared to the vaccine of another company that registered only 84 per

cent reduction in infection and deaths.

H E Dr Sa'eedi underscored the fact that there is no scientific difference between the Pfizer-bioNTech and Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccines, though one of the two is more abundantly available than the other at this point in time.

The minister explained that vaccines of some international companies have not yet been given the approval of World Health Organization. Such companies use the vaccines in their respective regions, but the sultanate will not accept any vaccine unless it is endorsed by the WHO.

Oman began its National Immunisation Campaign against COVID-19 in December 2020. ONA

Honourable Lady sends message on International Women's Day

Muscat - The Honourable Lady has sent a message on the occasion of International Women's Day observed on March 8, in which she said:

"International Women's Day highlights women's prominent status and recognises her role in nation-building and the determination to continue supporting women in all spheres.

"On this day, we would like to express our pride and delight at the accomplishments of Omani women which reflects the progressive attitude of the nation. Omani women are accorded a high status locally and internationally.

"We would like to remember the great efforts exerted by women in Oman and the fact that they join hands with womenfolk worldwide in building, developing and supporting their families and communities.

"Our sincere commendation to women for their contribution to human issues globally and their high sense of responsibility throughout the ages.

"Hail women in our dear country Oman! Hail women everywhere in the world!" ONA

Honourable Lady visits Imty village

Our Correspondent
Muscat

To support Omani heritage, the Honourable Lady visited Imty in the wilayat of Izki, Dakhliyah governorate, on Saturday.

In a visitor's book, the Honourable Lady wrote a message, saying, "I am pleased with what I have seen, the great legacy of this beautiful region. Blessed are your efforts and I wish you success."

Speaking to *Muscat Daily*, Falah Salim Khalfan al Toobi, project development manager of Harat neighbourhood in Imty, said, "The visit was aimed at witnessing the developments that have taken place in the village, supporting volunteer work, and viewing the artworks installed in the village. The Honourable Lady also saw a mural that was created recently by several artists from different Arab countries to support the village." The mural was painted on the wall of a structure built on a falaj.



He described the Honourable Lady's visit as a great

honour and motivation to continue the work of developing the village.

DHOFAR LIFT RECORD TENTH HM'S CUP TITLE



H E Sayyid Saud bin Hilal bin Hamad al Busaidi, Minister of State and Governor of Muscat, presents the winner's trophy to Dhofar captain Ali al Nahar (Syed Fasiuddin/Muscat Daily)

See also Page 16

03



Gulf Institute of Gemology - 'guardians of the industry'

14



Six of the worst for Premier League champions Liverpool

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

In step with men in nation-building

The sultanate will join the rest of the world in observing International Women's Day today. The event celebrates the prominent status accorded to women internationally and also showcases the welfare programmes for women which ensure their enhanced status in society and participation alongside men in every aspect of life. *Muscat Daily* spoke with a few prominent women on the occasion of International Women's Day



DR KAMEEZ FATIMA SADRIWALA

Associate professor, Department of Accounting, University of Nizwa; researcher and speaker at world forums

Gender inequality towards women cannot be denied. COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the existing gap. The data worldwide shows that roughly 80 per cent of healthcare and social-care workers are women, yet the pandemic hit the jobs of women hard. The disappointing fact is that poor women representation was found in pandemic solution strategy committees. What message are we giving to the world?

On this 2021 International Women's Day, I appeal to society to reduce the anxiety and the stress women face due to work-life balance, financial distress and above all lack of respect and value. Women are better bosses and better leaders; they are gentle, kind and more approachable. Do not sexually harass and assault them; treat them with respect, love and courteousness which they have been deprived for ages. Gender equality should be the major focus of all policies. It is a necessity for a happy and prosperous world.

DR SAMAH MAHMOUD AL SHARIF

Head of Veterinary Quarantine Department at Muscat International Airport under the Ministry of Agricultural, Fisheries and Water Resources

As we celebrate International Women's Day, we thank women for their active presence in various cultural, social, political and humanitarian fields. Oman has paid full attention to the participation of Omani women in the march of the Blessed Renaissance, providing them with opportunities for education, training and employment, and supporting their role and position in society. The Omani woman has achieved a lot regionally and internationally, especially in the veterinary field. Omani women still have ambitions and hopes to achieve on the global level.



SAADA AL ISMAILI

Head of Women's Department at Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, and board member of Oman Olympic Committee

As we celebrate International Women's Day, we thank women for their active presence in various sports, cultural, social, political and humanitarian fields.

International Women's Day is a special day for every mother, sister, wife and worker in any field. We offer all the love and appreciation to women who are essential partners in building any society. The woman has proven her ability and success in every field. I also congratulate the Omani sportswomen who have succeeded and proved their ability in various local and international sports competitions. I thank everyone who celebrates this day for their support to women.



RUMAITHA AL BUSAIDI

Director of Board, Environment Society of Oman

International Women's Day is one of my favourite days. It is a time to celebrate the impressive progress women at all levels of the career ladder have made in recent decades. This year's theme proclaims 'From challenge comes change, so let's all choose to challenge'. And climate change represents the most complex challenge of our time - it requires a concerted, proactive and holistic response.

However, gender inequality dramatically limits the resilience and adaptive capacity of us all to realise our climate ambitions. As a young Omani woman, the identities I carry have impacted the work that I do in ways that would surely be different if I weren't carrying them, and for that I am grateful. Despite the challenges we women face, I am confident that with more of us coming together, championing one another and seeking male allies, we can all work together to promote gender-responsive climate policies, and find ways to connect our work using the gender lens.



PIYA PAWANI

Model, actor, pageant winner

All of us are beautiful and strong in our own ways. It's our struggle, experience and exposure to situations and people that make us who we are. Let's hope we learn that every individual is unique and different and one must accept, love and respect all. Let go of judgements, and society-set standards and restrictions. Encourage one another to dream big, spread your wings and pursue your passion. Here's to all the strong women and men who love, support and motivate them to thrive and move ahead in life. Happy International Women's Day to all.

FAWZIA ABDULHADI ABDUL AZIZ

Executive, oil and gas sector

A woman is sophisticated, stunning and skilful. There is no woman like another; each and every one is a unique combination of strength, intelligence and beauty. A woman is a bunch of characteristics and experiences that have the power to change lives. International Women's Day is a day to take note of the wonderful contributions women make to society and life as a whole, and those we know who have shaped and raised us to be where we are. Wishing every woman a very Happy Women's Day.



SUHAILA NASSER AL KINDI

Head of Tender, Contracts and Procurement Department at be'ah

I'd like to congratulate the women of the world on the International Women's Day. The world is celebrating this day for the effective and influential role of women in society and its development. Women represent half of society. I also congratulate the Omani woman who has proved her ability in varied fields with the support of His Majesty the Sultan. Omani women have had a great role in spreading environmental culture among members of society.



AHLI BANK SAOG RIGHTS ISSUE RIGHTS TRADING CLOSES TOMORROW



Rights Issue of 300,000,000 Shares, at a price of Baizas 101 per Share

(With a share price of Baizas 100 per share plus issue expenses of Baiza 1 per Share)

Shareholders who do not wish to exercise their rights, have an option to trade their rights on Muscat Securities Market, through their brokers during market hours up to 9th March 2021.

Investors who wish to purchase rights may do so on Muscat Securities Market through their brokers during market hours up to 9th March 2021. Such investors, based on the rights purchased, should contact the Issue Manager immediately to obtain their application forms for subscription.

RIGHTS TRADING PERIOD	RIGHTS SUBSCRIPTION PERIOD
Opening Date: 25 th February 2021	Opening Date: 1 st March 2021
Closing Date: 9 th March 2021	Closing Date: 15 th March 2021

ISSUE MANAGER



Usher Capital SAOG
PO Box 1137, GPO, PC 111, Muscat, Sultanate of Oman
Tel: +968 24 949 000; Fax: +968 24 949 099
www.u-capital.net

COLLECTING BANK



AHLI BANK SAOG
P.O. Box 545, P.C. 116, Mina Al Fahal, Sultanate of Oman
Tel: +968 24577000; Fax: +968 24568001
www.ahlibank.com

Ministry amends end-of-service benefits for expats in public sector

Our Correspondent Muscat

H E Dr Mahad bin Said bin Ali Ba'owain, Minister of Labour, has issued Ministerial Decision No 35/2021 amending some provisions of the executive regulations of the Civil Service Law.

The first article of the decision states that the text of Article 8 of Appendix No 10 of the executive regulations of the aforementioned Civil Service Law be replaced by the second party (the expatriate employee), who is entitled upon termination of his service a grant in the amount of one month's salary for each year of

his service, up to a maximum of ten months for those in grades 1 to 6, and 12 months for grades 7 to 14.

These benefits are based on the last salary received by the second party, so that its value does not exceed RO12,000.

The employee is not entitled to the aforementioned grant in some cases such as if his service period is less than five years, unless the termination of service is due to death or inability to work, if he is punished with dismissal from service, if his service is terminated on account of felony or due to punishment for a crime involving dishonour or

dishonesty.

Article 2 of the decision also stipulates that this amendment applies to new non-Omani employees and those who have not completed ten years in service.

Appendix 10 of the executive regulations of the Civil Service Law relates to a contract of employment for expatriates in permanent jobs.

Earlier, all employees who put in more than two years of service were entitled to a maximum of 12 months salary as the end-of-service benefit.

The decision was issued on March 4, and came into effect a day after its publication in the Official Gazette.

Researchers in Oman develop AI-based symptom checker to aid telemedicine

Our Correspondent Muscat

As the COVID-19 pandemic rages on, new research to offset the repercussions of the disease are also increasing.

Researchers in Oman have developed a clinical decision support system (CDSS) for the provision of telemedicine in primary health centres and satellite clinics of Royal Oman Police (ROP) hospitals to support coronavirus patients.

They also developed an artificial intelligence-based symptom checker, which can be used by any citizen from home based on their current symptoms, a statement from The Research Council (TRC) under the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation (MoHERI), said.

The COVID-19 Research Programme of MoHERI has showcased many research projects on



Dr Sherimon P C

the coronavirus pandemic.

The latest one is 'Using clinical ontologies to build a knowledge-based CDSS for the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) with the adoption of teleconferencing for the primary health centres' by co-principal investigator Dr Sherimon P C from Arab Open University, the statement added.

Dr Sherimon and his research team used ontology to represent the clinical protocol available to combat COVID-19. Ontology includes concepts related to med-

ical knowledge, and attributes and semantic relationships between these concepts.

They also established their own WebRTC based telemedicine application, which is integrated into the CDSS. They tested the system with sample data, and it was found that the system provides the recommendations and medications similar to the doctors.

While the medical domain has a lot of expert systems to assist health practitioners in diagnosing various diseases, Dr Sherimon said that the proposed CDSS for this project is different as it involves artificial intelligence.

"Initially, the CDSS conducts diagnosis to detect the symptoms of coronavirus. It will also consider and evaluate the medical history and other medical issues or complications of the suspected patient."



Tridwip K Das
Muscat

The first graduating class of professional diamond graders of the first and only all-inclusive gemology institute in the Middle East received their degrees in December 2020. The Gulf Institute of Gemology (GIG), operating from Bait al Reem in Al Khuwayr, opened in September 2019 and aims to be the hub of gemological knowledge in the region. The institute's diplomas are internationally recognised owing to its membership to CIBJO, the World Jewellery Confederation that describes itself as the 'UN of the jewellery business'.

GIG's operations fall into three broad functions - a gem lab, a research department and education - all with the objective of 'assisting you with your everyday gem challenges'. "What we do is identify and grade any kind of gem material, and also teach how to do it," said Fabio D'Amico, CEO of GIG. "We use international systems, so any work or service we provide is of international standard. Any kind of document and all students coming out of our institute can be used and can work in any part of the world."

The services provided by GIG include comprehensive analysis reports and quality assessment for all kind of gems and minerals - natural diamonds, coloured diamonds, lab-grown diamonds, small diamonds (melee in industry parlance), coloured gemstones and jewellery.

Elaborating on the role GIG plays, D'Amico said it "protects the people and the purchase of the people. Who will guaranty you that what you bought is for the right price? Or what you bought is really what the jeweller told you?"

'We are like a referee in a football match'

He would have us believe this can only be done by gemology institutes such as GIG, which in D'Amico's words are 'guardians of the industry'. "We are not only for the final consumer, but for the retailers and wholesalers too. We speak for the entire trade. We are like a referee in a football

GEM SCHOOL

The Gulf Institute of Gemology in Al Khuwayr is among an exclusive few in the world considered 'guardians of the industry'



Any kind of document and all students coming out of our institute can be used and can work in any part of the world

FABIO D'AMICO

match. Everybody can rest assured with our guarantee."

But rather curiously, GIG doesn't tell its customers the price of the gemstones it evaluates. It establishes the value not in terms of numbers or cost, but in terms of rarity. "It's for our customer to convert the rarity in terms of numbers," D'Amico said.

Asked how an intangible quality such as rarity helps a GIG client eager to know the price of a gem, D'Amico reverts to the football referee analogy. "Our customers are not only final customers; they are also retailers and wholesalers. And the price of a stone for a wholesaler is different from a retailer. Since we have to take care of all of the trade, we will not tell the price. It will be incorrect of us. We

only tell them about the rarity of the stone."

While rarity can mean different things for different stones, for diamonds, the measure of rarity is indicated by four 'C's. Colour, clarity, cut and carat weight. For the first three 'C's, there are scales, while carat weight is a number. GIG's report for any stone a client may want evaluated reveals the grades for colour, clarity and cut, besides the carat weight. With this report, clients match the position on the scales for each 'C' for an indication of its rarity, and consequently an estimation of its price.

Explaining how they grade stones, D'Amico said gemologists derive information from the interaction between the gemstone and light. "We analyse

gemstones using the latest spectroscopic techniques - micro-Raman, Fourier-transform infrared and more - to derive information about their chemistry and crystallinity. Conducting these studies help identify the materials and treatments, and distinguish between natural stones and synthetics."

Varying in duration from five days to two months, GIG has courses on identification and grading of diamonds and coloured stones, and programmes for jewellery, including jewellery design using CAD/CAM. "We cover the entire process involved in our industry - from extraction from mines to the final consumer passing through the process of how to make jewellery," D'Amico informed. In keeping with the

times, the institute now offers several online courses.

Arabic language courses from April

Graduates of institutes such as GIG have careers as gemologists, lab analysts, jewellery retailers and wholesalers, auction house experts, business managers, designers, diamantaires and more. GIG's courses are open to all applicants older than 18 with a high school diploma. While enrolment currently requires fluency in English, starting April, the institute will offer courses in Arabic too.

He describes the staff at GIG - eight in all including Italians such as himself, a Greek and Omanis - as among very few professionals in the world qualified for this work. "To be a

gemologist at a high level, you need a lot of experience, and good relations and links. We have experience of running such institutes all over the world."

Having worked as in-house gemologist for the Italian luxury brand Bvlgari's gem laboratory and education manager of the California-based Gemological Institute of America (GIA), he was CEO of the Gemological Education and Certification Institute in Milan before joining GIG in 2019. "There aren't many institutes like GIA and GIG in the world - less than ten," he informed.

As for why the sultanate was chosen over the other Gulf states to open GIG in Muscat, D'Amico said, "Because Oman was the smartest country in the GCC to understand and plug the gap."

In his experienced observa-

I've completed the Diamond Grader and Professional Graduate Jeweller programmes, and currently enrolled in the Coloured Gemstones and Gem Identification Programme. GIG has opened new opportunities that I didn't know existed

AYA ISMAIL

Enrolling in GIG programmes is the best decision I ever made; the experience has been encouraging and inspiring. I have done four courses at the institute. Thankfully, I was also able to earn a scholarship offered by GIG

SAFA AL BURAIKI

tion, gemology of today is different from what it was five-ten years ago. "Now we have a lot of synthetic materials, including diamonds. Man can create and grow diamonds in a laboratory."

While the price difference between a natural diamond and a lab-grown one can be dramatic - 50 per cent less for the latter - the quality and brilliance of the two are the same. "They have the same optical, physical and chemical properties because they are built of the same material. If you look at them, there is no difference. The only difference is who made it? Mother Nature or man. But we can tell the difference."

That explains why GIG proudly claims in its mission statement that it's gaining trust one gem at a time.

oman
OASIS

sifr

OMAN'S ONLY
SODIUM FREE
DRINKING WATER

5
IN GALLON
BOTTLE

Sodium Free
Drinking
Water

The healthy choice

It is beneficial to limit sodium intake
if you have blood pressure,
diabetes, heart or kidney disease.

Call Toll-Free 800 71 222 or GSM 9275 5522
f OmanOasis @ OmanOasisOfficial www.omanoasis.com
OASIS WATER COMPANY LLC P.O.Box: 87, PC: 124, Rusayl, Sultanate of Oman.

C.R. No.: 1/36545/2

MoH launches Oman Obesity Briefing book

Muscat - Coinciding with the celebrations of World Obesity Day, a book titled *Obesity in Oman, a Major Public Health Challenge* was launched on Sunday at the Ministry of Health (MoH) headquarters.

The event took place through a virtual event held under the auspices of H E Dr Ahmed bin Mohammed bin Obaid al Sa'eedi, Minister of Health, with the attendance of a number of health practitioners and industry leaders from the MoH and others.

H E Ole Emil Moesby, Ambassador of Denmark to Oman, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, and Yemen, and Akin Aksekili, vice president at Novo Nordisk Gulf Cluster, joined the event.

The book has been developed as a collaboration between the National Diabetes and Endocrine Centre (NDEC), the Department of Non-Communicable Disease, the Department of Nutrition, the Oman Diabetes Association and Novo Nordisk, a Danish multinational pharmaceutical company.

H E Dr Sa'eedi said, "Oman faces a rise in the burden of obesity among its population. More than half of the Omani population are now overweight or obese with 30 per cent of the population having a BMI of more than 30. These figures show a rise in the prevalence of obesity in Oman since the last survey in 2008, especially amongst women."

H E Dr Sa'eedi pointed out that there is increasing recognition worldwide that obesity is not only a problem of individuals but also of society. It affects the life of the individual and is devastating in terms of the economic impact and cost of treating people



H E Dr Sa'eedi (Supplied photo)

and the loss of productivity.

"The causes of obesity are complex but one of the key drivers is the way we eat and how much we move about as a result of changes in our environment, unhealthy processed food and the technology that promote sedentary lifestyles.

"Unfortunately, convenience has led us to adopt an unhealthy lifestyle, which in turn has led to obesity. Even though there is no simple or single solution to obesity, if we are to fight this escalating crisis in our societies, a coordinated response that goes beyond the health sector is crucial.

"Only through the engagement in multi-sector dialogues and relentless commitment to work together on reducing the burden of obesity can we promote health and prevent disease."

