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US lauds Oman's role in resolving Yemen crisis

The sultanate is working passionately on this file with all parties: Tim Lenderking

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The United States has lauded the central role that the sultanate, led by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, has undertaken to resolve the Yemeni crisis by bringing disputing factions to the negotiation table to help reach a peaceful solution and safeguard the stability of Yemen and the region at large.

Tim Lenderking, US Special Envoy to Yemen, said, "The sultanate is keen to reach an end to this crisis. Oman is working passionately on this file with all parties." The US and key countries in the region, represented by



Displaced Yemenis receive humanitarian aid provided by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and Rawabi al Nahda Organisation in the Abs region of the northwestern province of Hajjah in Yemen (AFP)

Oman and Saudi Arabia, are working to reach tangible solutions, according to Lenderking, who noted the parties' support for a ceasefire aimed to lend a glimmer of hope to the Yemeni crisis.

Speaking about the visit of His Majesty the Sultan to Saudi Arabia last month and his meeting with the Saudi Monarch, Lenderking said that the summit tackled 'pivotal issues', the most important of which was the

Yemeni file and ways to reach a peaceful solution to the existing crisis.

Lenderking also reaffirmed that his country has offered US\$165mn to the Yemeni people to help alleviate the humanitar-

ian crisis witnessed by the country and its people. He explained that such aid will help those most needy segments meet their basic needs.

Last week, Sayyid Badr bin Hamad bin Hamoud al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, also welcomed the appointment of Swedish Ambassador to Yemen, Hans Grundberg as the UN Special Envoy to Yemen by United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres in succession to Martin Griffiths.

He expressed Oman's aspiration for working with him on such an important dossier along with the sultanate's determination to continue with the efforts aimed at providing a solution to the crisis in Yemen at the earliest.

Sayyid Badr also hoped that the professional experience of the new UN Special Envoy to Yemen will contribute to the efforts extended to ensure a comprehensive and permanent ceasefire by all parties and to ease the flow of humanitarian aid.

Wait been too long for expatriates to return to Oman

Shaddad al Musalmay
Muscat

With their families separated, jobs at stake and businesses suffering losses, Oman's expatriates who are stranded back home due to COVID-19 travel restrictions have been appealing for help to return to the sultanate. In desperation and at their wits' end, they hope the authorities lift the entry restrictions for residents, especially those who are fully vaccinated.

The Supreme Committee tasked with tackling the impact of COVID-19 and the Civil Aviation Authority has extended the suspension of entry to the sultanate until further notice for arrivals from Sudan, Brazil, Nigeria, Tanzania, Sierra Leone, Ethiopia, India, United Kingdom, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Philippines, Thailand, Malaysia, Vietnam, Indonesia, Iraq, Iran, Tunisia, Libya, Argentina, Colombia and passengers from any other country if they have passed through any of those mentioned during the 14 days preceding their request to enter Oman.

Omani citizens, diplomats, health workers and their families are exempt from the ban and are subject to entry procedures adopted by the sultanate.

Two days before India was included in the travel ban list in April, Madhusri Das flew out with her younger son to be with her elder son when he had to vacate his college hostel owing to the pandemic. Close to four months later, she's still stranded out of the country and eagerly

In fact, I managed to bring forward the date for my second dose in anticipation of the travel ban being lifted. But I'm still awaiting the announcement

MADHUSRI DAS

awaiting an announcement allowing passengers from India. The long separation and worry about her husband has taken a toll on her health.

"I have got both doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine, which is approved in Oman. In fact, I managed to bring forward the date for my second dose in anticipation of the travel ban being lifted. But I'm still awaiting the announcement."

Her younger son, a Grade 8 student of Indian School Muscat, continues to attend classes online and misses home. "It's too long a time to be away from home," she said.

Tanzanian resident M Hashim's family too has been split between Oman and Tanzania due to the travel restrictions. His wife travelled home to visit her mother. Just a few days later, the ban was imposed.

"Our two children are missing her. It has become very challenging for me to handle everything all by myself. The wait has been too long," Hashim said.

Continued on Page 02

NEWS BRIEFS

METEOR SHOWERS VISIBLE IN OMANI SKIES TILL AUG 24

Muscat - Meteor showers will be visible in the skies over Oman for a period continuing till August 24, according to Oman Astronomical Society. In a statement, the society said, 'Oman is currently witnessing the phenomenon of meteor showers, and the peak of this celestial activity will be seen from the evening of Thursday, August 12, to the early hours of Friday, August 13. Meteors will fall at a rate of 60 per hour at speeds of up to 72km per second.'



Oman's oil exports drop in H1 as shipments to China decline



Juma takes over as OHA boss; Kishry re-elected OSA chief

Three killed in Haima road crash



ROP airlifted three people from the crash site in Haima to Nizwa

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Royal Oman Police (ROP) announced the death of three people in a road accident in Haima on Tuesday.

In a statement, ROP said a collision occurred between two vehicles on the Adam-Haima road. 'The accident resulted in the death of three people,' ROP

stated.

According to ROP, three people were also airlifted to Nizwa hospital from the accident site. 'Three people in critical condition were transferred to Nizwa referral hospital following the accident,' the statement said.

With visitors flocking to Dhofar to enjoy the khareef season, ROP urged all to be alert and safe while driving.

Raheel's quest to make Duqm more than an industrial area

Our Correspondent
Muscat

To stimulate domestic tourism, an Omani woman has launched a project to hold outdoor events. Called Raheel, the project functions in Duqm, Al Wusta governorate.

Raheel is billed as a gateway to escape mundane routine as it encourages outdoor events and promotes tourist areas.

Speaking to Muscat Daily, Raheel Mohammed al Jabri, founder of the company, said, "I finished studying Architecture Engineering in the United States and have Bachelor's and Master's degrees. I chose lighting for by Master's thesis because I love interior design."

She said the idea for Raheel emerged when she was working as a trainee at Opaz - Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones.

"I saw a chance to start a proj-



ect for event management due to the need in Duqm for a similar project. Only high-end hotels like Crowne Plaza organised such activities and it meant they were very expensive."

Raheel informed that her company was established on January 14, 2021.

"My goal is to use this project to highlight major tourist areas in the Special Economic Zone in Duqm by bringing events to these beautiful spaces, for exam-

ple the Rock Garden. I picked a place outside the area because the Rock Garden is a reserved area. We utilised it as a background with a natural surrounding. I decided to create a simple traditional theme to suit the area and have facilities for customers to enjoy their dinner under the stars."