"The importance of population-based changes in the socio-environmental variables that influence energy intake and expenditure cannot be stressed enough. Marketing restrictions, dietary guidelines, policies that

focus on improving environments like schools and workplaces are only but some of the many interventions that should stop the drastic spreading of obesity," H E Dr Sa'eedi added.

H E Moesby said, "It is vital to combat the impact of this disease in the Sultanate of Oman and the MENA region at large. Obesity is a serious, chronic disease that affects more than 650mn people around the world. An essential part of this initiative is in line with our commitment to forming partnerships to develop and implement practical solutions to address the obesity challenge."

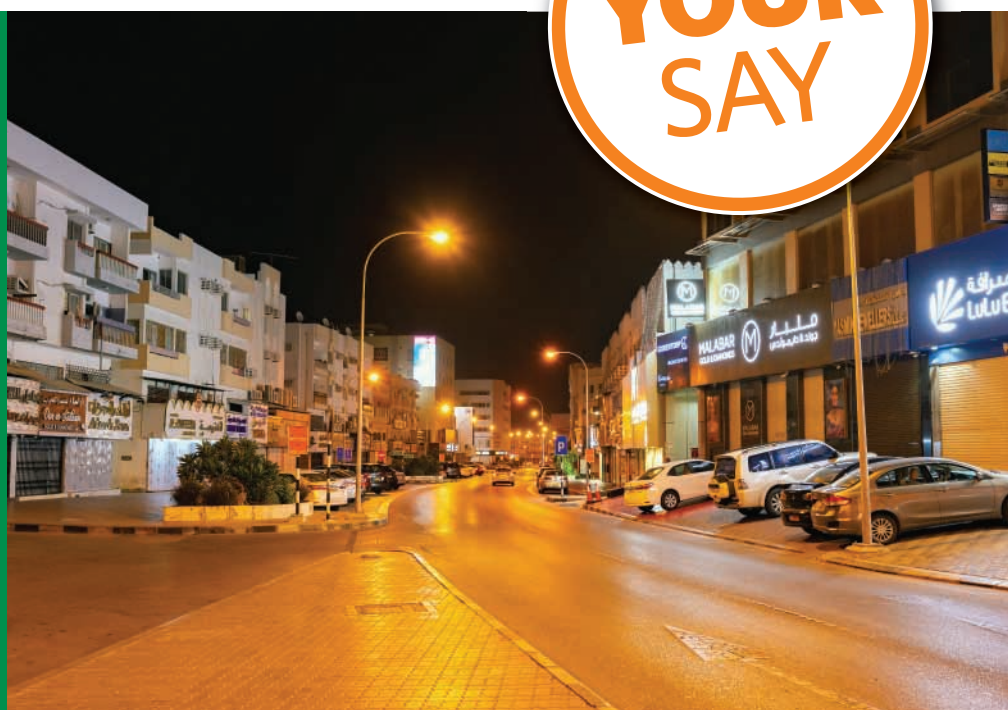
Dr Akin Aksekili, vice president of Novo Nordisk Gulf, emphasised the global burden of obesity, stating, "At Novo Nordisk, our long-term vision is to combat obesity among societies. We are committed to improving the understanding and management of obesity in collaboration with the Ministry of Health."

Dr Noor al Busaidi, director, NDEC, gave an in-depth overview of the book that focuses on the impact of obesity.

NOW ON WHATSAPP

Share your comment in not more than 50 words along with your full name, profession and front facing photo before next Sunday, 10am, via WhatsApp

Send us on WhatsApp 71509370



YOUR SAY

EVERYONE'S RESPONSIBILITY

As the COVID-19 cases increase, do you think the closure of commercial activities from 8pm to 5am will help curb the spread of the virus? How can we as individuals help prevent a spike in infections?

Asgar al Balushi
CEO

COVID-19 is an emergency and strict measures must be in place, especially in work environments. We do not see maintenance of social distancing in offices which is seen in other places. Some strategy is needed to ensure preventive measures during social interactions.



Mohamed Yaquob
Private sector employee

Closing commercial activities at 8pm is driving more people to commercial centres in a short period of time, which is risky. The best way to stop the spread is messages from patients speaking about how they suffered. Also, those who lost loved ones to the virus can speak about how they feel about losing a near and dear one to the virus.



Rahma Harib al Barwani
Student

The suspension of commercial activities will help prevent the spread of the virus. I believe we can help lower the number of cases by strictly following the precautionary measures.



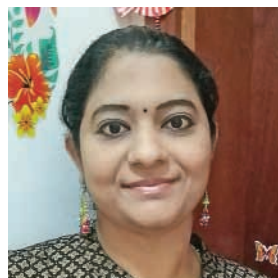
Muna Basheer al Zadjali
Private sector employee

Closure of commercial activities will not help contain infections. I prefer imposition of a lockdown. Only staying home and maintaining social distancing will produce positive results to reduce cases. Besides washing hands frequently and wearing a face mask, staying at home and avoiding large gatherings will help end this pandemic.



Ambika Padmanabhan
Educator

Many people fail to quarantine themselves or take precautionary measures. Individuals will have to understand that this disease is highly contagious and ensure that they care for other's well-being as much as they do for themselves. Closure of commercial activities will be helpful in preventing the spread of the virus by reducing exposure.



Archana Rakesh Pillai
Legal consultant

Until we have a feasible alternative, restrictions are the only thing we can do to prevent further catastrophic spread of the virus. The government is imposing restrictions despite the cost involved because every life is critical and important. The message to the nation is that it's the responsibility of each one of us to prevent infections.



? NEXT ON YOUR SAY

With summer around the corner and new water and electricity bills introduced, how and what is the best way to make sure bills aren't too high?

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

شركة زجاج مجان ش.م.ع.ع. MAJAN GLASS COMPANY S.A.O.G.

P.O Box 17, Postal Code 327, C.R.No:3/19456/6, Sohar Industrial Estate, Sultanate of Oman.
Tel: +968 26751654/5/6, Fax: +968 26751658, E-mail: info@majanglass.com

Notice for Annual Ordinary and Extra Ordinary General Meeting for Majan Glass Company SAOG

The Board of Directors of **MAJAN GLASS (the "Company")** has the pleasure to invite the shareholders to attend the Annual General Meeting, which will be held at 05:00 PM on 22/03/2021, via the electronic platform to hold general meetings which can be assessed through the website of Muscat Clearing & Depository Company (www.mcd.gov.om). If the quorum requirement for holding the Annual General Meeting is not fulfilled, a second Annual General Meeting shall be held at 05:00PM on 29/03/2021, to discuss the following agendas:

Extra Ordinary Agendas:

- To discuss and approve amending article (6) of the articles of association of the Company which relates to the board of directors' composition (as attached).

Ordinary Agendas Annual:

- To consider and approve the Board of Director's Report for the financial year ended 31 December 2020.
- To consider and approve the Corporate Governance Report for the financial year ended 31 December 2020.
- To consider the Auditor's Report and to approve the Financial Statements (Balance Sheet and Profit and Loss Account) of the Company for the financial year ended 31 December 2020.
- To consider the amounts allocated and spent for the company's social responsibilities for the year ended on 31/12/2020 (as per the Annexure).
- To consider and approve an amount of RO 500/- for Corporate Social Responsibility programs, for the year ending on 31/12/2021.
- To approve the sitting fees to the Board of Directors' meetings and its sub-committees for the previous financial year ended 31/12/2020, and to determine the sitting fees for the next fiscal year ending on 31/12/2021 (Annexure A).
- To consider and approve the transactions entered into by the Company with related parties during the fiscal year ended on 31/12/ 2020. (Annexure B)
- To consider and approve the transactions the Company will enter into with related parties during the financial year ending on 31/12/2021. (Annexure B)
- The appointment of the Statutory Auditor for the Company for the financial year ending 31/12/2021 and determine their fees.
- To elect a new Board of Directors for the Company from amongst Shareholders or non-shareholders.

Any person who wishes to be nominated to the Board of Directors of the Company is required to fill in a Director's Nomination Form. Such a form can be obtained from the Company. The completed Form should be delivered to the Company at least five (5) days prior to the date of the Annual Ordinary General Meeting of the Company (no later than the end of the business hours on Tuesday, 16 March 2021). The candidate must satisfy the company's board membership requirements.

According to the Company's Articles of Association and the controls for holding General Meetings using modern technology issued by the capital market authority, we would like to draw your attention to the following:

- Legal person, exclusively, has the right to delegate a natural person to attend the General Meeting and vote on its behalf through technical means, provided that this natural person has an investor number in MCD.
- Voting on any of the agenda items begins no more than three days before the date of the General Meeting until the voting process ends on the day of the General Meeting. If the shareholder's shares are increased or decreased, the voting process will be canceled, and the shareholder will have to vote again on the day of the General Meeting.

For further information, please contact on telephone No 98082098 or email: fc@majanglass.com

Chairman

Legal Advisor

External Auditor

Free home delivery & timely service

oman OASIS
BALANCED DRINKING WATER

Oasis Water Co. LLC,
PO Box 87, Rusayl 124,
Sultanate of Oman.
www.omanoasis.com

CALL TOLL-FREE
800 71 222
or GSM: **9275 5522**

Winner of
His Majesty's Cup Award
in 2012 & 2013
for Best Five Factories

C.P. No: 1296422

Five executives from Oman in Forbes' Top ME CEOs ranking

Continued from **Page 01**

The 100 CEOs represent 24 nationalities and 21 sectors. Saudi nationals dominate the list with 18 entries, followed by Emirati and Egyptian leaders with 16 entries each. Combined, these three groups make up half of the ranking.

Four out of the top five are from the region's oil and gas industry: Aramco's Amin H Nasser, is ranked 1st, followed by ADNOC Group's Sultan Ahmed al Jaber (2nd), Kuwait Petroleum Corporation's Hashem Hashem (4th), and Sonatrach's Toufik Hakkar (5th).

Ahmed bin Saeed al Maktoum, chairman and CEO of Emirates Group, is the only one in the top five from outside the oil and

gas industry.

With 29 listees, the banking and financial services sector contributes nearly a third of the ranking. Abdulla Mubarak al Khalifa, group CEO of Qatar National Bank, stands as the Middle East's top banking and financial services executive at rank eighth. Notable newcomer, Hana al Rostamani, ranks 19th on the list. The Emirati began her role as FAB's new group CEO in late January 2021, having previously served as deputy group CEO and head of personal banking.

Forbes Middle East assessed the size of the CEO's company using various measures, the individual's accomplishments over the past year, and their impact on their firm and the wider industry.

PRAYER TIMINGS

Fajr	5.05am	Asr	3.40pm
Sunrise	6.22am	Maghrib	6.13pm
Duhr	12.17pm	Isha	7.43pm

MARKET WATCH	
MSM30	3,655.16
FOREX RATES (RO1 equals)	
Indian Rs	190.26
Pakistani Rs	408.21
Bangladeshi Taka	220.59
Philippine Peso	126.44
Sri Lankan Rs	505.23
*Rates as on March 07 Source: xe.com	

BRIEFS

Airbus says won't lay off staff in Germany, France or UK

Airbus said that it would be able to avoid forced redundancies in Germany, France and Britain as the European aircraft maker reels from the fallout of COVID-19 on air travel.

The staff situation in Spain, another production site for the aircraft maker, is still uncertain because talks with unions had begun later than elsewhere, it said.

'At this moment, and thanks to the effectiveness of all social measures deployed so far, Airbus does not see the need to implement forced redundancies in France, Germany and the UK,' it said, adding however that this depended on the 'successful deployment of ongoing internal mobility measures'.

At the end of June, the company had said it was planning to cut around 15,000 jobs worldwide, or 11 per cent of its total workforce.

Fitch affirms ratings of six Omani banks, keeps outlook negative

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Fitch Ratings has affirmed the long-term issuer default ratings of six Omani banks, namely Bank Muscat, National Bank of Oman (NBO), HSBC Bank Oman, BankDhofar, Sohar International Bank and Ahli Bank. The ratings agency, in its rating action statements, said that it has kept the outlooks negative on all these six banks in the sultanate.

Fitch has affirmed Bank Muscat's, NBO's and BankDhofar's long-term issuer default ratings at 'BB-' with negative outlooks on all three banks. It also affirmed these three banks' viability rating at 'bb-'.

As per Fitch's statement, Bank Muscat's ratings reflect the bank's dominant position with significant market shares across retail and commercial banking (market shares of about 35 per cent in both) supported by its large retail branch network and strong links to the government.

The negative outlook on Bank Muscat's the long-term issuer default ratings, Fitch said, mirrors that on the Omani sovereign and captures downside risks on the bank's viability rating from a weakening operating environment. 'We expect this to result in



a deterioration in asset quality, pressure on earnings and potentially capitalisation.'

The long-term issuer default ratings of Sohar International Bank and Ahli Bank have been affirmed at 'B+' by Fitch, with negative outlook on both banks. Fitch also affirmed Sohar International Bank's and Ahli Bank's viability ratings at 'b+' and support rating floor at 'B'.

For HSBC Bank Oman, Fitch has affirmed the bank's long-term issuer default rating at 'BB' with negative outlook. Fitch has also affirmed HSBC Bank

Oman's viability rating at 'bb-'.

HSBC Bank Oman's long-term issuer default rating and support rating are driven by Fitch's expectation of a moderate probability of support available to the bank from its ultimate parent, HSBC Holdings.

'This reflects HSBC's strong ability to support HSBC Bank Oman, and HSBC Bank Oman's small size relative to the group. This view is supported by HSBC Bank Oman's role in the group, providing products and services in a market identified as strategically important to HSBC Hold-

ings,' Fitch said.

Fitch has maintained its operating environment score for the Omani banks at 'bb-' but with a negative trend.

The negative trend, Fitch said, reflects continued risks from economic disruption as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

According to Fitch's estimates, Oman's GDP contracted by 4.9 per cent in 2020 and it expects GDP to remain weak in 2021 (a fall of 1.5 per cent) reflecting the economic impact of lockdown measures, lower oil prices and the government's

expected continued restrictive fiscal policy.

Fitch said, 'If the sultanate's sovereign rating is downgraded to the 'B' range, we would be likely to lower the operating environment score (for Omani banks) as we believe the links between the sovereign and the operating environment for domestic banks to be highly correlated.'

'This is mainly due to the large proportion of retail financing for civil servants with salary assignment, the large share of lending to government-related entities or

Fitch has maintained its operating environment score for the Omani banks at 'bb-' but with a negative trend. The negative trend, Fitch says, reflects continued risks from economic disruption as a result of COVID-19

government projects, and because about a third of banking sector deposits are in the form of government or government-related deposits.'

Fitch noted that a revision of the Omani sovereign's outlook to stable from negative, combined with a sustained improvement in economic growth and diminishing pressure on asset quality and profitability, cushioning the bank's capitalisation, could result in a revision of the outlooks on Omani banks to stable.

Oman's hotel revenues fall 70%

Muscat - The total number of guests in the 3-to-5 star category hotels in Oman fell by 49.5 per cent in January 2021 at 78,451 guests compared to 155,488 guests in January 2020.

The average occupancy rate in Omani hotels remained as low as 27 per cent in January this year, according to the latest monthly statistics released by the National Centre for Statistics

and Information (NCSI).

The total revenues of these hotels also fell by 70 per cent to RO6.231mn in January compared to RO21.026mn during the same period of the previous year.

Among the nationalities, Omani guests constituted the maximum number of visitors with 76 per cent to stand at 59,735 guests. This was followed

by the Asian guests with 7,435, the European guests with 3,482, the Arab guests (excluding GCC countries) with 2,242 and the GCC guests with 1,468.

The number of American guests reached 1,437, followed by the Oceanian guests at 708, Africans at 377 guests and 1,567 guests from other nationalities.

ONA

Over 300 delegates attend Wellbeing @ Work Summit

Dubai, UAE - The fifth annual Wellbeing @ Work Summit in the Middle East took place virtually between February 22-24 with an incredible line-up of expert speakers from across the Middle East and the world providing invaluable insights to over 300 attendees from 12 countries.

Day one of the summit started with live music from award-winning jazz singer Ian Shaw followed by an excellent leadership panel discussion featuring NEOM, Liwa Stores, du and Petrotec Group discussing the world of work in an ever-changing environment. This was followed by a data-driven case study from Peter Baker of First Abu Dhabi Bank demonstrating a holistic approach to wellness in the workplace has a profound impact on productivity, engagement, and happiness.

A full morning of content on day two was focused on the importance of authentic, mindful, and compassionate leadership within the business environment. Case studies from Spotify, EY, DP World, Chalhoub Group, Zain Bahrain and Datamatics gave attendees the opportunity to gain real-life insights from organisations across the region. The event also witnessed the release of the data from a comprehensive study on the mental fitness of employees and organisations



Chris Cummings

across the region and what leaders and companies can do to improve the situation.

The final day of the summit focused on some of the most important themes for organisations and HR leaders across the region. Ellen Dubois du Bellay, chief human resources officer at Jumeriah Group, chatted to Dr Nick Taylor from Unmind on how they have and continued to create a great place to work to unlock human potential.

The summit finished with an excellent conversation between Mustafa El Rafei, senior vice president of human capital at Majid Al Futtaim Retail, and summit organiser Chris Cummings on the new social contract for employees and organisations.

Commenting at the summit, Rafei said, "Participating in the fifth edition of the Wellbeing @ Work Summit Middle East was

an excellent opportunity for HR leaders in the region to come together and share knowledge, experience and best practice. At Majid Al Futtaim, we realised early in 2020 that a new social contract must be established to suit the needs and wants of both talent and employers. Throughout all the challenges we continue to face, we realised that a quick response was essential - and as a result of our flexibility, Majid Al Futtaim successfully launched a series of new initiatives."

Cummings, CEO of Sonas Events, organisers of the Wellbeing @ Work Summit, said, "It has been fantastic to see the incredible progress that organisations have achieved across the Middle East region over the last five years since we have been running this summit. All the data clearly demonstrates that a holistic approach to the wellbeing and mental fitness of your employee population delivers strong business results and it is great to see significant interest and investment being made across the region. I am really looking forward to our community growing in the region and a bigger summit in 2022."

The Wellbeing @ Work Summits have been successfully delivering high-quality content to business leaders since 2014.

Investment Manager Report

On behalf of the Fund Management Board, I am pleased to present the Audited financial results of Al Hilal MENA Fund for the year ended 31 Dec 2020.

	31-Dec-20	31-Dec-19
Number of units	3,216,100	3,409,000
Net asset value (RO)	2,309,660	2,648,787
Net asset value per unit (RO)	0.768*	0.777
Net profit/(loss)	(29,614)	224,254

*Adjusted dividends of OMR 0.050 paid for the year ended December 2019

Al Hilal MENA Fund has ended the year with a loss of 1.16% as compared to 5.3% gain of S&P Shariah Index and a loss of 0.51% of MSM Shariah Index. A summary of the result is given hereunder:

Although the COVID-19 had negatively impacted regional economies including stock markets, most of GCC markets recovered in the second half of 2020.

Equity Markets

In 2020 GCC indices closed the year with a downward performance. Dubai was the main loser in the region, falling 9.9% for the year. Oman, Bahrain, Kuwait and Abu Dhabi indices declined by 8.1%, 7.48%, 6.77% and 0.6% respectively for the full year. Both Saudi Arabia and Qatar recorded a positive performance by 3.58% and 0.10% respectively for the year.

	Last Price*	2020	FY 2019	FY 2018	FY 2017
Saudi Arabia	8,689.53	3.58%	7.19%	8.31%	0.22%
Qatar	10,435.96	0.10%	1.23%	20.83%	-18.33%
Abu Dhabi	5,045.32	-0.60%	3.27%	11.75%	-3.25%
Kuwait	4,636.35	-6.77%	24.05%	9.11%	9.13%
Bahrain	1,489.784	-7.48%	20.41%	0.42%	9.12%
Oman	3,658.77	-8.1%	-7.92%	-15.21%	-11.82%
Dubai	2,491.97	-9.87%	9.29%	-24.93%	-4.55%

*As on 31-Dec-20

The decline of the above markets is based on the companies' financial profitability results which were marginally lower than investor expectation. During 2020 Moody's changed its outlook from stable to negative in eight UAE banks Emirates NBD, Abu Dhabi Commercial Bank, Dubai Islamic Bank, Mashreq Bank, HSBC Bank Middle East, Abu Dhabi Islamic Bank, The National Bank of Ras Al-Khaima and National Bank of Al Fujairah. Potential loan losses will increase provisioning charges stated by Moody's.

Also Moody's Investors Service downgraded Kuwait's long-term foreign and local currency issuer rating to A1 from Aa2, and changed the outlook to stable. Qatar was affirmed at Aa3 by Moody's (outlook stable) and Saudi Arabia was affirmed at A- by S&P with stable outlook.

The vaccine distribution led to a short-term boost, however, the size of the quantities of the vaccines are still small as compared to the actual needs.

A look ahead

The big easing on the lock down in GCC region is expected to positively impact the operations of the companies and their financials. In addition, if oil prices will continue to increase, market will be less volatile. In an efforts towards boosting state revenues, Oman removed subsidies on both electricity and water effectively from Jan 2021 and will impose VAT starting from April 2021. We expect the vaccines distribution will improve during the year 2021 and markets will perform substantially well.

الأهلي الإسلامي
ahli islamic

البنك الاهلي
ahlibank

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2020		
	2020 RO	2019 RO
Assets		
Financial assets at fair value through profit or loss	2,079,446	2,519,506
Due from brokers	-	88,010
Cash and cash equivalents	238,344	48,375
Total assets	2,317,790	2,655,891
Liabilities		
Accruals and other payables	8,130	7,104
Net assets attributable to the unitholders	2,309,660	2,648,787
Total liabilities and net assets attributable to the unitholders	2,317,790	2,655,891
Net assets per unit attributable to the unitholders	0.718	0.777
STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2020		
	2020 RO	2019 RO
Income		
Dividend income	46,861	97,083
Other income	452	582
Total income	47,313	97,665
Net realised (loss)/gain on sale of financial assets at fair value through profit or loss	(46,420)	199,462
Net unrealised gain/(loss) on financial assets at fair value through profit or loss	29,080	(1,209)
Net investment income	29,973	295,918
Expenses		
Management fees	(27,979)	(33,969)
Custody fees	(3,000)	(4,462)
General and administrative expenses	(28,608)	(33,233)
Total expenses	(59,587)	(71,664)
(Loss)/profit and total comprehensive (loss)/profit and (decrease)/increase in net assets attributable to the unitholders for the year	(29,614)	224,254
(Loss)/profit per unit	(0.009)	0.062

COMMENTARY

Non-compliance of VAT: Stringent fines and penalties

Under the VAT regime, taxable persons including business corporates need to be aware of the provisions of the VAT Law that can invite administrative fines and penalties for non-compliance. Administrative penalties are additional amounts payable by a person and may also attract imprisonment for breaching the provisions of the VAT Law.

Today's discussion will reveal these provisions and keep us vigilant on any deviation from the law. Let us look into the most important Articles as below:

Article 100 of the VAT Law: Imprisonment of two months to one year, and/or a fine from RO1,000 to RO10,000.

The above penalties will arise under following circumstances:

Responsible person and information.

► If a taxable person fails to identify

a responsible person and responsible person fails to notify to the Tax Authority on his replacement, in his absence from Oman for more than 90 days.

► In case of a request by the Tax Authority to see the responsible person and the person fails to appear in front of tax authorities.

► Failure to inform the Tax Authority regarding changes or updating the data with tax authority.

VAT compliant invoicing

Value-added tax compliance begins with VAT invoicing. Every single invoice generated or transaction recorded must be done in a VAT compliant way.

The invoice should be as per the tax invoice format published by the Tax Authority.

Any failure to maintain tax invoices or correct accounting records, import and export documents related to the

tax return, or issuing tax invoices with the incorrect tax amount will also attract the penalty.



MUHAMMAD FAISAL

The writer is assistant manager – VAT advisory at Crowe Oman

Tax return and supporting documents

Failure to submit a tax return for any tax period within the deadline.

Non cooperation with Tax Authority

Any action by the taxable person to prevent the Tax Authority officer or delegates to perform the required as-

essment, also failure to provide the tax invoices, accounting books, data, records required by the tax authorities will attract penalties.

Further, there are more rigorous penalties as below:

Article 101: Imprisonment of one to three year, and/or fine of RO5,000 to RO20,000.

VAT registration

Deliberate failure to register with the Tax Authority within the time frame provided by the Tax Authority in accor-

dance with the threshold criteria and the Ministerial decision No 3/2021.

Incorrect tax return

► If a taxable person deliberately submits the incorrect tax return or forges the supporting accounting documents to reduce the tax due amount.

► In case of someone who deliberately motivates the taxable person in submitting returns or records or other documents that are incorrect.

Assessment by the Authority

If a taxable person deliberately destroys, hide or dispose any documents, records, accounts, lists or any other document requested by the Authority for submission in case of assessment, within one year from the Authority's notification receipt date. It is important to know that in the case of repetitive non-compliance, the court may double

the penalty and increase the imprisonment to the maximum of the legal threshold of punishment but not exceeding half this threshold.

As we know that the Executive Regulations are still awaited and the same shall provide more clarity on the administrative penalties that may be imposed on the violator.

It is advisable to the taxpayer to be aware of the consequences of non-compliance for the VAT law and should seriously look-forward for timely registrations and VAT impact assessment in their organisations.

(Reader questions can be directed to davis.kallukaran@apexmedia.co.om)

The views and opinions expressed in this column are solely those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of Muscat Daily or Apex Media Publication

MSM rises on improved activity

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The benchmark index of the Muscat Securities Market (MSM) inched up by 0.07 per cent to close at 3,655.17 points on Sunday.

Trading activity improved from the previous session as turnover jumped by 127.63 per cent to RO2.15mn and volumes increased 74.92 per cent to 12.22mn shares.

The gains in the main index were supported by all the subindices. Financial index rose 0.82 per cent, Industrial index climbed 0.93 per cent and Services index rose 0.02 per cent. The MSM Shariah index closed up by 0.28 per cent at



543.94 points.

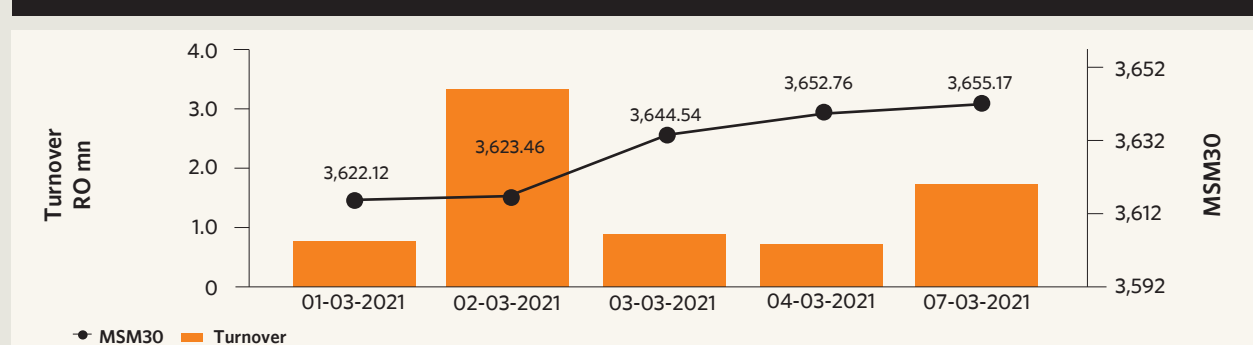
Market breadth remained positive as 21 companies closed up, while seven companies closed down. The rest 11 traded stocks closed flat for the day.

Top gainers were Oman Cables Industry (5.93 per cent), Oman National Engi-

neering and Investment Co (5.44 per cent), United Finance (4.76 per cent) and Al Jazeera Services (4.35 per cent).

Top losers were Omantel (-4.21 per cent), National Life & General Insurance (-1.52 per cent), Ooredoo (-1.46 per cent) and Bank Nizwa (-1.02 per cent).

MSM INDEX AND TURNOVER OF FIVE TRADING DAYS



EU urges post-virus employment boost

Brussels, Belgium - The EU executive urged member states to do everything they could to boost employment, as the pandemic appears to devastate prospects for the young and the low-skilled.

Europe has suffered its worst recession since World War II due to the coronavirus outbreak and EU leaders will meet in Portugal's city of Porto in May to find ways to ease the conse-

quences on their most vulnerable citizens.

The European Commission is asking leaders at the summit to agree to meet specific, yet non-binding, targets by 2030 on employment, training and getting more people out of poverty.

"It is essential to give a very strong political signal to all Europeans that the EU is concerned for their livelihoods, their jobs,

and their well-being," EU employment commissioner Nicolas Schmit told reporters.

Helping workers through tough times is an additional focus for the EU, which previous to the pandemic concentrated more on ensuring that governments balance budgets and spend wisely.

The EU is worried that many workers, including the young, will

be left behind as new technologies and demographic changes disadvantage the less skilled.

In its proposals, the commission asked member states to commit to achieving a 78 per cent employment rate by 2030.

European employment currently sits at around 72 per cent EU-wide, with big discrepancies among member states.

AFP

China exports spike to highest in decades

Beijing, China - China's export growth jumped to the highest in over two decades, official data showed on Sunday, with imports also surging in a sharp bounce-back from the coronavirus outbreak that had brought activity to a near halt.

Electronics and textile exports such as masks contributed to the spike in outbound shipments, as demand for work-from-home supplies and protective gear against the virus outbreak soared during the pandemic.

Exports spiked 60.6 per cent on-year in the January-February period, well above analysts' expectations, while imports rose 22.2 per cent, official data showed on Sunday.

The latest figures stand in stark contrast to last year's fall of around 17 per cent in exports and 4 per cent drop in imports.

The country struggled to contain the spread of COVID-19 early on, with consumers staying home and businesses seeing a slow return to operations.

The customs administration said comparison to last year is also likely to have bolstered the latest figures, saying in a statement that the 'low base is one of the reasons for the larger increase this year'.

On Sunday, official data showed that electronics exports rose 54.1 per cent, while textiles including masks rose 50.2 per cent.

China's overall trade surplus came in at US\$103.3bn, its customs administration said.



Employees work on a wind turbine part for export at a factory in Nantong, China's Jiangsu province on March 2 (AFP)

Meanwhile, the country's trade surplus with the US - a key point of contention during the trade war pursued by former president Donald Trump - doubled from the same period last year to US\$51.3bn.

Chinese authorities started combining January and February trade data last year, while it battled the coronavirus outbreak.

This is in line with how some other indicators are released, to smooth over distortions from the Lunar New Year holiday, which can fall in either month.

China's foreign trade data remained strong despite the 'off-season', the customs authority said on Sunday.

Trade was also high due to a recovery in production and consumption in major economies such as Europe and the United States amid the coronavirus pandemic, as well as improvements in domestic consumption.

Although business activity usually falls during the Lunar

New Year period when workers return to their hometowns, official appeals to avoid travelling this year to keep the COVID-19 outbreak in check supported production, the customs administration added.

'Many enterprises in major foreign trade provinces such as Guangdong and Zhejiang maintained production during the Lunar New Year,' it said. 'Market demand is expected to rebound further.'

Some companies have also been stocking up on goods such as integrated circuits, iron ore and crude oil imports.

"Global electronics demand has risen strongly due to the global shift to remote working and online shopping," said Rajiv Biswas, Asia-Pacific chief economist for IHS Markit.

This had driven demand for electronics products such as laptops, mobile phones and wearables, he said.

AFP

Central banks should not rule out negative rates: IMF

Ankara, Turkey - Central banks around the world should not discard negative interest rates policies (NIRP) but instead keep them in their toolkit, even if using such policies is unlikely, the IMF has suggested.

'NIRP was and remains politically controversial, partly because it is often misunderstood,' the global financial body stressed in a new report.

According to the report, negative rates are back on the table since the virus-driven crisis broke out in an environment where many central banks lack conventional monetary policy space.

'If markets internalise that rates can be cut below zero, the shift in market expectations is



likely to induce declines in longer horizon yields,' it said.

'This suggests a greater loosening effect of NIRP for countries that currently have low but positive rates,' it noted.

Many central banks may be forced to consider NIRP sooner or later, even if there are material adverse side effects, given the low level of the neutral real

interest rates, the IMF said.

It underlined the benefits of introducing negative interest rates, saying they have been effective, but added it remains unclear how much further negative rates could go before inducing adverse effects.

'The transmission of NIRP has been effective in money market rates, long-term yields, and bank rates,' it said, adding it has likely backed up growth and inflation.

The IMF stated that it is an open question how much further interest rates could go negative before seriously damaging financial intermediation or inducing other negative side effects.

Anadolu Agency

Honda launches advanced self-driving cars

Tokyo, Japan - Honda launched the world's most advanced self-driving car licensed for the road, releasing an initial batch of 100 models in Japan.

The Legend is capable of adaptive driving in lanes, as well as passing and switching lanes under certain circumstances.

The car also features an emergency stop function in case a driver is unresponsive to hand-over warnings, and Honda touts extensive safety testing.

'Approximately 10mn patterns of possible real-world situations were simulated during system development, and real-world demonstration tests were conducted on expressways for a total of approximately 1.3mn kilometres,' it said in a statement.

Experts said the limited rollout would help determine whether



there is sufficient demand for more autonomous vehicles.

Vehicle autonomy is classified along a 0-5 scale, with 5 indicating essentially total autonomy. The Legend is Level 3.

Several automakers have already manufactured vehicles capable of Level 3 autonomy, but few countries have legal frameworks permitting their

sale and use.

Honda's Legend release comes after the carmaker won approval for sales in Japan last November.

The government had already amended the law to allow for such vehicles, believing self-driving cars will be key in a country with a rapidly ageing population in need of safe

transportation solutions.

Automakers and tech firms are locked in a fierce battle for the lead in self-driving technology, with electric carmaker Tesla among the challengers.

For now, analysts say automakers are still a long way from a true Level 4 system, in which a car is considered to no longer have a driver, just passengers.

Level 5 vehicles would theoretically have no steering wheel or other driver controls and would be capable of handling all terrain types and weather without driver assistance.

Honda's limited release of the Legend will be available only for lease sales. The partially self-driving sedan is priced at 11mn yen (US\$102,000).

AFP

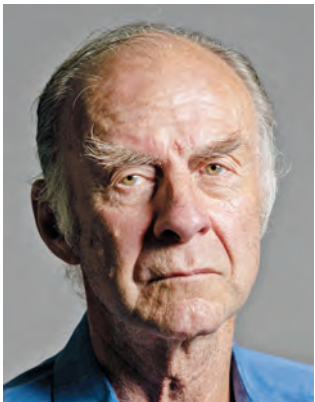
Sohar International's Viewpoints tomorrow

Reiterating its position as an active player in contributing positively to the society it serves, Sohar International's Chairman forum- Viewpoints invites you to its 11th edition on Tuesday, March 9 starting at 7.30pm, on the Zoom platform.

Continuing to bring global learning and perspective to locally relevant topics, the upcoming session of Viewpoints, titled 'Conquering Human Limitations', will host Sir Ranulph Fiennes, a famous British explorer, UK army officer and travel writer - also named as 'the world's greatest living explorer' by Guinness Book of World Records.

In this ever-changing world, human beings have been bounded by socio-economic restrictions - particularly in a situation like the current crisis which has limited the movement of mankind.

These limitations can and have been conquered through venturing and pushing the edge of mankind's capabilities and adapting resilience to cope with the difficulties and to bridge the gap. In light of these considera-



Sir Ranulph Fiennes

tions, Sir Fiennes will offer perspectives on the complexities that imply for human capabilities and limitations based on his groundbreaking expeditions.

Furthermore, explaining how his pursuit of extraordinary challenges pushed the limits of human endurance, setting new standards and determinations, Sir Fiennes will answer audience queries in the upcoming session of Viewpoints.

Expressing his view on the forthcoming session of viewpoints, Mohammed Mahfoudh al Ardhi, chairman of the Board of Directors at Sohar International

said, "In its endeavours to strengthen and encourage the local people of Oman in different areas by exposing them to global experiences and eminent personalities, the upcoming edition of Viewpoints reflects the need for overcoming various boundaries imposed on people in today's time and may continue to happen in the near future. The subject of the coming session has been specially chosen by Sohar International at this specific time, aiming to dive deep on how human beings can conquer and push the limits of durability with the right attitudes and resolve to overcome and conquer whatever stops them."

Sir Fiennes has one of the most unique life stories ever told. An expert in conquering human limitations, he is the only person alive to have travelled the surface of the world's polar axis.

He has never stopped risking life and limb for adventure, becoming the first to cross Antarctica on foot (over 97 days) and the first to run 7 marathons in 7 days on 7 continents for charity. Pushing the boundaries and test-

ing human limits, he conquered Everest at 65 years old, and he became the first person to summit Everest and cross both polar ice caps.

"Providing the community with valuable inputs and serving its objective of becoming an ideal platform for sharing knowledge, Sohar International's Viewpoints continues to offer comprehensive sessions from a global perspective, particularly with the pandemic continuing to reshape societies and economies around the world. It is our pleasure to host the pioneering British explorer, Sir Ranulph Fiennes, who will certainly add value by sharing his views and narrating his unique real-life journey with the notion of conquering human limitations," Ardhi added.

Over the last few years, Viewpoints - Sohar International Chairman's forum, witnessed compelling and engaging conversions, positioning it as a world-class thought leadership forum. Anyone interested can register for this virtual session free of cost by visiting www.soharinternational.com

Zubair SEC member's Omani tea brand brews success

In a country that is ideally known for its love for tea or rather its karak chai, Yaqob Salim al Rawahi's business idea is a sure shot winner. Zubair member and founder of Karak Baitna, Rawahi has been brewing a success story since 2018 when he first launched the Omani brand.