Additionally, by organising such events the company can engage SMEs from different places in Oman.

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Two-month ban on fishing kingfish begins on Aug 15



Our Correspondent
Muscat

A decision to ban fishing and trade in kingfish in the sultanate will come into effect from August 15 marking the beginning of kingfish breeding season, according to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources (MoAFWR).

The ministry confirmed that the ban period will last for two months and end on October 15 in accordance with the provisions of the Ministerial Decision No 230/2014.

By implementing the decision, the MoAFWR aims to preserve stocks of kingfish and regulate

By the decision, the MoAFWR aims to preserve stocks of kingfish and regulate fishing in order to achieve a balance between natural reserves and demand

fishing in order to achieve a balance between natural reserves and demand for the fish.

In preparation of the ban, the ministry - represented by directorates and fisheries departments in the coastal gover-

norates of the sultanate - carried out guidance and awareness activities among fishermen, transporters and businesses.

The MoAFWR has called on fishermen, transporters and businesses engaged in fishing, transporting, buying, selling, trading and exporting kingfish to follow its directives and decisions. The ministry stressed the need to monitor the departments and centres of fish development in governorates to register the stock of kingfish in their possession before the beginning of the ban. It will not allow any trade and export of kingfish during the ban period unless it is registered with the ministry.

ENJOYING HIJRI HOLIDAY



Families were overjoyed with the Hijri new year holiday. Ali Fatah Rahman Mohammed Essa, a Sudanese national, who was at the Qurm beach with his two daughters, said, "This one-day mid-week break gave the energy which will last for a couple of months. It was a pleasant surprise especially for kids as it broke the boring routine and allowed us to go out and have some fun - something we dearly miss because of the pandemic restrictions." (Syed Fasiuddin)

MoL conducts appraisal for job applicants

Muscat - The Ministry of Labour (MoL) on Tuesday conducted tests and interviews for a number of government jobs at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences, Ibra in North Sharqiyah governorate.

Salim bin Khalfan al Wuhaibi, head of the team tasked with conducting tests and interviews, said that the process will last for two days with 385 applicants - holders of bachelor's degree and post-GED - contending for 54 job



vacancies in the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning and the Environment Authority.

Wuhaibi said the evaluation is of two types with the first being a 30-minute electronic test containing 30 questions in the fields of specialisation and mental abilities. In the second appraisal the applicants undergo online interviews.

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Wait been too long for expatriates to return to Oman

Continued from Page 01

Another Muscat resident, Adnan Rasool is stuck in Pakistan. He runs a travel ticketing office and had flown there to see his parents. "I have been stuck in Pakistan for the last three months. I hope the news comes soon but I am struggling to keep my spirits high. If I don't fly back soon, my business will collapse," Rasool said.

Many other residents who had travelled out of Oman some months ago are worried about crossing the six-month period out of the country and their visas automatically becoming invalid.

"I fear my visa will expire. We heard that we can renew visas online, but then we came to know that it can't be done. There's confusion over how to go about it. I really must return to Oman at the earliest," said B Mohammad from Bangladesh.

Kuwait, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates are among the GCC states that have allowed fully vaccinated passengers to enter. On July 30, Qatar announced lifting regulations for expatriates flying from

Kuwait, Qatar and the UAE have allowed fully vaccinated passengers to enter

Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Nepal, the Philippines and Sri Lanka.

With direct entry banned from the countries on the travel restriction list, some expatriates considered alternate routes to Oman, choosing to fly through third countries. But few of these have actually opted for such routes owing to the very high expenses.

Faiyaz Khan, general manager for Travel Point, said, "Bookings and enquiries have fallen because people are not willing to spend so much money - it costs over RO500 to come back via Qatar, and that's excluding flight tickets. Everyone is eagerly waiting for direct flights to resume."

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Video, photo of littering in Dhofar upset netizens

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Incidents of littering in two different places in Dhofar have evoked a strong reaction among people on social media.

Two citizens brought to the Dhofar Municipality's notice, through social media, the instances of throwing food and a plastic bottles.

Hamad al Habsi, who posted a video on Twitter, said, "Someone has thrown a whole meal with plates, a bottle of water and soda cans without opening them. It's a waste of money and damage of nature as well."

Ahmed al Shanfari posted a photo on Twitter of an incident of dumping plastic bottles.

He wrote, 'All attempts to raise awareness during the past years have proven to be unsuccessful. It has become necessary to issue a law that fines the violator an amount of RO100. Responsible authorities must use drones and also conduct patrolling on foot to monitor and record any violations. That way we will preserve our environment and also create employment opportunities.'

Ahmed Jaboob, a citizen, speaking to *Muscat Daily* said,



Dhofar Municipality is trying hard to check littering in public places specially during khareef season.

"Responsible authorities must use scouting teams and volunteers to spread awareness on the importance of preserving the environment during the autumn period. Preserving nature is

everyone's responsibility. Fines must be severe to deter violators," he said.

Mohamed Jadad on Twitter said, 'Environmental police has become an important requirement for all governorates, especially for the Governorate of Dhofar, to deter those who do not care about the cleanliness of

the place; who do not remove their waste or those people who destroy nature by drifting to green areas."

Hamad al Busaidi, another Twitterati, said, 'Unfortunately, throwing trash in natural places has become very frequent. Some people should learn that natural sites and parks belong to everyone and not just to a few. Authorities should take action against the violators.'

Dr Ghazi al Rawas, tweeted, 'Environmental police may be the best solution to prevent these practices that exhaust the environment, such as killing wild animals, logging, burning or leaving waste, or drifting in green spaces. Unfortunately, littering can be seen in Jebel Akhadar and Dhofar mountains.'

Meanwhile, Dhofar Municipality has said the competent authorities have identified the person who appeared in the video circulated on social media as he was throwing a plastic bottle in the green areas.

Officials fined him RO100, in addition to taking legal measures against him.

Other violations were detected, for which legal measures will be initiated, the municipality stated.