Karak Baitna came about from the owner's fascination and love of making Karak tea. The product, which is a mixture of tea and special spices such as cardamom, ginger, satin, saffron, cinnamon and cloves has a keen fan base of its own. Over the last few years, he has added ready-made Karak tea blends with different flavours to add value to the brand.

Sustaining a brand as unique is a tough proposition in a highly competitive market. However, Karak Baitna has forged a special place for itself in the consumer's heart.

A spokesperson for Zubair Sec said, "We recognise the excellent performance and professionalism shown by Yaqob Salim al Rawahi in building his brand. We would like to commend him for his hard work and commitment that has made a difference to his success. He has the approach to do things



differently and that has helped in setting a good name for his brand."

The journey of making Karak Baitna a success story has been one of hard work, planning and application. "We experimented a lot before creating the final product. We started distributing the products to the stores in January 2019 after signing agreements with some stores to distribute," says Rawahi.

Today, Karak Baitna tea brand is available in 32 commercial outlets across various governorates of Oman, including Buraimi, Dhahirah, Dakhliyah, North and South Shariqyah, North Batinah and Dhofar.

Rawahi has participated in ex-

hibitions in different places which helped him increase the popularity of his products.

Karak Baitna owner credits the success of his business to the support from Zubair SEC.

"They helped me create and grow the brand by providing them with necessary support and technical services. They armed me with the necessary expertise and tools to succeed in increasingly competitive markets. Zubair SEC has contributed to the support and development of many companies that have become strong leaders in the local market. Karak Baitna is one of the businesses which relied on Zubair SEC services to advance forward," Rawahi explains.

Bank Muscat's Irshad programme continues free financial coaching

In line with its commitment to raising financial literacy and awareness, Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the sultanate, has announced a special campaign to spread the benefits of its free Irshad financial coaching programme for both individuals and entrepreneurs.

First launched by the bank to help SMEs, startups, entrepreneurs and even individuals learn how to manage their finances and plan ahead for the future, the bank has called upon the general public in Oman to make the best

use of this free mentoring programme for a number of topics including setting up a new business, personal finance and managing expenses, retirement planning and Islamic banking facilities. A total of 141 entrepreneurs and individuals have made use of the free coaching sessions till date.

The programme leverages the rich knowledge base of the bank's executives for the benefit of those who seek mentoring. Coaching in a number of areas such as budgeting, managing financial debt, the importance of



saving regularly, challenges for small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) and how to raise

capital are available from experienced mentors and the programme is aimed at empowering

participants with the relevant information they need for financial planning or running a sustainable business. Appointment for the coaching can be arranged through the following link: <https://www.bankmuscat.com/en/irshad/Pages/default.aspx> while feedback and queries may be sent to irshad@bankmuscat.com.

The virtual one-to-one Irshad sessions are implemented through Microsoft Teams and can be availed by Omanis and expatriates. The sessions are conducted in either Arabic or

English and participants may mention their language preference in the comments section while applying for a session.

To 'Book a meeting', applicants may click on the relevant link, input their details and choose the session, time, and date according to their preference. A calendar request for the meeting for the session will be sent to via email to both the Irshad Coach and the participant. The sessions are currently being done in online virtual mode using Microsoft Teams which can be downloaded and installed on

computers, phones and tablets. Participants must ensure that they already have an account to sign in before applying for the coaching session.

Bank Muscat brings a wealth of financial expertise to the table with its literacy, awareness and coaching programmes.

The bank attaches great importance to the development of SMEs, entrepreneurship, financial awareness and literacy as part of its corporate social responsibility initiatives. It has been playing a stellar role in improving financial inclusion.

NBO gets new chief internal auditor



Salah al Sharji

National Bank of Oman (NBO), has announced the appointment of Salah al Sharji as chief internal auditor. A certified internal audit executive and banking industry veteran, Sharji has over 16 years of experience in a number of leadership roles across some of the sultanate's largest private institutions.

With a proven track record in operational and compliance auditing, he is expected to spearhead the bank's control environment and support it on its next phase of development.

Abdullah Zahran al Hinai, CEO at NBO said, "At NBO, our hand-picked and highly qualified Omani leadership is integral to our position as a market leader. Salah's extensive experience across the sector and integral role in Oman's developing banking landscape makes him an added value to our team and we look forward to welcoming him on board."

HALCYON CAPITAL

AGENDA OF ANNUAL ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING

The Board of Directors of Halcyon Capital Holding Co. SAOC invites all Shareholders to attend the Annual General Meeting, which will be held on Thursday, 25th March 2021 at 11:30 am through the electronic platform of the general meetings, which you can access through the Muscat Clearing and Depository website (www.mcd.gov.om) to discuss the following Agenda.

However, in case the AGM was not held on the said date, the Company will hold a second AGM on Wednesday, 31st March 2021 at 11:30 am to discuss the same following agenda :

- To consider and approve the report of the Board of Directors for the financial year ended 31st December 2020.
- To consider the Auditor's report and to approve the financial statements (Balance Sheet, Profit and Loss Account) in respect of the Company for the financial year ended 31st December 2020.
- To consider and approve transactions entered into by the Company with related parties during the financial year ended 31st December 2020 (as per the Annexure 1).
- To consider and approve transactions that the Company will enter into with related parties during the financial year ending 31st December 2021 (as per Annexure 2).
- To consider and approve the sitting fees of the directors of the company during the year ended on 31st December 2020. (As per the Annexure 3).
- To consider and approve the sitting fees of the directors and sub-committees of the company during the next financial year ending on 31st December 2021. (As per the Annexure 4).
- To consider the election of the Board members from amongst the shareholders or non-shareholders. Any person who wishes to nominate himself/herself to the Board of Directors should complete a nomination form available with the Company. The nomination form will be sent to any shareholder on request. The completed forms should be delivered to the Company at least five days prior to the AGM date. Nomination forms received after Thursday, 18th of March 2021 during working hours shall not be accepted.
- To appoint auditors for the Company for the year ending 31st December 2021 and to fix their remuneration.

According to the Articles of Association of the Company and the regulations for convening general meetings via electronic means by the authority, we would like to draw your attention to the following:

(a) Only juristic persons shall have the right to appoint a proxy to attend the general meeting and vote on their behalf via electronic means, provided that the proxy person has an investor number in the MCDG.

(b) Voting on any of the items presented on the agenda starts three days before the date of the general meeting until the voting process ends on the day of the meeting, and if the shareholder's share is increased or decreased, the voting process will be cancelled and he must re-vote again on the meeting day.

For further information, please contact
Mr. Badar Mahfoudh Khalfan Al Wahaibi on telephone 22004507.

Chairman

Halcyon Capital Holding Co. SAOC
P.O. Box 1273, P.C. 114, Muscat, Sultanate of Oman.
Tel: (968) 22004500, Fax: (968) 22004546, E-mail: info@kitaracapital.com

شركة التغليف المحدودة (ش.م.ع.ع.)
Packaging Co Ltd. (SAOG)

INVITATION TO ATTEND THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Board of Directors of Packaging Co Ltd (SAOG) is pleased to invite the honorable shareholders to attend the company's annual ordinary general meeting scheduled for Thursday, 25th March 2021, at 5pm, through the electronic platform to hold the annual general meeting, that you can enter to reach it through the Muscat Clearing and Depository website (www.mcd.gov.com), and in case the quorum for this meeting is not completed, the second meeting will be held at 5pm on Monday, 29th March 2021, Via the online platform mentioned above, to discuss the following agenda:

The following is agenda for the Board Meeting,

- To consider and approve Chairman's Report for the financial year ended 31st December 2020
- To consider and approve the Corporate Governance Report for the financial year ended 31st December 2020
- To consider and approve the Auditor's report, Balance Sheet and Profit & Loss account for the financial year ended 31st December 2020
- Inform shareholders of the related party transaction during the financial ended 31st December 2020 and their approval.
- To appoint auditors for statutory and internal audit for financial year 2021 and to approve their remuneration.

Chairman

Legal adviser

External Auditor

OAB's Innovation Hub returns in its second edition virtually

Following the huge success of its first Innovation Hub, Oman Arab Bank (OAB) announced the launch of the second edition of the hackathon, which will be the first-of-its-kind to take place virtually in Oman on April 2.

The 24-hour challenge will provide a remarkable opportunity for participants from three categories, namely students, Fintech/professionals and OAB employees, to showcase their capabilities and innovative ideas. Anyone wishing to participate can simply register via www.oabinnovation.com.

The first Innovation Hub was launched successfully in 2019 and saw the participation of more than 350 participants across 70 teams. Nine of the participating students joined the bank's innovation internship for a period of six months and four of them were offered employment opportunities at OAB.

Rashad al Musafir, CEO of OAB, stated, "The world is very dynamic and it is our responsibility, as an established financial institution that is passionate about innovation, to pave the way for future generations. By enabling young people to turn their ideas into practical solutions, together with the support of experts in the field, we open a world of opportunity. We look forward to seeing individuals, both within and outside the Sultanate, taking part in the Innovation Hub 2.0 and presenting us with innovations that will shape the future of banking in Oman."

The Innovation Hub 2.0 will



begin at 12pm on Friday, April 2 and will continue until 5pm the following day, Saturday, April 3.

All participants will have 24 hours to develop their innovations and POCs, alongside the support extended by several experienced companies supporting the event, including GBM, Phaze Ro, and Phaze Ventures.

The virtual hackathon will also include a wide range of speakers and entrepreneurs in the field of financial technology from different countries, who will share their vision for innovation, their journey and success stories and how they have set themselves apart from competitors. These inspiring stories and several other activities will all be available to participants joining the Innovation Hub 2.0.

Leen al Atassi, head of Inno-

vation at OAB and the supervisor of the challenge, said, "This year's edition of the Innovation Hub will focus on two themes, innovation in Fintech and Tourism. During the challenge, participants from each of the three categories will have to develop their ideas and turn them into a prototype within 24 hours.

"Due to the current prevalent conditions, we have made the Innovation Hub 2.0 virtual, utilising an online platform to allow all participants to collaborate with their team members and work collectively. Each team from all the categories will then present their ideas to a panel of judges.

"With regard to the prizes for the hackathon, the winning student team will join a paid innovation internship programme for 6 months at our Innovation Lab,

which is the first-of-its-kind in the local banking sector."

They will be able to continue working on their idea and turn it into viable practical products or solutions, under the direct supervision of experts from the bank. In addition, they will receive a cash prize and a chance to be employed by OAB.

The winning team from the Fintech category will receive a cash prize, as well as potentially be awarded a contract by OAB to implement the solution and be launched into the market.

The OAB staff winning team will be able to join the Innovation Lab to work on their ideas and benefit from the vast expertise provided by the Lab.

All participants will receive a certificate of participation that will add value to their CV.

Deutsche Hospitality accelerates Middle East expansion

Deutsche Hospitality, the leading German hospitality group with five unique hotel brands under its portfolio, has recently announced the appointment of Siegfried Nierhaus as vice president of the Middle East.

With determined and imminent growth plans across the entire region, Deutsche Hospitality is building a committed and resourceful team, headed by Nierhaus to manage the envisaged expansion. The company is poised to expand its footprint in the region by 20 hotels by the end of 2023 in key leisure destinations including Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Ras al Khaimah, Fujairah, Muscat, Salalah, Jeddah and Riyadh.

Nierhaus was previously responsible for the strategic regional expansion and opening of the first Steigenberger Hotel and IntercityHotel in the region. Under his management the group signed agreements for hotel openings in locations including Dubai, Oman, Saudi Arabia and Tunisia. The hospitality expert is now overseeing and executing the company's new operational strategy and driving additional strategic growth in the Middle East, as part of Deutsche Hospitality's global expansion plans.

"I am delighted to once again join the Deutsche Hospitality team in the Middle East as the business continues to expand its offering in the region. The Middle East market has proven remarkably robust during the pandemic and continues to pursue ambitious multi-sector growth plans," Nierhaus said.



Siegfried Nierhaus

"With the launch of the first federal domestic tourism campaign boosting the country's domestic tourism strategy and visa reforms coupled with the robust national vaccination programme this is an ideal time for regional expansion. Deutsche Hospitality in Dubai has a formidable team with extensive Middle Eastern experience and credentials, I am glad to be back with DH family and be a part of such a dynamic organization which is driven by the values of passion, perfection, care and tradition, and our vision to be the best local hoteliers in the world."

The group's robust global expansion plan spans across the brand portfolio including Steigenberger Hotels & Resorts, MAXX by Steigenberger, Jaz in the City, IntercityHotel and Zleep Hotels.

Anticipated openings by 2022
Q4 2021 - IntercityHotel (Dubai)
Q3 2021 - Steigenberger Hotel (Doha, Qatar)
Q4 2021 - IntercityHotel Muscat (Oman)
Q1 2024 - Jaz in the City (Dubai)



Ministers visit Atyab Food Industries factory in Barka

H E Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion; H E Dr Saud bin Hamoud al Habsi, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources; and H E Dr Khalfan bin Said al Shu'aili, Minister of Housing and Urban Planning, visited the factory of Atyab Food Industries and inspected the baking methods at the factory.

The Atyab Food Industry, known as Atyab Bakery, is one of the investments of the Oman Flour Mills affiliated to the Oman Food Investment Holding Company. It runs its manufacturing operations from its bakery located in Barka. The factory was visited and inspected by the ministers. Senior government officials were also present during the occasion. They were received by Sheikh Salah bin Hilal al Mawali, chairman of the Board of Directors of the Oman Flour Mills, and Haitham bin Muhammad al Fannah, CEO of the Oman Flour Mills.

The ministers and the delegation accompanying them were shown a presentation about the factory and its production capabilities. They lauded the massive development in Atyab factory which uses modern technologies and industrial intelligence in its manufacturing operations.

They appreciated the roles being played by the factory in manufacturing high-quality bakery items.

Sheikh Mawali said, "This visit paid by the ministers and the accompanying delegation to learn about the factory's work and its achievements is of huge importance. During the visit to the factory, the ministers were briefed about the working methods and the developments in various production and marketing areas."

He added, "During their tour of the factory, the excellencies and the accompanying delegation were briefed about the stages and methods of making baked products in Atyab factory. Atyab factory is one of the major national projects and part of the efforts being made to achieve food security. It is one of the top priorities and concerns of the government to ensure that the consumer demands of food items are comfortably met."

He said that the factory was well known for its use of latest technologies and artificial intelligence. It is one of the best factories in the Middle East. It follows the finest international methods and standards. Atyab Food Industries is a leading company in the Sultanate of Oman and the region. Its products are distributed within the sultanate, the

countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council and in other Arab states, as well as internationally.

The visiting delegation was also familiarised with the company's research and development department, which is aimed at providing healthy products to the market in the sultanate. It works to improve the quality of its products, keeping in pace with scientific developments in the food industries. It also develops and improves existing products and produces new food products of high quality to be made available in the market.

Fannah said that Atyab Food Industries produced various fresh and frozen baked products, such as all types of breads, cakes, butter croissants, pies, sweets, puffs, and the various other forms of bread, as well as healthy bread products such as sliced bread, high-protein omega-3 bread, fiber breads etc. These products are available in the market under the brand name 'Gold', 'Atyab' and 'Bon Vivant'.

The ministers urged the executive management of Atyab Food Industries to put in more efforts to promote Omani industries. They said that the ministries were ready to remove any obstacles and difficulties faced by the Omani industries in the best possible way.

OSN celebrates International Women's Day

In celebration of International Women's Day, OSN has announced that it will be launching its first-ever content line-up dedicated to women in the region. Launching on Monday, March 8 to mark the occasion, the 'OSN Woman' content offering will be available as a standalone channel through any OSN box as we well as on demand and on the OSN Streaming App to empower women across the region, offering valuable, unique, and relevant entertainment experiences.

'OSN Woman' will bring female audiences a variety of lifestyle programming across fashion, health, parenting, relationships, and reality topics. Audiences can expect to watch bespoke and inspirational content such as the hit documentary, *The Weekly: Special Edition, Framing Britney Spears*, which fol-



lows the rise and fall of the Grammy-winning singer, Britney Spears which has been making headlines ever since it came to light. In addition, *A Perfect 14*, will be part of the content line-up which explores the world of plus-size models fighting to reshape the fashion industry and traditional beauty standards, as well as *Public Figure, Fashion Start-Up, Inside Misguided* and *Royals De-*

classified to name a few.

The driving force behind this unique project were several female programming specialists at OSN, who hand-picked every single content, utilising their understanding of women and the region in order to come up with a tailored proposition that's sure to answer every woman's need.

And that's not all, to celebrate OSN's new milestone, an all-female cast and crew led the 'OSN Woman' campaign concept creation.

The talented team included director Danielle Arden and regional executive content producer at Prodigious, Nayla Chacra among other creative women, who came together to create a fresh powerful video showcasing different women from across and region and giving them a platform to voice

what they want to see on the screens.

"We are excited and proud to launch this unique project on International Women's Day, a day that celebrates the achievements of women all over the world. We want to send a message to all the women of the region that we listen to them and care about bringing content that connects with them and answers their daily needs. This is yet another milestone for OSN, where we manage to give an important segment of our audience a product that's tailor-made to them. We are tapping into a wider base of modern women through a mix of strong programming that was planned entirely by women like them and made available as a channel and on demand across our digital platforms," said Rolla Karam, interim chief content officer at OSN.

AGFE stands for equal opportunity access to education for women in the region

In light of International Women's Day, and in line with this year's theme of #ChooseToChallenge, the Abdulla al Ghurair Foundation for Education (AGFE) joins the world in celebration of the tremendous achievements of women, challenging all forms of gender inequality, and especially highlighting a focus on their right to access quality education.

For anyone who ever had a doubt, this last year must be proof positive that gender equality is central to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Women have stood out at the frontlines of the COVID-19 crisis, as scientists, healthcare workers, caregivers, innovators, community organisers and as some of the most exemplary and effective national leaders in combating a pan-



dem across the world.

Women's economic empowerment boosts economic growth, and gender gaps prove to be a substantial threat to socio-economic prosperity. That is why the education of women is critical for the socio-economic prosperity of communities, national recovery, and global sustainable develop-

ment. Yet, the progress of underserved young women who do not have access to quality education and are underrepresented in the formal labor market is striking - especially since we are now in 2021.

In the last year, we have seen the devastating impact of COVID-19 on access to high quality education and upskilling opportunities for elevated livelihood for underserved youth. Given the new reliance on online learning and remote work, and that the digital divide remains a gendered one, we do need a special solidarity to overcome a growing challenge that can be overcome with the collective will of every single individual around the globe.

At AGFE our mission is to elevate the livelihoods of Arab youth

through quality education to enable the sustainable development of the region. We are proud of the comprehensive support we were able to offer scholars rising to the challenges the pandemic posed.

We know that when we help underserved young women from low-income families who only dreamed of a university education achieve their dreams, we help challenge the barriers of poverty and gender bias.

AGFE has been providing support through its scholarship programmes, facilitating access to high quality university education to over 1,000 students from the region. Almost half of our scholars are female with 11 per cent of our female scholars holding a refugee status.

Dr Sonia Ben Jaafar, CEO, AGFE

Pope prays for ‘victims of war’ in Iraq

Mosul, Iraq - Pope Francis prayed on Sunday for ‘victims of war’ in northern Iraq, where the Islamic State group ravaged one of the world’s oldest Christian communities until the extremists’ defeat three years ago.

With the partially collapsed walls of the centuries-old Al-Tahera (Immaculate Conception) Church behind him, Pope Francis pleaded for Christians in Iraq and the Middle East to stay in their homelands.

The 84 year old pontiff said the ‘tragic’ exodus of Christians from Iraq and the wider region ‘does incalculable harm not just to the individuals and communities concerned, but also to the society they leave behind’.

The IS onslaught forced hundreds of thousands of Christians in northern Iraq’s Nineveh province to flee. The country’s Christian population has shrunk to fewer than 400,000 from around 1.5mn before the US-led invasion of 2003.

The faithful had gathered on Sunday in the courtyard of the Al-Tahera Church, whose roof collapsed during fighting against IS in 2017. It is one of the oldest of at least 14 churches in Nineveh province that were destroyed by the extremists.

The heaviest deployment of security personnel yet has been mobilised to protect Francis in northern Iraq on what is perhaps the riskiest day of his historic trip to a country where state forces are still hunting IS sleeper cells.

But the Pope appeared not to be fazed, as he was driven around Mosul’s historic Old City - largely razed during the grinding fight to dislodge the extremists - in a golf cart.



Believers gather around Pope Francis as he arrives at the Syriac Catholic Church of the Immaculate Conception, in the predominantly Christian town of Qaraqosh in Nineveh province, some 30km from Iraq’s northern city of Mosul, on Sunday (AFP)

‘Do not lose hope!’

The visit to the north embodies a cause close to the Pope’s heart: Iraq’s traumatised Christian community.

Watching from afar as IS swept across Nineveh in 2014, Pope Francis said at the time he was ready to come and meet the displaced and other victims of war in a show of solidarity.

He finally fulfilled his promise on Sunday, holding a prayer service in Qaraqosh, whose ancient church - named Al-Tahera, like the one in Mosul - was torched by the extremists, who largely also destroyed the town itself.

Residents of Qaraqosh have since rebuilt their homes with little government help and Al-Tahera too has been refurbished, its imposing marble floors and internal colonnades buffed to host its most important guest yet.

Dressed in traditional embroidered robes, hundreds of the faithful - who speak a modern dialect of Aramaic, the language spoken by Jesus Christ - welcomed the pontiff with hymns and olive branches.

“Do not stop dreaming! Do not give up! Do not lose hope!” Francis urged those gathered.

“Now is the time to rebuild

and to start afresh,” he said.

Pope Francis’ trip to Iraq as a ‘pilgrim of peace’ aims to reassure the country’s dwindling Christian community, besides expanding his dialogue with other religions.

On Saturday, the leader of the 1.3bn Catholics met Iraq’s top Shiite cleric, Grand Ayatollah Ali al Sistani, who said that Iraq’s Christians should be able to live in ‘peace’.

“We believers cannot be silent when terrorism abuses religion,” Francis said at an inter-faith service in the ancient site of Ur later that morning.

Pope Francis landed early on Sunday at the airport in the Kurdish regional capital of Arbil, which was targeted just a few weeks ago by a volley of rockets that killed two people, the latest in a series of strikes.

He held a brief meeting with regional president Nechirvan Barzani and his cousin, the prime minister Masrour Barzani.

Thousands of troops and police have been deployed as the Pope criss-crossed Iraq, taking planes, helicopters and armoured convoys to cover more than 1,400km in-country.

AFP



Pope Francis meets with top Shiite cleric Grand Ayatollah Ali al Sistani, in the Iraqi shrine city of Najaf, on Saturday (AFP)

Iran newspapers hail Pope-Sistani meeting

Tehran, Iran - The Iraq meeting of Pope Francis and Grand Ayatollah Ali al Sistani, one of Shiite’s top clerics, was front-page news in Iran on Sunday, with some media declaring it a chance for peace in the neighbouring country.

Officials in Iran, a Shiite-majority country like Iraq, have not yet commented on the pontiff’s historic visit to Iraq that began on Friday.

Tehran, with its allies within Baghdad’s state-sponsored Hashed al Shaabi paramilitary force, helped Iraqi troops defeat the Sunni extremist Islamic State (IS) group at the end of 2017.

Iran’s reformist *Sazandegi* daily said the two religious leaders are now ‘the standard-bearers of world peace’ and called their meetings ‘the most effective event (in the history of) dialogue between religions’.

Another reformist daily, *Shargh*, said it was ‘a symbolic spectacle showing the impor-

ance of cooperation between followers of different religions’.

‘Victory for Shiism and Christianity,’ wrote the government-run Iran daily in a front-page column, saying that the pope’s visit showed that ‘Christianity is alive in Iraq’ despite the ‘suffering’ caused by the IS.

Iran’s conservative dailies noted that the return of security to Iraq was the result of efforts by ‘resistance’ forces, recalling Sistani’s call in 2014 for Iraqis to take up arms against the extremists.

‘Pope Francis and many western countries must be aware that this freedom (to travel to Iraq) owes much to the blood of the courageous youth of the resistance axis and the wisdom of the Shiite authority,’ said the ultraconservative *Resalat*.

It added that the meeting could be ‘a valuable opportunity for peace’.

AFP

Iranian President urges Europe to avoid ‘threats’

Tehran, Iran - Iran’s President Hassan Rouhani on Sunday urged Europe to avoid ‘threats or pressure’ in any negotiations with Tehran, as he received Ireland’s Foreign Minister amid diplomatic efforts to revive a landmark nuclear deal.

Ireland is currently ‘facilitator’ for the United Nations Security Council resolution that enshrined the 2015 nuclear accord between Iran and six major powers, according to the Irish Foreign Ministry.

The deal, known formally as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), has been hanging by a thread since former US president Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew from it in 2018 and reimposed punishing sanctions on Tehran.

Following Joe Biden’s election as the US President, the US, the European parties to the deal - France, Germany and Britain - and Tehran have been trying to salvage the accord.

“The best way to solve problems with European partners at various bilateral, regional and international levels, is negotiations



Iran’s President Hassan Rouhani during a meeting with Ireland’s Foreign Minister Simon Coveney, in the capital Tehran on Sunday (AFP)

based on mutual respect and avoiding any threats or pressure,” Rouhani told Irish Foreign Minister Simon Coveney at Sunday’s meeting, according to a statement by the Iranian presidency.

Ireland is not party to the nuclear deal, but currently sits on the UN Security Council.

As ‘facilitator’ for resolution 2231 - the UNSC resolution en-

shrining the nuclear deal - Dublin is tasked with keeping other council members briefed with implementation of the deal.

The Iranian President criticised Europe’s ‘inactivity on JCPOA commitments’ and added that Iran is committed to ‘preserving the JCPOA and is the only party that has paid a price for it’.

AFP

Saudi-led coalition intercepts ten Huthi drones from Yemen: Media

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia - A Saudi-led military coalition intercepted ten drones launched by Yemen’s Huthi rebels on Sunday, state media reported, in a sharp escalation in cross-border attacks on the kingdom.

The coalition - fighting in Yemen alongside an internationally recognised government against the insurgents - said the drones were aimed at ‘civilian’ targets in Saudi Arabia, the official Saudi Press Agency reported, without specifying the locations.

The Iran-backed rebels have stepped up attacks on Saudi Arabia in recent weeks, while they escalate an offensive in Yemen to seize the government’s last northern stronghold of Marib.

The escalation comes even after the United States last month delisted the Huthis as terrorists and stepped up efforts to de-escalate the six-year conflict.

The terror designation, imposed late in the administration of former US president Donald Trump, had been widely criticised by aid organisations, who



Smoke billows following a reported airstrike by the Saudi-led coalition on Yemen’s capital Sanaa, on Sunday (AFP)

warned it would hamper their efforts to alleviate a humanitarian crisis in Yemen.

“The removal of the Huthis from the list of terrorist groups has been interpreted in a hostile way by the militia,” SPA cited the coalition as saying.

The coalition added that their ‘victories’ in Marib had prompted the rebels to step up attacks on the kingdom.

On Saturday, Yemeni government sources said fierce fighting between pro-government Yemeni forces and the rebels in oil-rich Marib had left at least 90 combatants on the two sides dead over the span of 24 hours.

Years of bombing have failed to shake the rebels’ hold on Yemen’s capital Sanaa, and they have steadily expanded their reach in the country’s north.

US President Joe Biden halted support to Saudi offensive operations in Yemen’s war, which he called a ‘catastrophe’ that ‘has to end’. But he also reiterated US support for Saudi Arabia in defending its territory.

The grinding conflict has claimed tens of thousands of lives and displaced millions, according to international organisations.

AFP

Aftershocks of last week’s Greece tremors stoke fears in people left homeless

Athens, Greece - Twin earthquakes in Greece last week have left around 900 houses uninhabitable, media reported on Sunday, while strong aftershocks continue to stoke fear in people left homeless.

Wednesday and Thursday’s quakes, rated at magnitude 6.3 and 5.9, damaged hundreds of buildings in the villages of Larissa, Ellassona, Tyrnavos and Farkadona and injured 11 people.

After inspecting around 1,800 structures, engineers said 898 homes would have to be demolished along with some hospitals, schools and churches, Athens News Agency reported.

The mainly agricultural area has many stone buildings that are over 70 years old.

Authorities are rushing in caravans and tents to shelter those left homeless from low temperatures and rainy weather.



A woman stands by damaged old buildings in the earthquake-hit village of Damasi, near the town of Tyrnavos, on March 3 (AFP)

Thessaly regional governor Kostas Agorastos said Sunday that temporary housing units and caravans would be hooked up to electricity and water supplies in Damassi and Messohori villages, with at least 100 caravans expected in the coming week.

On Saturday, deputy Interior Minister Stelios Petsas said that each earthquake-hit municipality would receive €300,000 to fund emergency spending.

Meanwhile seismologists have warned people not to return to damaged homes, forecasting many months of aftershocks.

“It’s a given that post-earthquake activity will be long, at least for 4-5 months, so the best solution is to move earthquake-stricken families to containers,” the director of the Greek Geodynamic Institute, Akis Tselentis, told *Kathimerini* newspaper.

A magnitude 4.2 aftershock

hit late on Saturday near the town of Ellassona in Thessaly.

Greece is located on a number of fault lines, and is sporadically hit by earthquakes. But they mostly occur at sea and do not cause casualties.

In October, a 7.0 magnitude quake struck in the Aegean Sea between the Greek island of Samos and the city of Izmir in western Turkey.

AFP

Protest rally after raids in Myanmar

Yangon, Myanmar - Thousands of Myanmar anti-coup demonstrators defied a continued military crackdown on Sunday, following overnight raids in Yangon in which an official from Aung San Suu Kyi's party was beaten to death and several others were detained.

Myanmar has been rocked by unrest since a February 1 coup ousted civilian leader Suu Kyi from power and triggered a mass uprising opposed to the new military junta.

Wednesday was the deadliest day so far, with the United Nations saying at least 38 people were killed as security forces fired into crowds, shooting some protesters in the head.

The UN rights office also said it has verified at least 54 deaths since the coup - though the actual number could be far higher - and more than 1,700 people have been detained.

National League for Democracy party official Soe Win confirmed some officials were arrested in overnight police operations but the exact number is not known.

At least one community leader connected to the ousted NLD government, 58 year old Khin Maung Latt, was killed during a raid at Pabedan township in Yangon, Tun Kyi, from the Former Political Prisoners Society, said.

"He was beaten and taken in a raid since last night and it seems he underwent a harsh interrogation," he told AFP.

"The dead body is being taken from Mingaladon military hospital and on the way to Yay Way cemetery."



Protesters disperse after police fire tear gas during a demonstration against the military coup, in Yangon on Sunday (AFP)

NLD MP Sithu Maung posted on Facebook that security forces last night were also searching for the party's information officer Maung Maung but had been unable to find him.

"Maung Maung's brother was beaten by police and soldiers and his body was held in an upside-down position while he was tortured because there was no one to arrest," the MP said.

State-run media on Sunday warned ousted lawmakers involved in a group called the Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw - which is

claiming to be the legitimate elected government - that they are committing 'high treason' and could be sentenced to death or 22 years jail.

The junta has declared group members personae non-grata and says those who communicate with them could face seven years prison.

'Willing to die'

Rallies fanned out across the country with more than seven separate demonstrations in Yangon and at least five in other cities and regional towns, ac-

cording to Facebook live feeds.

The only reports of serious injuries were a 19 year old man shot in the jaw and a woman (56) hit by a rubber bullet in Bagan, a UNESCO World Heritage Site famed for its ancient Buddhist temples.

"One woman was shot with a rubber bullet in her left leg," a rescue team member said.

Security forces opened fire near the ancient city at around 9am local time.

"There was one (19 year old) boy who was shot through the jaw and neck in Bagan," Ko Ko, a

member of the Bagan rescue team, told AFP.

Yangon-based activist Maung Saungkha said coordinated protests across multiple cities and areas were part of a two-day general strike.

"We are willing to die for our country," he told AFP.

"This current situation is worse (than the past regime). So do we stay under this condition or do we fight? This time we must fight to win."

A state-run newspaper on Sunday urged people not to join the rallies.

'It's important brothers and sisters, let us unite,' the crowd sang.

There was also a large turnout in Mandalay - Myanmar's second biggest city - where security forces used tear gas, rubber bullets and live rounds in the afternoon against protestors.

Yan Naing from the Mandalay rescue service told AFP that two of his colleagues were shot while driving motorbikes - one managed to escape but the other was taken away by security forces.

Another woman on a motorbike was also shot and authorities removed her from the scene to an unknown location, he added.

Scores of monks in saffron robes also staged a sit down protest in the city, with signs saying 'we don't want a military junta'. That city lost another life on Saturday, according to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners, which reported that 21 year old man Naing Min Ko had died after being shot in the leg and beaten by security forces the previous day.

The monitoring group also said a group connected to the military-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party was responsible for two deaths on Saturday morning in the Magway region - a 17 year old and a NLD party official.

In neighbouring Thailand, thousands of Myanmar migrant workers rallied outside the United Nations Office in Bangkok on Sunday calling for intervention. Many waved their country's flag and held photos of Suu Kyi in the air.

AFP

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

With 40% fully vaccinated, Israel re-opens restaurants, eateries

Jerusalem - Israel took another step towards post-pandemic normalcy on Sunday, opening restaurants and cafés to vaccinated 'green pass' holders, with about 40 per cent of the population fully inoculated against the coronavirus.

"We are coming to life," Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu declared, as he cut into a pastry at a Jerusalem café, according to a video posted on Facebook.

Israel, which launched its vaccination campaign in December, has given the recommended two jabs of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine to more than 3.7mn of its roughly nine million people.

Nearly five million have received one shot.

The country launched its green pass programme last month, allowing controlled numbers of people with proof of full vaccination - or those who had recovered from COVID-19 - to enter gyms, pools and other facilities.

But Sunday's slate of reopenings has been highly anticipated, as it marks the restoration of services that touch the daily lives of many Israelis.

Restaurants are now permitted to resume indoor dining up to 75 per cent capacity, with a cap of 100 people and with tables two metres apart.

Green pass holders can also now have a drink at a bar - but cannot yet strike up a chat with a stranger sitting on the stool beside them, with rules requiring an empty seat between patrons, unless they live together.



Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (left) and the Mayor of Jerusalem Moshe Lion visit a re-opened restaurant in Jerusalem on Sunday (AFP)

Israel, which launched its vaccination campaign in December, has given the recommended two jabs of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine to more than 3.7mn of its roughly 9mn people

Eating and drinking on terraces does not require a green pass.

Large numbers of students, many of whom have been out of classrooms for months, will also start returning to school this week, while hotel event halls, sport venues and places of worship are re-opening to green pass holders, with capacity lim-

its in place.

Israelis stranded abroad amid a weeks-long airport closure will also be allowed to return home in increasing numbers this week, beginning with 1,000 arrivals permitted on Sunday.

'We'll be done'

Netanyahu, who faces a tough

re-election battle in two weeks, has put Israel's robust vaccination drive at the centre of his campaign.

While many countries have struggled to secure vaccine supply, Netanyahu's government has remained well-stocked thanks largely to an arrangement with Pfizer to share medical data on the product's impact.

The Prime Minister, in power since 2009, has said he wants Israel's entire over-16 population vaccinated by the end of this month, hoping the economy will be almost fully re-opened in time for the Passover holiday, which begins on March 27.

"Just have to get a few hundred thousand more people... especially the over 50s, and we'll be done," Netanyahu said at the Jerusalem café, gesturing as if he were jabbing his arm with a shot.

While Israel's vaccination pace remains among the world's fastest, the Jewish state has faced widespread calls, including from the United Nations, to ensure inoculations of Palestinians living under occupation in the West Bank, and those in Israeli-blockaded Gaza.

Netanyahu's government has announced plans to vaccinate 100,000 Palestinians with permits to work in Israel.

AFP

Paraguay reshuffles Cabinet after protests

Asuncion, Paraguay - Paraguay's President Mario Abdo Benitez announced a Cabinet reshuffle on Saturday after violent street protests over the government's handling of the pandemic.

He announced new people would be appointed to the ministries of health, education, women's issues, and civil affairs. "I am sure that the men and women named will do their utmost to confront this moment of crisis that the country is enduring," the President said.

Thousands of protestors clashed with police late on Friday, ransacking shops and setting cars on fire. A total of 21 people were injured, hospi-

tal officials said.

Paraguayans are angry over a shortage of personal protective gear and other equipment to confront the health crisis and a collapse in the healthcare system. The health minister already resigned on Friday.

On Saturday, another 5,000 people came out to protest but this time the rally was peaceful, and they called for the President's resignation.

As of Friday, Paraguay had reported 165,811 coronavirus cases and 3,278 deaths.

It is awaiting the arrival of 4mn vaccine doses from the Convax system of the World Health Organization.

9 cases in COVID-free New Caledonia

Noumea, France - The remote Pacific territory of New Caledonia, one of the few places on the planet to have avoided COVID-19, is to go into strict lockdown after detecting nine cases, local officials said on Sunday.

The outbreak on the French archipelago was detected after a school headteacher fell ill on the Wallis and Futuna islands - another French territory in the Pacific - leading authorities to screen for cases.