AL KHUWAYR DRAINAGE WORK IN PROGRESS



Construction work on storm water drainage system is going on in full swing on the Sultan Qaboos Street in Al Khuwayr. The project, which started with the diversion of traffic from Ruwi towards Seeb on July 13, has been taken up to elevate the existing road for the construction of drainage culvert channels to avoid the impact of water logging on the road. Construction work on each side will take approximately three months and the project is scheduled to be completed before December, said an official (Syed Fasiuddin)

ROP deals with motorcyclist gathering, drifting in Dhofar

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Royal Oman Police (ROP) said that it dealt with a gathering of a large number of motorcyclists in residential neighbourhoods and some people drifting their vehicles and damaging grassy areas in Dhofar.

Lt Col Suleiman bin Saeed al Jabri, director of operations in Dhofar, said, "Dhofar Governorate Police Command monitored some violations, such as the gathering of a large number of motorcyclists in residential neighbourhoods and rural areas, which caused disturbance to the public comfort and endangered

drivers and others. Some people were drifting their vehicles and damaging grassy areas.

"The police also dealt with reports of heavy truck accidents on the road leading to Salalah."

'The Royal Oman Police, represented by the Dhofar Governorate Police Command, in light of the COVID-19 pandemic dur-



ing the khareef season continues its efforts by taking all preventive measures in the aspects of security and traffic, especially on roads leading to tourist sites, and directing the public not to gather and crowd,' the ROP said.

"The governorate police are making great efforts, most notably activating checkpoints in

the wilyats of Thumrait, Hasik and the Harit region," Lt Col Jabri said, adding that "the police are also ensuring that the visitors have received the COVID-19 vaccine before entering Dhofar."

The ROP has urged all to co-operate and abide by the procedures of the Supreme Committee to limit the spread of the virus.

North Batinah running project to boost agricultural produces

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources (MAFWR) has this year launched a project to encourage Omani farmers to go for more produces by helping them increase agricultural and animal products.

The project - financed by the Agricultural and Fisheries Development Fund - aims to enhance, sustain and protect natural agriculture, increase the number of farmers in North Batinah, and improve the living conditions of farmers in the governorate.

An official at the ministry said that the General Directorate of Agricultural and Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources in Batinah has started the project called Agricultural Control, on January 24 this year and this would continue until July 24 next year.

"The initiative aims to encourage good agricultural practices such as compliance with modern irrigation tools and agricultural specifications to provide high quality agricultural products,"



the official said.

Talking about the ministry's efforts, he said, "The ministry has introduced modern irrigation systems. With the sprinkler system being used, a significant progress has been made in the expansion of crop cultivation and increase in its productivity."

"The sultanate is working continuously through studies and research to improve arable land which constitutes only seven per cent of the total area," he added.

According to the ministry's

statistics, the agricultural sector's contribution to the GDP increased from RO416mn in 2018 to RO433mn in 2019, recording a growth rate of about four per cent.

Data from the National Centre for Statistics and Information showed that the combined growth of agriculture and fisheries sectors was 9.8 per cent, reaching RO571mn by end of September 2020, compared to RO520.1mn during the same period in 2019.

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Max	Min	Max	Min	Max	Min
42°C	30°C	44°C	34°C	44°C	28°C

Little details, big impact

VW’s bestseller in the region has become more visible on Oman’s roads since its facelift in April

VW TERAMONT 2021 HIGHLINE

Tridwip K Das
Muscat

VW's Teramont is a behemoth compared to the other models in its stable. First introduced in 2016 at the LA Auto Show, it is called Atlas in the North American market. It came to ME three years ago and quickly became the marque's best-selling model. The Model Year 2021 is a facelift while remaining the same at heart – a 3.6lt V6. Other markets also have a 2lt turbo. Distributed by Premium Motors, in Oman the new Teramont comes in four trims – Trendline, Comfortline and Highline and the top of the line R-Line.

EXTERIOR
The refreshed façade has a new VW logo, three-slat grille and bumper. From the front, it bears a strong semblance to its sibling, the Touareg. The logo itself has been redesigned. VW's signature has remained fundamentally the same for 70 years. The new design is a minimalist take on the classic logo, doing away with the three-dimensional gradient.

Double 'L' LED headlamps complement the façade, adding an executive

feel to the look. At the rear end are what appear to be exhausts that are unmissable. Rather curiously, these metallic outlets are just for cosmetic purpose. The real ones are tucked under the updated bumper.

The abundance of space in this seven seater becomes very evident at just a cursory glance at its side profile.

INTERIOR
The first thing that'll spring to mind as you get into the Teramont is space. With one of the longest wheelbases in its category, it's spacious in every sense of the word – there's a lot of it for passengers and cargo. Beginning at the rear, there's 583lt of space with the third row seats up and 1,573lt behind the second row. With all seats folded down, there's 2,741lt of total storage capacity. That's more than enough space for an entire football team's kit and weekend shopping put together.

For passengers in the second row, even a 6ft adult will find plenty of head and legroom, while the third row seats are surprisingly usable. On short rides, adults won't have much to complain about.

The seats, covered in Vienna leather, are comfortable. The driver's seat, however, is a remarkable piece of design and technology that offers a clear view and makes you feel in command. It's ten-way adjustable with memory for up to three configurations.

The cabin is quiet, styled in a mix of leather, metal and wood trim upfront. A satin ply wood insert on the dash seems like an odd feature. This design element stands out without looking out of place.

Adding to the sense of space in the cabin is a panoramic sunroof with tilt function that spans the length of almost all three rows of seats. Designed for comfort and functionality, the Teramont overindulges when it comes to keeping all hydrated with a ridiculous number of cupholders – 17 no less.

Other creature comforts include a two-zone air-conditioning system that cools every corner of the cabin, sunshades for driver, front passenger and second row seats, wireless charging for phones, and a 480W Fender Premium Audio System with a heartwarming sound.

Infotainment and navigation systems are controlled through an eight-inch HD touchscreen display, and a ten-inch digital instrument cluster is standard in the Highline trim.

Encased in leather, the multifunctional steering wheel has a racy touch to it with its bottom flattened out – minor details of endearments that can hook owners.

PERFORMANCE
Powering the Teramont is a 3.6lt V6, mated to an eight-speed automatic transmission, which produces 280hp and 360Nm of torque – enough power

and some to spare. Despite its size, the car feels spirited. Admittedly, we weren't able to test its off-roading limits, but negotiating an inclined stretch of gravel behind Pakistan School Muscat was a piece of cake.

With eight-inch ground clearance, kitted out in 20 inch alloy wheels and a soft suspension, the ride is comfortable on most surfaces cushioning bumps when encountered. While city driving is smooth, you won't feel abused off road.