"According to the first indications, the patient developed symptoms in mid-February and could have been infectious in Wallis and Futuna from the end of Janu-

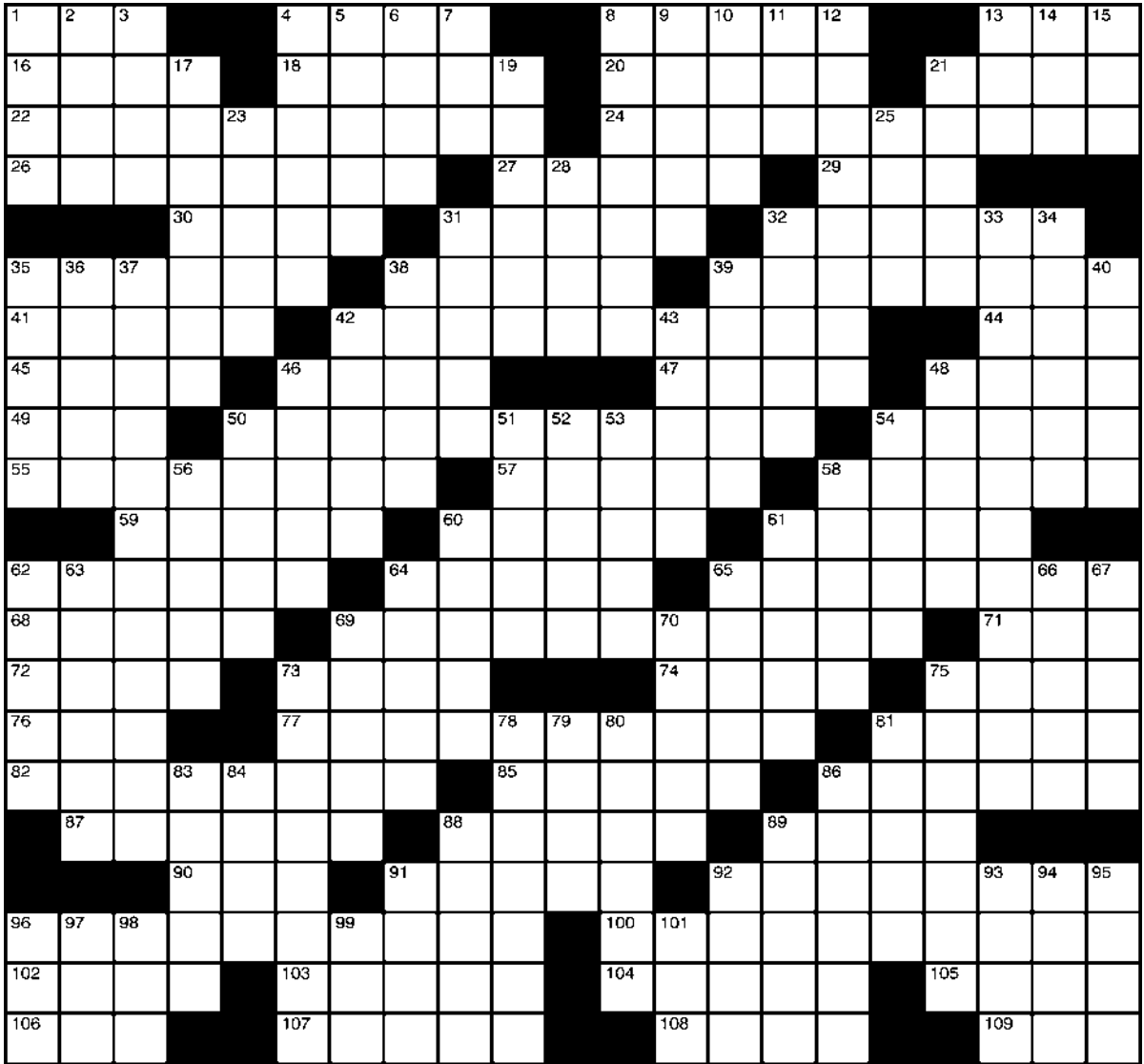
ary," the head of the local government in New Caledonia, Thierry Santa, said.

Travel between the two French territories had previously been unrestricted, while anyone arriving from elsewhere had to undergo a strict 14-day quarantine in a hotel. Santa announced a two-week lockdown for New Caledonia starting from Monday evening, to 'break the transmission of the virus while there is still time'.

The islands had previously succeeded in stopping community transmission of the novel coronavirus, which has reached almost all corners of the globe.

AFP

DAILY CROSSWORD



©2020 Tribune Content Agency, LLC All rights reserved

ACROSS

- 1 Venerable patriotic org.
- 4 Galena and cinnabar
- 8 Table bird
- 13 Lippo Lippi
- 16 Norse explorer
- 18 Collector's item
- 20 Rhyme scheme
- 21 Form a network
- 22 Infringements
- 24 Mozart opera
- 26 Losers
- 27 Pronoun
- 29 ___ de vie
- 30 Eisteddfod item
- 31 The candidates
- 32 Lighthearted
- 35 Most trustworthy
- 38 Office help
- 39 Certain Belgians
- 41 Hackneyed
- 42 Set up again, British style
- 44 Electronics Corp.
- 45 Decomposes
- 46 Ham or bacon
- 47 ___ du Vent
- 48 Bow or slip
- 49 Drs. org.
- 50 Elastics

- 54 Wear away
- 55 Leas
- 57 Architectural fillets
- 58 Turned the pages
- 59 First zodiac sign
- 60 Simon and McCartney
- 61 Mexican plant
- 62 Kind of geometry
- 64 Old hat
- 65 Of certain walls
- 68 Movie teasers
- 69 Suffer the consequences
- 71 Elected: Fr.
- 72 Social liabilities
- 73 Where Callao is
- 74 South American tubers
- 75 Child's play
- 76 Disencumber
- 77 Nagged
- 81 This: Fr.
- 82 Literary device
- 85 Musical composition
- 86 Showed one's years
- 87 Small finches
- 88 Lots of lots
- 89 Snail or electronic
- 90 Chemical ending

- 91 Pineapple
- 92 Populate anew
- 96 Details
- 100 Score bull's-eyes
- 102 Seine tributary
- 103 Fiber plant
- 104 English Victorian novelist
- 105 Hence
- 106 Hardwood
- 107 Situations
- 108 ___ out: got by
- 109 Playing card
- DOWN**
- 1 Buddhist deity
- 2 Seed covering
- 3 Grande and Bravo
- 4 Navigational aid
- 5 Wishing undone
- 6 Olympian
- 7 Sloth, for one
- 8 ___ head: culminated
- 9 Humiliate
- 10 Summon by name
- 11 Ornamental sash
- 12 Aircraft features
- 13 1918 health scourge
- 14 Inactive: abbr.
- 15 Hew
- 17 Storage places

- 19 Stableboy
- 21 Planet . . . or not?
- 23 Got up
- 25 Fall short
- 28 Knack: colloq.
- 31 Stoke-on-Trent
- 32 Diamond features
- 33 Cornucopia
- 34 Apply cryptography
- 35 Constrict
- 36 Bouquet
- 37 In the pink
- 38 Some Europeans
- 39 Lonely regions
- 40 Overfull
- 42 Garments
- 43 Reds and Braves
- 46 Sauce base
- 48 African village
- 50 Ancient Roman buildings
- 51 Comic ridicule
- 52 Encounter
- 53 Continental thoroughfare
- 54 Fisherman
- 56 Missteps
- 58 Bowling place
- 60 Settle the bill
- 61 Kabuki country
- 62 African capital
- 63 Thrashes

- 64 Ward off
- 65 Lace edging
- 66 Excite
- 67 Gulled
- 69 Bosc and Anjou
- 70 Benedict XVI, Francis, et al.
- 73 Of speech sounds
- 75 ___ deal: commit oneself
- 78 Encloses
- 79 Star Trek's Michael
- 80 Not relaxed
- 81 Shouts
- 83 Remove completely
- 84 Cotton and sloe
- 86 Showed surprise
- 88 Tarsus
- 89 Mix
- 91 Simulates
- 92 File's companion
- 93 Legal wrong
- 94 Theater accommodation
- 95 Harrow's rival
- 96 Fan's disapproval
- 97 Estuary
- 98 Query
- 99 ___ rule
- 101 Do a yard chore

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

Avoid people who are hostile to authority, because their message definitely isn't going to be worth hearing. They'll feed into your insecurities and fears, which is not going to help you get to where you want to go. Instead, pay attention to the quieter, more subliminal emotional business going on under the surface. While other people are complaining, you'll be gaining valuable insight.



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

Try as they might, no one will be able to get anything over on you! You're in a strong intuitive phase right now, which means you can smell baloney a mile away. This puts you an extremely powerful position if you're involved in any negotiations, and it will help you get further in a romantic conquest if there's anyone around who's caught your eye. It's almost as if you can read people's minds.



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

Safety should be your top concern today, so shy away from anything that is emotionally or physically dangerous. A new relationship could be riskier than you initially realised. This person isn't being completely honest with you, so avoid making any big commitments right now. If you're feeling a bit fragile, then let your people know about it.



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

It's odd, but the compliments a stranger gives you will mean much more than what friends or loved ones say about you today. Perhaps there is a tendency for people who know you to be jealous about how fabulous you look or how popular you've become, which prevents them from genuinely meaning what they say, and you'll pick up on it. Just let it go today.



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

You can choose the path to take. Even if it feels like you need to follow instructions or just go along with the crowd, you need to remember that you always have a voice and can always use it. So if you're feeling under pressure from someone you're romantically interested in, follow your heart. Don't delve deep into any type of emotional entanglement right now.



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

It's all well and good to talk about your hopes for the future, but is talking about them going to help them come to fruition? You've done a good job of figuring out what you want, but now you have to focus all your energy on making it come into being! You're the only person who can take yourself where you want to go in life. So set aside some time. Set some specific goals.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

Big personalities are arriving on the scene, and they might try to crowd you. The best approach for these people is to just let them have the stage. If you fight them for the limelight, they'll only push back at you harder. To get things started on the right foot, you should step back and give up some of your share of the attention. They won't notice your sacrifice, so don't expect any gratitude.



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

It's important for you to remind yourself of the value of money. Stop using so much plastic and get back to a cash-based economy. You need to remind yourself that every dollar you spend means one less dollar you have. It's too easy to forget that when you use a little piece of plastic. Even if you're not worried about your money situation, it would be best to stop relying so much on credit.



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

The already thin line between your family and your career is getting even thinner, but you don't have to stress out about it. This might not be such a bad thing, at least for the time being. Mixing these two worlds together will enable you to operate more smoothly and efficiently in both of them! So try to embrace this time in your life. It will definitely be rewarding in the end.



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

You can make a fresh start with someone you've been arguing with. All you have to do is put in all the work required. You also have to humble yourself and admit where you went wrong. Start this conversation as early in the day as possible, and try to ensure that it takes place face-to-face. Meeting over coffee in the morning would be perfect. You have the energy for this task.



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

Your social circle suddenly has more of a magnetic pull for you, but you should be wary of spending all of your time with others no matter how much you adore them. You've got to keep your priorities straight, and hanging out with your friends doesn't rate above getting your work finished! Don't put off the boring stuff just because it's boring. Get it done as soon as you can.



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

A co-worker can't stop talking about a trendy new project or hobby they've discovered. They talk a good talk, and your interest has been stirred up. You want to hop on board this bandwagon as soon as possible! Slow down there. You don't want to get involved in stuff you're unsure of too soon. Give yourself time to research and observe other people.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. Water is a good solvent of ionic salts because

- a. it has a high boiling point
- b. it has a high dipole moment
- c. it has a high specific heat
- d. it has no colour

2. Vijayalakshmi Pandit was

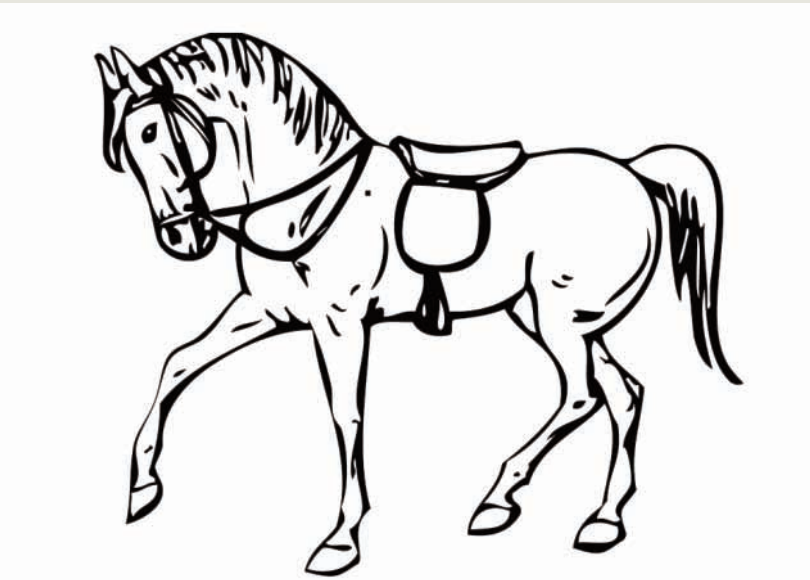
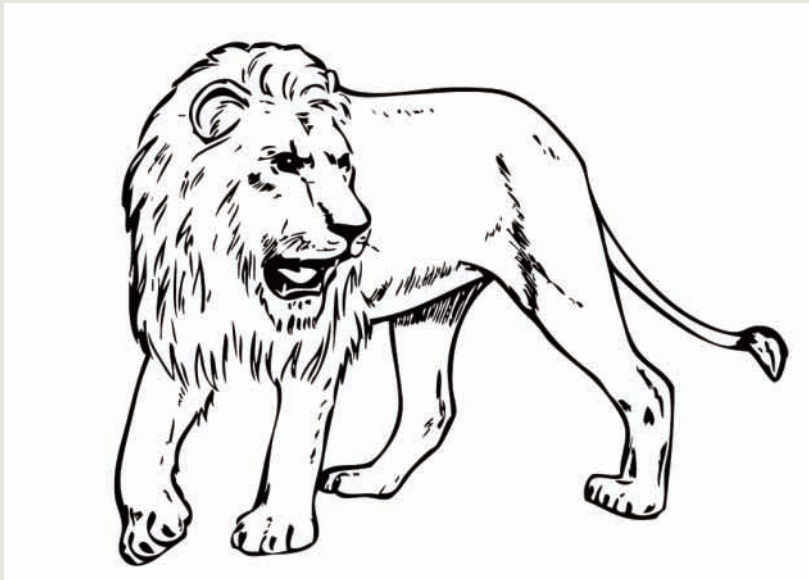
- a. the first women minister of an Indian state (UP)
- b. the first woman to become president of the UN General Assembly
- c. the first Indian women Ambassador to Moscow
- d. All of the above

3. Tiger Woods is associated with which of the following sports?

- a. Table tennis
- b. Tennis
- c. Golf
- d. Boxing

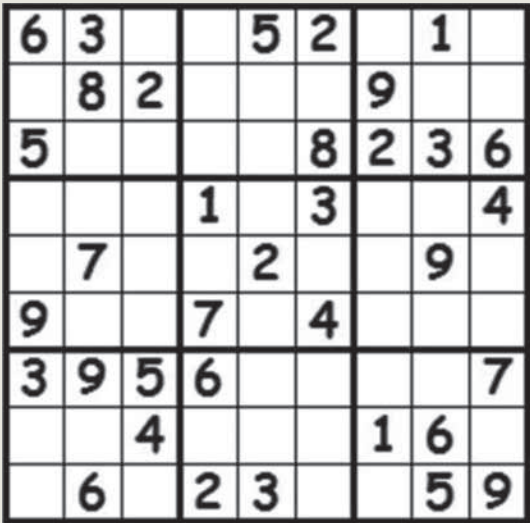
Answers: 1: b 2: d 3: c

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



BOGGLER



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



DAILY CROSSWORD ANSWERS (MARCH 07)



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



INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Choose to challenge

The campaign theme for International Women's Day 2021 is 'Choose to Challenge'. A challenged world is an alert world. And from challenge comes change. So let's all choose to challenge says the IWD website, calling on people around the world, men and women, to attest their support to the theme by sending in their views and photos as a sign of solidarity. International Women's Day (March 8) is a global day celebrating the social, economic, cultural, and political achievements of women. The day also marks a call to action for accelerating women's equality in all professions, in all countries around the globe. Given below are the frank opinion of some women in Oman who believe that it is important that women come to the forefront in all key professions to streamline the process of nation building in different countries.



Abeer Ali Mubarak al Mukhaini
Admin & Follow-up Director,
Al Matar Group

From challenge comes change! And form change opportunities and new leaders are born. Challenge helps in shaping us as individuals, and countries, in general. The huge challenge that we are experiencing globally, and not in Oman alone, is an alert to increase the level of responsibility towards society. It also requires a collaborative force to generate a blossoming future for all.

Having women in the forefront to strengthen their presence in various professions, side by side with men, will encourage diversification that results in a more prosperous society.

I always look at challenge as an opportunity. And Omani women, historically and at present, have proved their capability and competence in achieving more than what has been dedicated to them. Now is the time where women can participate more effectively in building future nations.



Dr Lamya Harub
PMO Lead - Polices & Procedure Project
at OQ

While we celebrate International Women's Day, it is paramount to realise that 'gender equity' will not be attained in our lifetime if we fail to see its direct correlation with economic prosperity.

This is because gender equity is intrinsically linked to sustainable development and is vital to the realisation of rights for all.

To this end, if we want a successful and flourishing economy, we must include the contributions and potentials of all - men as well as women.



Juliette Lotthe de Thomson
French artist

The potential women have in all areas is certainly underestimated, and even more underexploited. In a situation of crisis, it is even more of a loss. What women have to offer are strong abilities that complete the ones men have. Intellectually men and women are equal, but emotionally, many times they prove to be stronger, to be the pillars of society, the same way they are the pillars of the family. They are the glue that hold human beings together at all levels and certainly today we realise how much that bond is fundamental, even professionally, to build nations and face tough times.

It is true in every culture and all professions, and even in art or sport. Without their contribution, the nations will be deprived of half of what they could be.



Elizabeth Davis
Marine biologist and banker

Women constitute half the population. If 50% of a country's people are not empowered, it is obvious that that nation is not going anywhere. Bringing women to the forefront is of utmost importance for the world to progress in a holistic manner.

These backbenchers have proven equally able, whether in ruling countries, heading major corporations, financial institutions, flying jets, going to space, to name a few.

Women are not back-benchers by choice, that was the place reserved for them by society. Women have proven themselves excellent at multi-tasking and are sensitive to issues, as well. They are used to managing homes efficiently and could easily do that in the bigger arena. Just give them an equal opportunity and they will surely rise and shine. And so will the nation!



Shalini Kumar
Public speaker, poet, artist

I would like to begin with two lines from my own poem recited on Women's Day at a poetry and literary group platform - 'There is nothing impossible for women to make possible. We should not underestimate a woman when she can even defeat the enemy by flying a fighter plane as tough as the MIG21.'