A 4MOTION all-wheel-drive system controlled via a rotating knob on the centre console offers four drive modes, including Sport and Off Road, ensuring there's no traction issue while navigating any terrain.

Drive assists include Park Distance Control (front and rear), Side Assist, and Adaptive Cruise Control with Stop and Go. Front Assist is designed to automatically apply brakes when need be, Area View comprises four cameras allowing you to see blind spots with ease and make parking and pulling out into traffic easier, and Rear Traffic Alert with sensors to warn you of vehicles crossing your path while in reverse.

The Teramont has mostly flown under our radar, but since the launch of its refreshed edition in April, it's become very visible on Oman's roads. It's a handsome car with endless space, and VW has made minor tweaks that impact its overall likeability.



(Syed Fasiuddin)





VW Teramont 2021 Highline

Engine	3.6lt FSI V6
Transmission	8-speed automatic
Power	280hp
Torque	360Nm
Fuel tank	70lt
Length X Width X Height	5,097 X 1,990 X 1,771 (mm)
Wheelbase	2,980 mm





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Oman's oil exports drop in H1 as shipments to China decline

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman's oil exports recorded a 4.5 per cent year-on-year decline during the first half of 2021, mainly due to a significant drop in China-bound shipments.

The sultanate's total oil exports decreased to 139.8mn barrels in the first six months of 2021 in comparison with 146.43mn barrels recorded in the corresponding period of last year, according to the figures released by the National Center for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

With a decline in China's overall oil imports during the second quarter of this year, Oman's crude exports to China, the biggest destination for the sultanate's oil shipments, fell 10.7 per cent during January – June period of 2021 compared to the same period a year ago.

Oil exports to China, which purchased about 83 per cent of Oman's total oil shipments during the first half of this year, dropped 10.7 per cent to 115.85mn barrels in 2021 compared to 129.75mn barrels in the same period of 2020.

China's total crude oil imports fell about 3 per cent year-on-year in the first half of 2021 against the same period of last



Photo for illustrative purpose only

Sultanate's Oil exports to China dropped 10.7 per cent to 115.85mn barrels in the first half of 2021 compared to 129.75mn barrels in the same period of 2020

year, according to the media reports.

'China's crude oil imports in the first half of 2021 declined for the first time in eight years, pulled down by sharp year-on-year falls in inflows in May and June, as a steep increase in oil prices prompted importers in Asia's biggest oil consumer to defer purchases and dip into do-

mestic inventories instead,' S&P Global Platts said in a report.

But analysts and industry officials expect China's oil imports in the second half of the year to recover and bring overall growth for the year, amid expectations that the anticipated commissioning of new refining capacity would create incremental demand, the report added.

On the other hand, Oman's oil exports to India and Japan sharply rose during the first six months of the year.

Oil exports to India jumped by 315 per cent to 14.42mn barrels in the first half of 2021 from 3.47mn barrels in the same period a year ago, while exports to Japan surged by 127 per cent to 1.38mn barrels.

South Korea, however, purchased 9.4 per cent less quantity of Oman crude during the January-June period at 4.52mn barrels against 4.99mn barrels in the same period of the previous year. Oman's oil exports to other countries also dropped more

than 52 per cent to 3.6mn barrels.

Production edges down

Oman's total oil output decreased by 2.5 per cent to 172.84mn barrels in the first half of 2021 from 177.30mn barrels recorded in the same period of 2020, the NCSI statistics showed.

The daily average output remained 1.0 per cent lower this year at 954,900 barrels per day during the January-June period as compared to 964,200 barrels per day for the same period of 2020.

Of the sultanate's total oil production during the first six months of 2021, crude output fell 10 per cent to 132.92mn barrels while condensate production jumped more than 35 per cent to 39.91mn barrels.

The average price at which Oman sold its crude during the first half of 2021 remained nearly 10 per cent higher at US\$56.2 per barrel compared with US\$51.1 per barrels achieved in the same period of 2020.

On Tuesday, Oman crude price at the Dubai Mercantile Exchange increased 2.2 per cent to US\$68.87 per barrel (for October delivery).



Voltamp, BEC sign deal to manufacture power transformer

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Voltamp Power, a subsidiary of the Voltamp Energy Group, has signed a deal with Bahwan Engineering Company (BEC) to manufacture and supply of 500MVA/400kV class power transformer, which will be utilized by Oman Electricity Transmission Company's (OETC) network.

The agreement was signed by Eng Ali bin Said al Hadabi, vice chairman of Voltamp Power, and Ajay Jhavar, advisor to vice chairman and business units head - projects and products at Bahwan Engineering Company.

The manufacturing of this category of transformers is considered first of its kind in Oman and the region. The signed deal comes within the framework of contributions made by OETC in strengthening the fundamentals of infrastructure and supporting

the energy industry sector in the sultanate.

In a press statement, Eng Abdullah bin Said al Badri, CEO of Voltamp Energy, said, "We are extremely delighted by signing this agreement today with Bahwan Engineering Company. We are proud to inform that Voltamp Power has successfully manufactured and tested its High Voltage Transformers of 500MVA/220kV rating during this year and again this is first of its kind in the region, this will be installed for OETC's network."

D N Kachare, division head - electrical projects of Bahwan, said, "Voltamp's Sohar facility is meeting the global standards of manufacturing and Bahwan Engineering Company is confident that this first 400kv class unit will be manufactured and delivered on time to the fullest satisfaction of end client OETC who have always promoted and supported Omani products."

Pharmaceutical firms rake in billions with COVID-19 jobs

Paris, France - COVID-19 vaccines have brought billions of dollars to the coffers of pharmaceutical companies.

Germany's BioNTech, maker with partner Pfizer of the pioneering mRNA jab, raised its vaccine revenue forecast for 2021 in its latest earnings report on Monday.

Here are the numbers for the companies that publish financial results:

Biggest winners: Pfizer and BioNTech

US firm Pfizer and BioNTech got a headstart over rivals as they were the first in the western world to announce positive results from clinical trials of their vaccine last year.



They were also first to get authorisation from US and Euro-

pean Union regulators to sell their shot.

Pfizer has earned more than its competitors, raking in US\$10.8bn in the first half of this year.

The US company has raised its outlook for 2021, expecting to make US\$33.5bn in sales for the full year.

BioNTech reported on Tuesday revenues of 7.3bn euros in the first half. Unlike its larger partner, the company's only product on sale is the coronavirus vaccine.

BioNTech expects vaccine revenues to reach 15.9bn euros for the full year, up from a previous estimate of 9.8bn euros.

Moderna the other mRNA champion
US startup Moderna is the only

other firm to have produced an authorised mRNA vaccine so far.

Messenger RNA technology works by providing human cells with the genetic instructions to make a surface protein of the coronavirus, which trains the immune system to recognise the real virus. Like BioNTech, the company's only product in the market is the COVID-19 vaccine. The vaccine requires two shots taken weeks apart.

Moderna reported turnover of US\$5.9bn in the first six months of the year. It expects to make US\$20bn in revenues thanks to the vaccine this year.

AstraZeneca, Johnson & Johnson trail
British pharmaceutical giant As-

traZeneca and US firm Johnson & Johnson had their vaccines approved by the EU later than their rivals.

AstraZeneca's vaccine is one of the world's leading vaccines and has been vital in the UK's speedy vaccination drive - which enabled England's economy to fully reopen this month.

But it has not been approved by US drug regulators.

Johnson & Johnson's vaccine - made by Janssen, its Belgian subsidiary - has the advantage of being administered with one shot instead of two like those of its rivals.

AstraZeneca and J&J do not use mRNA technology. They both made more traditional viral vector vaccines, which use

genetically-engineered version of a common-cold causing adenovirus as a 'vector' to shuttle genetic instructions into human cells. The two companies also vowed to sell their vaccines at cost during the pandemic, meaning they would not earn profits from them.

They are cheaper than the Pfizer/BioNTech and Moderna jabs, which reflects in their revenues.

AstraZeneca's COVID-19 jab generated US\$1.2bn in sales in the first six months of the year.

J&J reported US\$264mn in sales and expects to make US\$2.5bn for the full year. AstraZeneca has not provided a detailed full-year estimate. AFP

Amazon to compensate for unsafe goods sold by independent traders

New York, US - Online retail giant Amazon pledged Tuesday to directly compensate customers harmed or injured by faulty goods bought from independent sellers on its platform.

The company said that from September 1 it will pay out on personal injury or property damage claims of up to US\$1,000 for defective products sold through Amazon.com - which accounts for 80 per cent of cases.

Amazon said in a statement on its website that it might pay out higher amounts if the vendor fails to respond to claims or rejects a claim that Amazon deems valid.

The announcement comes almost a month after the federal US Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) sued Amazon in a bid to force the company to take responsibility for the recall of dangerous products sold on its platform.



Among the products deemed to potentially be putting customers at risk of injury or death were 24,000 faulty carbon monoxide detectors and 400,000 hair dryers sold without sufficient protection against electrocution.

"By standing behind customers and the products in our

store, regardless of who sells them, Amazon is going far beyond our legal obligations and what any other marketplace service provider is doing today to protect customers," the company said.

It said it would use external, independent insurance fraud experts to analyse the validity of

claims.

"We will present valid claims to sellers and deny unsubstantiated, frivolous, or abusive claims," the company said.

"By doing this work on behalf of sellers, we save them from having to investigate these claims on their own."

AFP



Ministry of Higher Education Research & Innovation

ELECTRONIC TENDERS

The Internal Tenders Committee of the Ministry of Higher Education Research & Innovation announced the following tenders:

Tender No.	Tender Name	Company that are entitled to participate	Tender Price	Last Date for purchasing Tender	The deadline for submission of tenders
08/2021	Providing cleaning services for Shinas Vocational College	Specialized in providing Same service and registered with the Tender Board with Grade First- Second, Third,	25/= RO	29/08/2021	18/09/2021
09/2021	Providing cleaning services for Al Buraimi Vocational College	Specialized in providing Same service and registered with the Tender Board with Grade First- Second, Third,	25/= RO	29/08/2021	18/09/2021
10/2021	Providing cleaning services Of Head Quarters Building	Specialized in providing Same service and registered with the Tender Board with Grade Excellent	25/= RO	29/08/2021	18/09/2021

The purchasing of the tender documents by E-Tendering system will starting on Tuesday 10/08/2021 at 07:30 am. To purchasing, please visit the following link:

<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om/>

All companies that are bidding must provide a bank guarantee or a certified cheque from a bank operating in the Sultanate for at least (1%) of the tender value on behalf of His Excellency Dr. / Chairman of the Internal Tender Committee.

Preference will be given to companies' or small and medium enterprises registered with the General Authority for the development of Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) that includes the largest proportion of its tender Omanization.

Ministry is not bound to accept the lowest or any other tender.

Chairman of tender committee
Ministry of Higher Education
Research & Innovation



US lawmakers unveil massive \$3.5tn spending blueprint

Washington, US – US lawmakers on Monday laid out a US\$3.5tn budget framework, calling it the 'most consequential' social spending plan since the 1930s, and launching what are expected to be tough congressional negotiations over the programs it covers.

The ten-year budget blueprint pushes Congress towards the next step in President Joe Biden's ambitious vision for his first term in office, following on the heels of the US\$1.2tn infrastructure plan, which the Senate was expected to approve in a Tuesday vote before the measure is sent to the House of Representatives.

The dollar amount is staggering, almost matching the size of Germany's economy in 2020.

"The budget resolution will be the most consequential piece of legislation for working people, the elderly, the children, the sick and the poor since FDR (President Franklin Delano Roosevelt) and the New Deal of the 1930s," said independent Senator Bernie Sanders, chair of the Budget Committee.

"It will also put the US in a global leadership position to combat climate change and make our planet healthy and habitable for future generations," he wrote.



Visitors walk past the US Capitol as the sun begins to set behind them on Monday in Washington, DC (AFP)

The spending plan published Monday includes funding for climate measures, new investments in infrastructure including items left out of the targeted Senate package, residency status for millions of migrant workers, and two years paid tuition at public universities.

Senators have until September 15 to submit their amendments. The Democratic majority in Congress plans to pass the package through a mechanism known as 'reconciliation' which will allow them to adopt the final text by a simple majority in the

Senate, without votes from Republicans who are fiercely opposed to it.

Congress must approve the final spending bills by September 30 to prevent a government shutdown, or extend the current year's budget into the new fiscal year while debate continues.

But while Senate Democrats are ready to give the green light to the budget resolution in a procedural vote as early as this week, moderates in the party have expressed strong reservations about the total price tag, which means tough negotiations

are likely.

Hitting the debt limit

Crucially, the resolution does not include an increase in the US federal debt ceiling.