Today's woman is literate, knowledgeable and capable of doing any task given. So in the true sense, if any nation wants to progress fast and become powerful, women should come to the forefront in all key professions.

In Oman and in India, women have joined all key professions, from business and engineering to the medical and defence fields. Hence, both countries are progressing fast.

I would like to end, quoting Hillary Clinton - When women participate in an economy, everyone benefits.



CLASSIFIEDS

SITUATION WANTED

Looking for a driver job in Muscat, has got 9 years experience. Contact 78344297

TO ADVERTISE IN MUSCAT DAILY CLASSIFIEDS

CALL 99104346 OR E-MAIL dailyclassifieds@apexmedia.co.om

WJ Towell Group Company

Quality car rentals at competitive prices.

Muscat 9014 6672, 9679 0684

Sohar 9731 6218 | Salalah 9429 9325

www.orbit-oman.com

أوربت ORBIT

Car Rental & Lease

- Fleet of 2,000 vehicles
- Choose from a wide range of brands & models
- PDO, OXY and BP spec vehicles available
- Attractive rates for short-term & long-term lease

FREE CLASSIFIED LISTING

Muscat Daily now offers free classified listings for individuals in the following categories:
Situations Wanted/ Accommodation Wanted or Available/Sale of Household Items/ Car for Sale or Wanted/ Matrimonial Alliances (Word limit is 35)

Please email your listing to dailyclassifieds@apexmedia.co.om or call 99104346

GET YOUR LATEST NEWS UPDATES ON WhatsApp

SUBSCRIBE NOW

71509370

1. Save this number to your contact list

2. Send "start" to receive news updates

BEST DESTINATIONS

OFF THE BEATEN TRACK-2

Best destinations to travel in the Middle East in 2021

Joan Torres, popular travel blogger and author of 'Against the Compass', a well-established brand aimed at promoting emerging tourism destinations, has compiled a list of the 25 best places to travel in the Middle East in 2021, in which three destinations of Oman figure (Dhofar, Salalah and Musandam).

"These choices are based on their level of security, historical importance, and natural beauty," he says. Glimpses about 13 of Torres' top 25 are published here, in the second part of the series. (The other 12 had been published a fortnight ago.)



The Citadel of Aleppo

Country - Syria

Before the war, Aleppo used to be the largest and most touristic city in the country. Being a few thousands years older than Damascus, the Citadel and Old City of Aleppo have been mostly destroyed by the Civil War but after the liberation of the city in 2017, but the reconstruction has already begun and Syrians are moving back and shops are, very slowly, reopening.

In a matter of years, the beautiful city of Aleppo will return to its maximum splendour.



The Dead Sea – The lowest point on Earth

Country - Jordan

Occupying territory in both Israel and Palestine and Jordan, the Dead Sea is the lake with the highest salt density in the world and also, the lowest point on Earth, 430 meters below sea level. Such is the high concentration of salt that animals and plants can't live in it, hence the name.

Swimming in the Dead Sea is totally fine and, due to the high density of the water, sinking is almost impossible. Along the coast of the Jordanian side, there are several hotels and resorts where one can chill on their beaches and have a mud bath.



Liwa Oasis – The purest image of the Gulf

Country - UAE

Around 500 years ago, a group of bedouins tapped underground, freshwater recourses to cultivate dates and, as a result, several villages and settlements appeared in the area, which we currently call Liwa, the birthplace of the Nahyan family, the current ruling family of Abu Dhabi and the UAE.

Since then, and over the years, the cultivation of dates in Liwa has been a key factor in the region's economic development. Liwa is located in the south of UAE, next to Saudi Arabian border and near the Empty Quarter, a huge desert spread across UAE, Yemen, Oman, and Saudi Arabia the largest sea of dunes on Earth.



Qeshm Island – Most authentic Persian Gulf culture

Country - Iran

Located in the Persian Gulf, right in the Strait of Hormuz, between Oman and Iran, Qeshm is an island with amazing geological formations, as well as very rich wildlife. This is what most travelers come here for but the most interesting part of the island is to get immersed in the local culture.

Qeshm is a different world from the rest of Iran and it can be seen not only in the religion, the architecture and their food, which is mainly based on seafood, but also in the way their women dress, in such colourful abayas and niqabs, like nowhere else.



Dahab – Backpackers haven in the Middle East

Country - Egypt

Dahab is a lovely touristic beach town inhabited by Bedouins in the Sinai peninsula, which is considered the most backpacking-friendly place (and probably the only one) in the Middle East.

For decades, Dahab has attracted travellers from all over the world for having some of the best diving spots in the country. In Dahab, one comes for two things: either scuba diving or doing literally nothing, as it has this laid-back atmosphere that consists of going to the beach, relaxing and eating at the several seafood restaurants.



Jerash – Accessible Roman ruins

Country - Jordan

If making a trip to Lebanon to visit the ruins of Baalbek sounds too hardcore for you but you still want to travel to the Middle East, perhaps you should consider visiting Jerash, another of the greatest Roman ruins outside of Italy. Constructed in some of the most fertile valleys in the region, Jerash today comprises green, rolling hills filled with olive and fig trees.

The location, therefore, is not a coincidence because, when it was built around 2,000 years ago, the Romans wanted to make it a great city due to the richness of the land.



Musandam – Norway of the Middle East

Country - Oman

A rocky desert land composed of stunning fiords, cliffs and one of the largest varieties of wildlife in the Middle East, Musandam (often called the Norway of the Middle East) is a piece of territory north of the UAE, projecting into the Strait of Hormuz, but belonging to Oman.

Musandam is a pretty common destination among expats living in Dubai but still, the area remains pretty untouched. Along the coast, you find several beaches only occupied by the local Omanis.



Hebron – Most troubled city in Palestine

Country - Palestine

Hebron is the city where the Tomb of the Patriarchs stands, the place where Abraham, Jacob and Isaac are buried. The Tomb of the Patriarchs is one of the holiest places for both, Muslims and Jews.

This means that both religions share an important holy place but, on top of that, Hebron also happens to be the only city in Palestine where Jewish settlements are within the city itself. In the old part of the city, the local Palestinians have built a fence to prevent the settlers on upper floors from discarding garbage.



Qadisha Valley – Lovely Christian mountain villages

Country - Lebanon

If you either want just to relax, eat good food, visit beautiful Christian monasteries or to go hiking, the Qadisha Valley in Lebanon will be the perfect place for you. Qadisha means 'holy' and owes this name to the fact that this valley is home to some of the most ancient communities of monastic Christians in the Middle East.

Monasticism is a way of life for which the person (in this case the Christian monks) renounces to everything to devote himself completely to spiritual work. The valley is full of natural caves, difficult to access.



Manama – Where the fun never ends

Country - Bahrain

In case you've never heard of it, Bahrain is a tiny country (one of tiniest in the world actually) located in the Persian Gulf, between Qatar and Saudi Arabia, and Manama is its capital. To make it short, Bahrain is the only Arab Gulf monarchy that has run out of petrol, or at least, can't rely on the petrol income anymore.

Looking at alternative ways of gaining income, Bahrain has become the party place in the Middle East. Connected to Saudi Arabia by a bridge, every week, thousands of people cross the border to relax and enjoy a relative level of freedom.



Luxor – Greatest open-air museum

Country - Egypt

Established on the shore of the great Nile river and surrounded by both, mango plantations and desert, Luxor is the world's greatest open-air museum.

This is the place where the most well-known pharaohs come from (like Tutankhamun, for example) and most of the temples are either in excellent conditions or perfectly restored.

From large and epic tombs to temples constructed on a giant scale, all of them dating from between 3,200 BC and 1,500 BC, Luxor is an unmissable place to travel in the Middle East.



Bethlehem – Birthplace of Jesus

Country - Palestine

The most interesting part of Bethlehem is to get a close feeling of the consequences of the Israeli occupation as, after the Second Intifada, in 2001, Israel built an 8m wall that would finally isolate the West Bank from Israel. The wall, however, was built within Palestinian territory and it passes by the centre of the city. It is decorated with plenty of pro-Palestinian paintings, including a real work from the famous Banksy, the white pigeon.



Salalah – Coconuts, pineapples, tropical rain

Country - Oman

This is a unique place in the Persian Gulf where it rains, which is full of green meadows and the locals sell coconuts and pineapples. Salalah, a city found in the most southern part of Oman, very close to the Yemeni border, and the region of Dhofar, experience a monsoon season.

This season is called Khareef and occurs from July till September during which Salalah becomes beautiful and lush green, attracting visitors from all over the country, as well as the gulf region, who seek some respite from the extremely hot and humid summer.

FOOTBALL ROUND-UP

Six of the worst for Liverpool

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE

London, UK - Liverpool's season remained in free fall after relegation-threatened Fulham became the latest side to emerge victorious from Anfield with a 1-0 win on Sunday to tighten the battle to beat the drop.

The English champions have lost six consecutive home league games and gone eight without a win at Anfield.

That run is all the more remarkable as Jurgen Klopp's men had gone nearly four years without a league defeat at home in 68 games between April 2017 and January this year.

However, empty stands and an injury crisis has seen the fear factor disappear for visiting sides.

Liverpool's best chance of qualifying for next season's Champions League may now be in winning the European Cup for a seventh time as they sit seventh, four points adrift of the top four, having played at least one game more than all their rivals.

Despite their lowly position in the table, Fulham had lost just one of their previous six games and were well worthy of a half-time lead.

Klopp made seven changes to the Liverpool side beaten by Chelsea on Thursday, but another defensive reshuffle did the Reds little favours as Josh Maja and Ademola Lookman should have opened the scoring earlier for Fulham.

Mohamed Salah's surprise substitution in midweek provoked fresh speculation over the Egyptian's future and he was at fault for the only goal in first-half stoppage time.

Mario Lemina outmuscled Salah to win the ball inside the Liverpool box before firing low



Fulham's players celebrate on the pitch after the win against Liverpool at Anfield in Liverpool, UK, on Sunday

across Alisson Becker into the far corner.

The hosts were far better after the break, but have not scored from open play at Anfield in seven games.

Alphonse Areola produced a stunning save to deny Diogo Jota before Sadio Mane came off the bench to hit the woodwork.

Fulham remain in the bottom three but only on goal difference behind Brighton.

Newcastle are just a point better off after a dismal 0-0 draw at West Brom earlier on Sunday.

The Magpies had been unsettled by a dressing room bust-up between manager Steve Bruce and Matt Ritchie over the past week with Bruce pledging to root out a mole who leaked the story to the press.

OTHER RESULTS:
Saturday: Aston Villa 0 Wolves 0, Brighton 1 Leicester 2.

ITALIAN LEAGUE

Mancini lifts Roma past Genoa to fourth

Milan, Italy - Italy international defender Gianluca Mancini nodded in a corner to lift Roma to fourth in Serie A on Sunday with a 1-0 win over Genoa.

Paulo Fonseca's side pull one point ahead of Atalanta who drop to fifth before their game Monday at Serie A leaders Inter Milan.

Mancini jumped highest to turn in a Lorenzo Pellegrini corner after 24 minutes in the Stadio Olimpico, beating Genoa second choice 'keeper Federico Marchetti who replaced Mattia Perrin.

Roma extended their unbeaten run against 13th-placed Genoa to 14 games, to sit nine points behind leaders Inter Milan.

The three points were a boost for the capital side days before

hosting Shakhtar Donetsk in their Europa League last-16, first-leg tie.

Champions Juventus are just one point behind Milan in third after claiming their seventh straight win at home on Saturday 3-1 against Lazio.

OTHER RESULTS:

Sunday: Fiorentina 3 Parma 3, Hellas Verona 0 AC Milan 2, Crotone 4 Torino 2; **Saturday:** Spezia 1 Benevento 1, Udinese 2 Sassuolo 0, Juventus 3 Lazio 1.

GERMAN LEAGUE

Sunday: Cologne 1 Werder Bremen 1; **Saturday:** Hertha Berlin 2 Augsburg 1, Borussia Moenchengladbach 0 Bayer Leverkusen 1, Hoffenheim 2 VfL Wolfsburg 1, Eintracht Frankfurt 1 VfB Stuttgart 1, Bayern Munich 4 Borussia Dortmund 2.

AFP

Rangers are champions for first time in ten years

SCOTTISH PREMIERSHIP

Glasgow, UK - Rangers' first Scottish Premiership title for ten years was confirmed Sunday after Celtic's drew 0-0 at Dundee United to stand 20 points behind their Glasgow rivals with six games left to play.

Steven Gerrard's men have stormed to the title without losing a game to end Celtic's record-equalling nine consecutive Scottish league titles.

Rangers were not even in the top-flight for four of those seasons after the club was demoted to the fourth tier following liquidation in 2012 due to financial troubles.

"This club has been to hell and back over the past 10 years," said Gerrard after Saturday's 3-0 win over St Mirren put Rangers on the brink of a first major trophy since 2011.

"I've only been part of it for three, but I can certainly relate and I've got that feeling and that affection with the

fans and I know what they have been through."

The former England and Liverpool captain never won a league title during his legendary 17-year career at Anfield. However, Gerrard has transformed Rangers' fortunes, both domestically and in Europe, since taking his first senior managerial role in 2018.

The newly crowned Scottish champions have reached the last-16 of the Europa League for the second consecutive season and face Slavia Prague on Thursday.

Rangers were denied the chance to rub salt into Celtic wounds by winning the title at Celtic Park in two weeks' time in their next league fixture.

Celtic dropped points for the 12th time in the league this season with caretaker manager John Kennedy taking charge for just the second time since Neil Lennon resigned last month.

AFP



Rangers are Scottish champions

Benzema grabs late equaliser for Real in Madrid derby

SPANISH LEAGUE

Madrid, Spain - Atletico Madrid squandered the chance to inflict a heavy blow on Real Madrid's La Liga title hopes on Sunday as Karim Benzema's late equaliser earned the champions a 1-1 draw and kept them in the race at the top. Luis Suarez's flicked finish early in the first half looked to be enough to give Atletico a crucial win that would have put them eight points clear of their opponents, with a game in hand.

But they failed to make their authority count and Benzema punished them in the 88th minute, his goal earning Real Madrid a draw that ensures the gap between the two city rivals stays at five points.

It is still a considerable lead that Atletico can extend to eight points with 12 matches left if they win their game in hand at home to Athletic Bilbao on Wednesday night. Instead, the title race remains very much in Atletico's favour but still up for grabs, especially for Barcelona, who were perhaps the biggest beneficiaries of this result.

Barca, now sit only two points behind Atletico, having played a game more. They also face Diego Simeone's side at Camp Nou in May. Earlier on Saturday, Barcelona beat Osasuna 2-0 to edge two points behind leaders Atletico Madrid in La Liga.

Lionel Messi set up both goals in Pamplona as Jordi Alba hammered home in the first half before the 18 year-old Ilaix Moriba came off the bench to curl in an impressive shot late in the second.

OTHER RESULTS:

Sunday: Huesca 3 Celta Vigo 4; **Saturday:** Valladolid 2 Getafe 1, Elche 2 Sevilla 1, Cadiz 1 Eibar 0.

AFP

Now in 1 Liter!

Topfruit
PREMIUM
NO ADDED SUGAR

Topfruit
100% JUICE
ORANGE
NO ADDED SUGAR

1L

Unbeaten Muscat in sight of T20 title

IT Works defeat Renaissance, Al Turki NMC trounce AER

LOCAL CRICKET

Muscat CT are on the verge of Oman Cricket Premier Division T20 title after recording back-to-back victories to stay unbeaten at Al Amerat on the weekend. The table-toppers defeated Arm Alpha on Friday and made it two-in-a-row with a facile victory over Renaissance CT the following day.

The victories extended Muscat CT's winning streak in the ongoing competition to eight matches to garner a total of 16 points. Renaissance are second with 12 points after concluding their league engagements (ten games) while IT Works have ten points from eight matches so far. A victory for Muscat CT over IT Works in the next match will secure them the title.

BRIEF SCORES:

Saturday: Renaissance 88 in 16.4 overs (Rafi Ullah 28; Sandeep Goud 3-5, Samay Shrivastava 2-12, Wasim Ali 2-21) lost to Muscat CT 92-2 in 12.2 overs



Jatinder Singh



Shoaib Khan



Jay Odedra



Twinkal Bhandari

(Jatinder Singh 48 n.o., Shoaib Khan 28).

Friday: Muscat CT 161-6 (Shoaib 69; Sanuth Ebrahim 2-21, Bilal Khan 2-26) beat Arm Alpha 76 all out in 15.1 overs (Nalinda Prasad 32; Shrivastava 3-5, Wasim 2-7, Goud 2-15).

Vital victory for IT Works

Meanwhile in the Premier Division (50-over-a-side) League Khawar Ali's allround display led IT Works to a vital four-wicket win over Renaiss-

sance CT. The win helped IT Works reach 14 points from nine matches and they next play Muscat CT in a match that could decide the league winner. The teams clash in their concluding league game on March 12.

Muscat currently lead the table with 16 points. Al Turki NMC also have 14 points and take on Renaissance in the final league match leaving a possibility of the winner being decided on net run-rate (NRR).

BRIEF SCORES:

Renaissance 110 in 36 overs

(Abdul Rauf 24, Shubo Pal 24; Shakeel Ahmad 3-8, Mohammed Nadeem 2-20, Khawar Ali 2-26, Imran Mohammed 2-31) lost to IT Works 113-6 in 19.1 overs (Zeeshan Maqsood 38, Khawar Ali 25; Asif Khan 3-7, Mohammad Bilal 3-33).

Premier Division: AER 150-9 in 50 overs (Afzal Khan 58 n.o.; Jay Odedra 3-14, Hemalkumar Tandel 2-52) lost to Al Turki NMC 154-5 in 22.5 overs (Twinkal Bhandari 81 n.o., Akshay Patel 21; Amanpreet Singh 2-29, Muzahir Raza 2-34).



Djokovic takes Federer's world No 1 record

Paris, France - Novak Djokovic will on Monday set a new landmark of 311 weeks as world No 1, surpassing Roger Federer whose hold on a record-equalling 20 Grand Slam titles is now firmly in the Serb's sights.

The 33 year old Djokovic, already the winner of 18 majors, has time on his side with Federer turning 40 in August.

He is also a year younger than Rafael Nadal who also has 20 majors.

"Now that I've become the historic No 1, I'm relieved," said Djokovic after sweeping to a ninth Australian Open last month which guaranteed his extended stay at the top.

"Now, I'm going to be able to focus mainly on the Grand Slams."

AFP

PUBG MOBILE

FUEL THE SQUAD

Mountain Dew

EVERYONE IS A WINNER

WIN EXCLUSIVE IN GAME REWARDS

VISIT DEWSQUAD.COM AND GET THAT GEAR

Find the code under the ring pull

Go to WWW.DEWSQUAD.COM

Redeem the exclusive **PUBG** in-game items

*Terms & Conditions apply

GUPTILL LEADS NZ TO SERIES WIN



New Zealand's Martin Guptill plays a shot during his knock of 71 against Australia in the fifth T20I match at Wellington, New Zealand, on Sunday

NEW ZEALAND VS AUSTRALIA FIFTH T20I

Wellington, New Zealand - A dreadful finish to Australia's innings opened the way for New Zealand to rumble to a seven-wicket victory and a 3-2 T20I series triumph, as Martin Guptill (71) and Devon Conway (36) finished the bout the way they had started it in Christchurch.