This could mean another big battle in Congress to avoid default, as the Democrats will need Republicans to raise the borrowing limit, but opposition leaders have so far said they are against it.

Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen on Monday issued yet another appeal to lawmakers to take action, noting that "The vast

majority of the debt subject to the debt limit was accrued prior to the Administration taking office."

Congress suspended the debt limit in 2019, but the two-year suspension lapsed July 31, resetting the cap at US\$28tn, and forcing Treasury to begin taking 'extraordinary measures' to remain under the ceiling and continue funding government operations. But those measures only buy Treasury a few weeks before it runs out of cash.

The US national debt and deficit have soared during the COVID-19 pandemic after Washington approved three massive spending bills aimed at lessening the damage from its economic impacts.

In recent years, including three times during the presidency of Donald Trump, "Democrats and Republicans came together to do their duty," Yellen said in a statement.

"Congress should do so again now by increasing or suspending the debt limit on a bipartisan basis." She noted that raising the ceiling on borrowing does not authorize new spending, but simply allows Treasury to finance actions already approved by the legislature.

AFP



Air Arabia posts AED44mn profit for first half 2021

Sharjah, UAE – Air Arabia, the Middle East and North Africa's first and largest low-cost carrier, on Tuesday reported a profitable first half 2021 (January to June) despite COVID-19 continued impact on the aviation industry's financial and operational performance.

Air Arabia reported a net profit of AED44mn for the first six months ending June 30, 2021, an increase of 126 per cent compared to the corresponding first half 2020. In the same period, the airline posted a turnover of AED1bn, a 5 per cent increase compared to the corresponding first half of last year.

More than 2.3mn passengers flew with Air Arabia between January and June 2021 across the carrier's five hubs while the airline's average seat load factor – or passengers carried as a percentage of available seats – during the first six months of 2021 stood an average at 73 per cent.

Air Arabia managed to regis-

ter a profitable second quarter despite the COVID-19 pandemic continuous impact on the industry's bottom-line. This is the third consecutive profitable quarter that the company managed to register since the pandemic hit the aviation industry.

During the second quarter ending June 30, 2021, Air Arabia registered a net profit of AED10mn, an increase of 104 per cent compared to the net loss reported for the same period last year.

Sheikh Abdullah bin Mohamed al Thani, chairman of Air Arabia, said, "Air Arabia's ability to post a profitable first half of 2021, despite the continued impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the aviation industry worldwide, is a direct result of the cost control measures adopted by the management team and supported by the gradual resumption of operations witnessed in the first half".

WAM

Philippine economy grows at fastest pace in more than three decades

Manila, Philippines – The Philippine economy grew in the second quarter at its fastest pace in more than three decades, but an official warned Tuesday of 'speed bumps' as coronavirus restrictions were tightened to combat surging infections.

Gross domestic product (GDP) expanded 11.8 per cent on-year, the statistics agency said, after five straight quarters of contraction.

The increase – the best since the last three months of 1988 – was driven by a rebound in construction activity and consumer spending.

But it came off a 17 per cent slump in the same period last year when the country endured its first crippling lockdown that wiped out millions of jobs.



"The robust performance is driven by more than just base effects – it is the result of a better balance between addressing COVID-19 and the need to restore jobs and incomes of the people," Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Karl Chua told a briefing.

But Chua warned hopes for

"continuous positive growth" could be erased by the current two-week lockdown in the national capital region – which accounts for a third of the economy – and other areas aimed at slowing the spread of the hyper-contagious Delta variant.

"There are speed bumps given the ECQ (enhanced com-

munity quarantine) in Metro Manila and other parts of the country," Chua said.

"The longer we have ECQ then the higher the risk that we may not achieve our target."

The tightened restrictions, which include a ban on restaurant dining and an eight-hour nighttime curfew, are expected to cost the Philippine economy about US\$3bn a week in lost output.

The second quarter – which overlapped another lockdown in April – contracted 1.3 per cent from the first three months of the year, the data showed.

ING senior economist Nicholas Mapa predicted "a similar setback" in the third quarter because of reduced mobility.

AFP

China Telecom eyes \$8.4bn IPO, world's biggest in 2021

Shanghai, China – China Telecom could raise more than US\$8bn in a Shanghai initial public offering that would be the biggest this year, months after it was delisted in the United States amid Washington's stand-off with Beijing.

The firm said it had priced its offer at 4.53 yuan per share, which would be worth 47.1bn (US\$7.3bn), according to a filing with the Shanghai Stock Exchange.

However, if an over-allotment option was exercised that would jump to 54bn yuan (US\$8.4bn), Bloomberg News said.

China Telecom was delisted by the New York Stock Exchange in January along with fellow state-owned telecoms firms China Mobile and China Unicom following an executive order by



former president Donald Trump.

The order banned investments by Americans into a range of companies deemed to be supplying or supporting China's military and security apparatus.

China Telecom is the country's largest fixed-line operator, and the share issue would be the biggest of the year, topping the

US\$5.4bn raised in Hong Kong by TikTok rival Kuaishou Technology in February.

Many of China's biggest tech and telecom firms listed their shares on the more developed US stock markets in the 2000s as they sought access to funding, but the tide has been turning.

AFP

€30bn needed to rebuild after German floods, says Laschet

Berlin, Germany – The conservative frontrunner to succeed Angela Merkel as German chancellor, Armin Laschet, called Monday for up to €30bn (US\$35bn) to rebuild after last month's catastrophic floods.

Laschet, who leads one of the states hardest hit by the historic deluge, North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW), told a special session of the regional legislature that victims could count on "solidarity".

"The total damage in North Rhine-Westphalia will reach €13bn according to initial estimates," he said, while neighbouring state Rhineland-Palatinate "will reach a similar, perhaps even higher sum".

Laschet said Germany's 16 state leaders and the federal government were well on their way to hammering out a relief package for afflicted areas.

"All the states have shown they are ready to commit this €20bn to €30bn."

He added that NRW had not



Armin Laschet gives a statement as he visits the city of Stolberg, western Germany, located in the region hit by deadly floods (AFP)

faced the need to rebuild thousands of destroyed homes at once since World War II and would appoint an official to manage the reconstruction effort and improve disaster warning systems. The costs are to be equally shared between the federal government and the states, according to draft conclusions of a meeting of top political officials to be held on Tuesday reported in German media.

At least 190 people lost their lives in severe floods that pum-

melled western Germany in mid-July, wiping out homes, businesses and vital infrastructure.

Laschet's Christian Democrats are leading in the polls ahead of the September 26 election although he has faced criticism for his handling of the catastrophe.

Government officials have vowed to learn lessons from the tragedy and improve the country's disaster warning systems, including through SMS alerts and wider use of sirens.

AFP

Jailed Samsung chief granted release on parole

Seoul, South Korea – The jailed de facto leader of the giant Samsung Group will be released early on parole this week, South Korea's justice ministry said Monday, easing concerns over a possible leadership vacuum at the conglomerate.

Lee Jae-yong – the 188th richest person in the world according to Forbes, with a net worth of US\$12.4bn – is currently serving a two-and-a-half year prison sentence for bribery, embezzlement and other offences in connection with the corruption scandal that brought down ex-South Korean president Park Geun-hye.

But calls for his early release from both politicians and business leaders have grown in recent months over concerns about the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the South Korean economy, the 12th-largest in the world.

His freedom will ease concerns over decision-making at Samsung, by far the biggest of the family-controlled conglomerates, or chaebols, that dominate



Lee Jae-yong (AFP)

business in the country.

There is a long history of top chaebol figures being charged with bribery, embezzlement, tax evasion, or other offences.

But many of those convicted have subsequently had their sentences cut or suspended on appeal, with some receiving presidential pardons in recognition of their "contribution to the national economy".

South Korea traditionally issues pardons around this time of the year as it celebrates Independence Day on August 15, and the justice ministry said this year 810 people had been approved

for release on parole.

Justice Minister Park Beom-kye said Lee was "among those granted parole in consideration of the national economic situation due to the prolonged coronavirus pandemic".

The decision was "based on various factors including public sentiment and his attitude in prison", he told reporters.

Local reports said he was a 'model prisoner' and this month a rule change came into effect cutting the proportion of the sentences prisoners must serve to be eligible for parole.

Lee, 52, just comes into com-

pliance with the new requirement and will be released on Friday. He was first jailed for five years in 2017, after Park's ouster, then walked free the following year when an appeals court dismissed most of his bribery convictions and gave him a suspended sentence.

But the Supreme Court later ordered Lee to face a retrial, which convicted and jailed him again.

Monday's announcement comes after five major South Korean business groups in April appealed to the presidential Blue House for a pardon for Lee on national economic grounds.

In June, leaders of the country's top four conglomerates – SK Group, Hyundai Motor Group, LG Group and Samsung – also met with President Moon Jae-in to press him to pardon Lee.

Polls also show an increasing number of South Koreans supporting the idea of granting him parole, with more than 66 per cent of respondents in favour in a recent Realmeter survey.

AFP

Sohar International provides range of services for business

Constantly innovating to cater to the changing needs and demands of its elite clientele, Sohar International has remained a preferred choice in the sultanate. With an increasing base of entrepreneurs in the sultanate, Sohar International has introduced an enhanced proposition, 'Sohar I Business Account' to cater to such business-owner customers.

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

"With a deep understanding of the various businesses day-to-day banking requirements, the Sohar Business Account will undertake a more efficient approach to servicing customers in this category and assist them with their requirements. At Sohar International, we constantly refine and realign our ac-



count types to suit our long-term strategies. This has ultimately always proved beneficial to our customers, and serves as a testament to the bank's efforts towards premium client servicing," said Khalil Salim al Hedaifi, chief retail banking officer at Sohar International.

"Meeting the specific needs of customers who own a business, Sohar Business Account supports their enterprises with services including the ease of availing credit and access to a variety of fund management options. We believe

that by doing so, it takes off a major operational stress from their minds, thereby also contributing to the national economy, by helping them focus on increasing their production capacity."

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

current account documents already provided.

The thoughtfully created Business Account also has several advantages for cash transactions. It ensures there are no restrictions on the number of cash deposits and withdrawals, allowing 24/7 cash deposits through Cash Deposit Machines.

To ensure that the basic operations of a business flow seamlessly, the payments and remittances feature enables bulk payment facility through Internet Banking, RTGS and ACH and also offers free of charge standing instructions for bill payments like water, electricity, telephone and the like, as well as local fund transfers. In fact, accounts with a minimum average balance of RO2,000 (or its equivalent in foreign currency) are also eligible for personalised cheque books with the name and logo of the establishment printed on them.

As part of the Employee Payroll Services, all Employee Salary Accounts have the advantage of a zero-balance savings account facility with no account maintenance charges. This feature is being offered by the bank for a limited period until December 31.

National Finance pockets award for innovation

Financial institutions have been competing in providing the best services and innovate financial solutions to its clients to meet their expectations. Leading the scene in the sultanate, National Finance, Oman's largest finance company, recently received the 'Most Innovative Retail Finance - Automobile - Oman 2021' Award by International Finance Awards.

National Finance realises the importance of ease and flexibility for customers who are seeking finance solutions. Hence, it has constantly been working towards providing financial products and services that are fast, easy and flexible in order to fulfill clients' aspirations. The company's offering in automobile finance is known for its easy approvals, seamless procedures, easy documentation and flexible terms. The accolade by International Finance comes to recognize this commitment and National Finance's industry benchmark process in obtaining Automobile Financing.

Commenting on this achievement, Ali al Mani, acting chief executive officer of National Finance said, "This award is a testimony to National Finance's efforts in constantly providing in-



novate solutions that are tailored to the needs of our clients. Through such recognition, we aim to enrich our customers and partners' experience, ensuring them the best possible service."

National Finance, established in 1987, has built a reputation as the market leader trusted by thousands of customers across the sultanate. National Finance

offers a wide range of products targeting both individual customers and Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) through its 20 branches across the sultanate. Recognising its efforts, the company won many accolades, the latest of which was the 'Best SME Finance Solution 2021' award by Capital Finance International (CFI.co).



Special EMI announced on luxury SUV Infiniti QX80

Infiniti Oman has announced a low EMI on the full-size luxury SUV Infiniti QX80, that is designed and engineered to allow customers to travel everywhere in luxury. Customers can benefit from a starting EMI rate (terms and conditions apply) of RO398 on the Infiniti QX80.

The new Infiniti QX80 features added equipment, innovative new technologies and stylish attributes befitting its luxury status, in addition to a new 'Black Edition' grade. The Infiniti QX80 is a full-size luxury SUV - the flagship of the Infiniti range. It combines bold proportions and a commanding exterior design with a spacious, high quality cabin with room for seven or eight passengers.