A pair of wins in spectator-free games had allowed Australia to turn up for the final game with a chance to win from 0-2 down, but on a sunny Sunday afternoon with a crowd again present, Kane Williamson's side scotched early momentum enjoyed by the visitors when Matthew Wade and Aaron Finch were in harness to completely dominate the closing overs and leave a target of just 143 to win. Ish Sodhi, Mitchell Santner and Trent Boult all made valuable contributions.

Guptill and Conway, joining forces as openers, then powered to a stand worth 101 to mean that a rapid second spell from Riley Meredith was nowhere near enough to prevent the match and series going comfortably New Zealand's way. Having been eliminated from the World Test Championship final by India's victory over England the night before, it has not been a happy 24 hours for the Australians.

Wade roused by his demotion

On a surface that promised to be tired by its third consecutive use for a T20I, Finch was very happy to bat first, but with one significant change: switching Josh Philippe up to open and demoting Wade to No 3 after four underwhelming games. The move

did not work out for Philippe, who took a huge swing at his first ball from Boult and was extremely lbw as it swung back just enough down the line of the stumps, but it had the effect of rousing Wade into action.

Finding the boundary on either side of the wicket, and taking his runs with equal alacrity off pace and spin, Wade allowed Finch to bat comfortably in his slipstream, and at 74 for one in the tenth over a tally of at least 160 beckoned. Even after Finch fell, cutting Sodhi, and Glenn Maxwell picked out deep backward square leg second ball, Australia were well placed at 99 for three with seven overs remaining - or so it seemed.

Australians fail after promising start

In addition to Philippe, the tourists also elected to promote Ashton Agar to join Wade, but the shuffling did not aid their efforts to build a second set of momentum in the closing overs.

Wade found himself starved of the strike once wickets began to fall, and while still seeing the ball well, ended up miscuing a Boult knuckle-ball from the bottom of the bat to find deep midwicket. Marcus Stoinis and Agar threatened briefly, but upon being presented with consecutive friendly full tosses from Sodhi, both found fielders.

Mitchell Marsh averted a full tosses hat-trick, and clumped one big blow beyond wide of long-on, but when he was comprehensively yorked by Tim Southee after an ordinary start to the final over, the innings had slipped well away from Australia in terms even of putting up a total beyond 150. The tally for the

final seven overs of the innings was to read 43 runs at a cost of five wickets, a strong endorsement of the way Williamson marshalled his bowlers and fielders to frustrate Australia after such a promising start.

Guptill, Conway take control

The day's second change in opening partnerships had Conway promoted to start New Zealand's chase alongside Guptill. This time, the fresh union was to prove decisive to the match and the series, as they were not parted until New Zealand had 100 on the board and a small Wellington crowd dancing in the aisles.

There was some useful assistance for spin, and Meredith's speed was again considerable, but Guptill and Conway got themselves set before launching with telling effect.

Thirteen came from the third over, 11 from the fifth, 12 from the sixth and then a monumental 23 from the ninth twirled down by Adam Zampa, including a Guptill six that landed on the 'cake tin' lid, aka the roof of the stands.

A partnership ultimately worth 101 before Conway's exit provided a more than useful extra option for New Zealand in terms of their thinking for the T20 World Cup later this year: Conway, though, seems adept at most batting tasks.

Meredith's speed can't turn the game

Finch brought back Meredith for a final tilt at the rush of wickets needed to turn the game, and the swift Tasmanian was at least able to have plenty of watchers

take notice by grabbing two in as many balls. Conway's slice to deep point was only partly to do with the bowler, but the fast off cutter that pinned Williamson in front of leg stump - meaning Meredith had dismissed the New Zealand captain twice in three balls this series - will be remembered by the Australia selectors.

Glenn Phillips' first few balls from Meredith were also uncomfortable for their sheer pace, but once New Zealand's No 4 got used to the velocity, he was able to respond with shots that meant the fast bowler's analysis was a seemingly unexceptional two for 39. That left the stage clear for the finish, as Phillips delivered the series to his side after Guptill fell, swatting Zampa for two sixes in three balls to win with 28 balls to spare.

Cricinfo

SCOREBOARD

AUSTRALIA	
J Philippe lbw b Boult	2 (8)
A Finch c Santner b Sodhi	36 (32)
M Wade c Guptill b Boult	44 (28)
G Maxwell c Boult b Chapman	1 (2)
M Stoinis c Guptill b Sodhi	26 (26)
A Agar c Guptill b Sodhi	6 (7)
M Marsh b Southee	10 (9)
J Richardson c Phillips b Southee	4 (6)
K Richardson not out	2 (2)
Extras: (lb 3, nb 1, w 7)	11
TOTAL: 142 for eight in 20 overs	
Fall of wickets: 1-8, 2-74, 3-77, 4-103, 5-122, 6-122, 7-139, 8-142	
Bowling: T Southee 4-0-38-2, M Santner 4-0-21-0, T Boult 4-0-26-2, M Chapman 2-0-9-1, I Sodhi 4-0-24-3, G Phillips 2-0-21-0	
NEW ZEALAND	
D Conway c Agar b Meredith	36 (28)
M Guptill c Marsh b J Richardson	71 (46)
K Williamson lbw b Meredith	0 (1)
G Phillips not out	34 (16)
M Chapman not out	1 (2)
Extras: (w 1)	1
TOTAL: 143 for three in 15.3 overs	
Fall of wickets: 1-106, 2-106, 3-124	
Bowling: A Agar 4-0-26-0, R Meredith 4-0-39-2, J Richardson 3-0-19-1, K Richardson 2-0-16-0, A Zampa 2-3-0-43-0	



IPL 2021 to be held in India from April 9

Mumbai, India - IPL 2021 will be played entirely in India, starting on April 9, with the final set for May 30. The tournament will be played across six cities: Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Chennai, Delhi, Mumbai and Kolkata.

Chennai will host the tournament opener, in which defending champions Mumbai Indians will face Royal Challengers Bangalore. The playoffs and the final will be held at the Motera in Ahmedabad.

In a significant change from previous IPLs played in India, the organisers have decided to conduct all games at neutral venues. The league phase will be played behind closed doors 'to begin with', BCCI secretary Jay Shah said in a media release on Sunday.

A final call on if and when spectators will be allowed, Shah said, will be taken at a 'later stage' of the tournament.

ESPNcricinfo understands the BCCI is utilising the IPL, a multi-team event, as a dry run for the men's T20 World Cup, which is slated to be held in India in October-November this year, and thus wants to ensure all precautions are in place accordingly.

11 double-headers, less travel

This season, the afternoon games - there are 11 double-headers lined up - will begin at 2pm (Oman time), while the evening games start at 6pm (Oman time), both 30 minutes earlier than usual start time for IPL games played in India.

Each franchise will play at four out of the six venues

during the league phase, which includes 56 games. Chennai, Mumbai, Bengaluru and Kolkata will host ten games each, while Delhi and Ahmedabad will host eight each.

The first 36 league matches will be split across Chennai, Ahmedabad, Mumbai and Delhi, while the next 20 will be played in Bengaluru and Kolkata in May - this is because elections in West Bengal will be held late March to late April, while, in Bengaluru, it is understood that the floodlights at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium are being replaced.

Venues - the key reason for the delay

Immediately after successfully hosting IPL 2020 in the UAE, the BCCI had said it would be hosting the 2021 edition in India subject to the state of the pandemic. The UAE remained a back-up, but having conducted the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy in India in January, the BCCI was confident of hosting in India.

However, the franchises were concerned as the IPL had not disclosed the final venues with roughly a month to go for the tournament. The reason behind the franchises' concerns was they had to book hotels, secure visas for overseas players, figure out logistics, all within the framework of the Standard Operations Procedures required to maintain the tournament's biosecure bubble.

With COVID-19 infections on the rise in several places in India, both the franchises as

well as the IPL were sceptical about going with the usual routine of eight venues. As per the original plan, Mumbai, Pune and Ahmedabad were meant to host the entire tournament. However, the rising number of COVID-19 cases in Maharashtra, the most severely affected state in India, forced the IPL to rethink. Then, in the second plan, Mumbai was set to be left out as a venue.

Why no crowds?

The BCCI wanted to play it safe. This, despite the fact that it had opened the final three Tests of the four-match series against England to 50% capacity. The key reason behind this decision was that the IPL is an eight-team event, as opposed to a bilateral series where two teams can be more easily managed in a biosecure environment. Also, with many of the IPL venues listed, crowds can be in the vicinity of the dressing room and there is always a danger of safety protocols being breached, which could endanger the entire bubble.

There is also the upcoming T20 World Cup, which the BCCI will be hosting, to keep in mind. The abrupt suspension of the Pakistan Super League due to COVID-19 cases within the bubble will offer 'learnings', ICC chief executive Manu Sawhney had said, as the global governing body readies for the World Cup that will feature 16 teams. The final schedule for that tournament, including the venues, could be shaped by how the IPL goes.

Cricinfo

Bigger pandemic squads helped boost new Indian talent, says coach Shastri

Ahmedabad, India - India's new Test cricket heroes have pandemic-induced squad regulations to thank for getting their shot in the Australia and England series, coach Ravi Shastri said on Sunday.

Given the added risk of fatigue and injuries in the 'bio-bubbles' needed to stage international games during the coronavirus crisis, teams have been allowed to have larger travelling squads.

Most Indian players have been in one bubble or another, with only small breaks since the IPL in September.

"You had to dig deep and



Ravi Shastri

pick your best 30 players. It's a good headache to have," Shastri told reporters.

"It has worked well, you would have never imagined the number of players that would have played for India, six

months ago." Allrounder Washington Sundar and paceman T Natarajan had an extended stay in Australia as part of the travelling squad, and have since made dream starts to their Test careers.

"If you think Natarajan would have played a Test, no way. Would Washington Sundar (have) played a Test, no way. But circumstances make it happen," said Shastri.

"And I'm glad the youngsters who got the opportunity, have grabbed it with both hands."

India's new talent played a key role in helping the side reach the World Test

Championship final against New Zealand in June.

Sundar played a gritty knock with Shardul Thakur - another bowler who got a lucky Test Down Under - in India's historic Test series triumph in Brisbane and proved his mettle again with an unbeaten 96 against England on Saturday.

Left-arm spinner Axar Patel made most of his debut in the England series with 27 wickets in three matches after replacing the injured Ravindra Jadeja.

Shastri praised the new players for playing 'fearless cricket'.

AFP

BEST

AIR CONDITIONERS

BEST COOLING

BEST ENERGY EFFICIENCY!

ROTARY SERIES - BSTS18CNE2 | BSTS24CNE2

RECIPROCATING SERIES
BSTS18GPE2 | BSTS24GPE2 | BSTS30GPE2

R-410A
REFRIGERANT

HEAVY DUTY
COMPRESSOR

4 way swing
Better Air Flow

6 in 1 Filter
Healthy Air

quiet

Low Noise
Peaceful Sleep

Gold Fin
Anti Rust

Genetco
GENERAL ELECTRIC & TRADING CO. L.L.C.

50
YEARS OF SUCCESS

MUSCAT
97693496, 96742452

C.R. No. 1009680

SALALAH
79011363

Available at
Major Hypermarkets & Electronics Retailers

HAJRI IS DHOFAR'S HERO

Salalah giants rout Al Suwaiq 5-1 to script a new chapter in domestic football history



Dhofar Club players and officials celebrate with the His Majesty's Cup trophy after beating Al Suwaiq in the final for a record tenth title at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex on Sunday (Syed Fasiuddin/Muscat Daily)

Ashok Purohit
Muscat

2020-21 HIS MAJESTY'S CUP FOOTBALL FINAL

Less than 100 days since they lifted the previous title, defending champions Dhofar demonstrated their dominance in domestic football in no uncertain terms as they

outplayed Al Suwaiq 5-1 in the final of the His Majesty's Cup Football Championship to lift a record tenth crown at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex (SQSC) on Sunday night.

The title-triumph for the Salalah heavyweights underlined their credentials as domestic giants as the club now boasts of record crowns won by a club in

the top-flight league (11) and HM's Cup (ten).

And the hero of Dhofar's historic victory on Sunday was striker Khalid al Hajri, who scored a treble in Suwaiq's rout.

Coached by former national team coach Rasheed Jaber, Dhofar have been unbeaten since their HM's Cup title triumph last year on November 30 at the Al Rustaq Sports Complex.

Going into the final, Dhofar held an advantage with their current form and a strong line-up as nine of their players have been called up for the national camp by Croatian coach Branko Ivankovic for the forthcoming trip to the UAE.

The match was touted as a tactical battle between Jaber and former Iraq national team coach Hakeem Shaker of Iraq, who had led Al Suwaiq to their last HM's Cup title win in 2017 against Dhofar. Jaber exacted sweet revenge for that title loss and this was the second occasion that Dhofar have won back-to-back HM's Cup titles, the previous occasion being in 1980-81.

With the final being played behind closed doors, there was not much fanfare to the sultanate's coveted tournament and Dhofar did not take long to open their account.

Suwaiq defenders, who had a torrid night, were at fault as a speedy run by Hajri saw the striker outmuscle his marker, Yousuf al Saadi, and smash home the first goal past the goal-



Dhofar coach Rasheed Jaber is lifted in the air after the team's emphatic victory in the final on Sunday



Khalid al Hajri

keeper Mazin al Kasbi, who had a night to forget, in the 19th minute of the match. Stung by the early goal,

Suwaiq displayed enterprise in their fight and were rewarded for their efforts in the 39th minute. A free-kick nearly 40 yards from the goal saw Suwaiq's Yaseen al Sheyadi sent in a measured chip over the Dhofar wall to the far right corner of the box where captain Abd al Nofli crossed the ball to Omran al Heidi, who beat Dhofar goalie Faiz al Rusheidi. With the scores level,



H E Sayyid Saud bin Hilal al Busaidi (second from right) presents a winner's cheque replica to a Dhofar official



DHOFAR'S ROLL OF HONOUR

1	1977
2	1980
3	1981
4	1990
5	1999
6	2005
7	2007
8	2012
9	2020
10	2021



Action from the HM's Cup final between Dhofar and Suwaiq on Sunday

the match sprung into life with both teams opting for a more open play and this led to Dhofar taking the lead just minutes before the interval.

A counter move had Dhofar's Harib al Saadi relay a pass inside the box where Bikey Lawson's diving header left Kasbi with no chance as the champions went into the break with a 2-1 lead.

With Dhofar dominating ball possession, Suwaiq struggled to put up a fight in the post-interval session and then suffered Hajri's double-blow. Moataz Saleh began the move and his lob had Hajri leap high and nod the ball under Kasbi's right foot, who possibly could have been unsighted due to his teammate's movement in the 62nd minute.

Down 1-3, Suwaiq had a late push but Rusheidi's brilliant save in the 77th minute kept Dhofar

ahead and Hajri made it 4-1 with five minutes left with a stinging left-footer that crashed into the right corner of the net after substitute Yazid Salim orchestrated a defence-splitting pass. Another substitute, Yaseen al Sheikh, completed the rout in the injury-time of the match.

Later, the chief guest, H E Sayyid Saud bin Hilal al Busaidi, Minister of State and Governor of Muscat, awarded the trophy to Dhofar captain Ali al Nahar in the presence of H H Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, H E Rashad al Hinai, Undersecretary at the sports ministry, Oman Football Association (OFA) chief Sheikh Salim al Wahaibi and other top officials. The winning club also received RO75,000 as prize money.

@ashokmuscat

SETTLE DOWN IN THE COUNTRY OF YOUR CHOICE

Choose the best. Choose MJ Global...

Get Permanent Residency of Canada through Express Entry/ Provincial Nominee Program in 6-12 months OR Get Permanent Residency through Owner operated LMIA within 12 months with minimum Investment of CAD 150,000 OR Start your business in British Columbia with minimum CAD 250,000 and get residency in 11 to 13 months.

USA EB-3 Visa: Direct employment and US Green Card for you and your Family. Processing Time 15 months. Occupation in Demand: Caregiver, Janitor, Production Helper, General Laborer

Germany Business Immigration with minimum Euro 25,000 capital investment in business, Processing time is only 5 months, Resident Visa for entire family, Get Passport on the 5th year.

Invest in real estate of minimum Euro 280,000 and get the Portugal Golden Visa in 6 months. Get Portugal Passport in 5 yrs with access to 177 countries visa free travel. Stay requirement only 7 days per year in Portugal. Excellent returns on investment

Hungary Business Immigration • Euro 50,000* Minimum Investment • Temporary Resident Visa for entire family • Processing time only 4-5 months • 2yrs Business experience/Senior Management role preferred

Cyprus: Get a Permanent Residency in 3 months by investing in Real Estate with investment worth Euro 300,000

Dominica Citizenship by Investment • Starting from USD 100,000* • Direct Citizenship • Visa free travel to over 120 Countries • Processing time 4-5 months • No need to stay in Dominica

Grenada Citizenship by Investment • Starting from USD 150,000* • Direct Citizenship • Visa free travel to over 130 Countries • Processing time 6 months • Tax advantages

Turkey: Get your citizenship in 5 months by investment of USD 250,000 in Real Estate. Smooth and Fast processing with excellent returns.

M-J Global, Floor no.2, Globex, Panorama Office Center, Panorama Mall, Bousher, Muscat, Sultanate of Oman
Office Timing: Saturday to Thursday 10 am to 6:30 pm
Email: cs@m-jglobal.com, Phone: +968 93571122, +968 93899424
www.m-jglobal.com

THERE IS A
Jeep
FOR EVERYONE®



NOW'S THE TIME.

GLADIATOR SPORT

RO **16,490** | EMI RO **193***
AFTER CASH GIFT OF RO 5,010

5 YEARS WARRANTY - FREE REGISTRATION

5 YEARS ROADSIDE ASSISTANCE

Offer Valid from January 1st till March 15th. EMI calculated on loan amount after 20% down payment. EMI calculated for a 7-year tenure with Bank Muscat. Credit subject to approval & at discretion of bank/finance company. *Terms & Conditions Apply. Vehicle image shown is for illustrative purposes only and accessories showing might not be part of standard model. Please ask for more details. ©2021 FCA US LLC. All Rights Reserved. Jeep, is a registered trademark of FCA US LLC.

Jeep
THERE'S ONLY ONE

dhofar ظفار
AUTOMOTIVE للسيارات

Wattayah, Athaiba, Sohar, Nizwa, Salalah

For corporate enquiries **982 961 43** | For more information **245 845 30** | info@da-oman.com
www.dhofarautomotive.com