Effortless performance, advanced drive-assist technologies and taut yet refined dynamics

allow for a relaxing and confidence-inspiring drive.

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

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

The new 'Black Edition' grade features dark chrome and black exterior accents highlight the front grill and fascia, side fender vents, door mirror caps and rear tailgate strip. The commanding stance is heightened with the addition of dark chrome 22-inch forged alloy wheels. Three stylish interior trim colours are also available: including 'Graphite', Saddle Brown' and 'Wheat' with a revised Charcoal Ash Wood accent trim.

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

Get down to business with Ooredoo's Shahry Endless plans

Ooredoo believes that connectivity should be the least of a business's worries. That's why it's portfolio of tailored B2B plans are designed with value, flexibility, and convenience in mind. Take Business Shahry Endless for example.

For a limited time only, customers can take advantage of unlimited data, unlimited closed user group minutes, world roaming and international minutes, all without a contract. Plus, with a

dedicated customer service desk to support them all the way, all customers have to worry about is getting down to business.

Subscribers can choose from three great-value plans. For just RO10 per month, Shahry Endless 10 comes with 14GB of data including 7GB to use locally or in the GCC, 1GB of world roaming, unlimited CUG, and 1,000 local voice minutes including 500 to India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Or, for just RO20, Shahry Endless

20 comes with 40GB of data including 20GB to use locally or in the GCC, 5GB of world roaming, unlimited CUG, unlimited local calling, including 500 minutes to India, Pakistan and Bangladesh and 75 minutes international voice minutes. For only RO30 per month, Shahry Endless 30 comes with 70GB of data including 35GB to use locally or in the GCC, 8GB of world roaming, unlimited CUG, unlimited local calls with 1,000 free minutes.



شركة الباطنة للتنمية والاستثمار القابضة ش.م.ع.ع

Al Batinah Development & Investment Holding Co. SAOG

Board of Directors Report

Dear shareholders,
On behalf of the board of directors, I present the report of Board of Directors and the unaudited financial statements for the Six months ended June 30, 2021.

Financial performance of the parent company and the group:
The parent company income from the investments for the Six months ended June 30, 2021 amounted to OMR 175,365 compared to loss of OMR (50,152) for the same period of last year. The parent company achieved a net profit of OMR 119,718 compared to a net loss of OMR (110,036) for the same period of last year.

The group's achieved income for the six months was OMR 294,838 compared to loss of OMR (52,118) for the same period of last year, and the group incurred a net profit after tax of RO 174,191 compared to a net loss of RO (204,698) Last year. The Net shareholders' equity amounted to RO 2,482,044 and net assets per share 83 Baisa, compared to 2,368,326 RO 79 Baisa, respectively, for the same period last year 2020.

Finally, I have the honors on behalf of the members of the Board of Directors and the shareholders to extend our deepest thanks and gratitude to His Majesty Sultan Haithem bin Tariq for his wise leadership and guidance and pray to God to keep Oman and its people in peace and prosperity. I would also like to thank the esteemed shareholders for their support and continued encouragement of the company and the Capital Market Authority, the banks and all the entities that the company deals with.

Best regards,
Salah Bin Hilal Al-Mawally
Chairman

	Unaudited Group 30 June 2021 OMR	Unaudited Parent Company 30 June 2021 OMR	Unaudited Group 30 June 2020 OMR	Unaudited Parent Company 30 June 2021 OMR
ASSETS				
Non-current assets				
Property, furniture and equipment	52,429	2,328	78,481	2,214
Intangible assets	717	424	194,037	706
Investment properties	1,475,931	-	1,112,000	-
Financial assets at fair value through other comprehensive income	357,650	357,650	375,472	251,099
Investment in subsidiaries	-	1,173,792	-	2,139,241
Deferred tax assets	23,784	-	-	-
Total non-current assets	1,910,511	1,534,194	1,759,990	2,393,260
Current assets				
Financial assets at fair value through profit or loss	752,397	619,057	661,056	460,042
Settlement guarantee fund	-	-	12,500	-
Inventories	179	-	816	-
Trade and other receivables	43,341	3,192	179,469	5,134
Current portion of amounts due from related parties	850	81,246	850	74,391
Cash and bank balances	14,842	4,999	74,626	1,864
Total current assets	811,609	708,494	929,317	541,431
Total assets	2,722,120	2,242,688	2,689,307	2,934,691
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES				
Shareholders' equity				
Share capital	3,000,000	3,000,000	3,000,000	3,000,000
Legal reserve	350,135	212,450	310,701	200,478
Special reserve	24,541	24,541	24,541	24,541
Retained earnings	(658,074)	(941,384)	(680,888)	(540,390)
Investment fair value reserve	(216,027)	(216,027)	(317,904)	(321,678)
	2,500,575	2,079,580	2,336,450	2,362,951
	(18,531)	-	31,876	-
Non-controlling interest	-	-	-	-
Total shareholders' equity	2,482,044	2,079,580	2,368,326	2,362,951
Non-current liabilities				
Employees' terminal benefits	24,546	23,130	23,410	20,638
Deferred tax liability	84,750	-	-	-
Total non-current liabilities	109,296	23,130	23,410	20,638
Current liabilities				
Trade and other payables	54,243	32,612	135,516	61,181
Amounts due to related parties	-	30,829	-	328,101
Bank overdrafts	76,537	76,537	161,820	161,820
Current portion of long-term loan	-	-	235	-
Total current liabilities	130,780	139,978	297,571	551,102
Total equity and liabilities	2,722,120	2,242,688	2,689,307	2,934,691
Net assets per share	0.083	0.069	0.079	0.079

	Unaudited Group 30 June 2021 OMR	Unaudited Parent Company 30 June 2021 OMR	Unaudited Group 30 June 2020 OMR	Unaudited Parent Company 30 June 2021 OMR
Revenue	45,874	-	44,116	-
Cost of revenue	(4,663)	-	(4,575)	-
Gross loss	41,211	-	39,541	-
Net investment income	244,627	166,365	(91,909)	(50,152)
Other income	9,000	9,000	250	-
	253,627	175,365	(91,659)	(50,152)
Expenses				
Salaries and other related staff costs	(55,238)	(24,268)	(83,094)	(31,448)
General and administrative expenses	(53,774)	(26,203)	(51,063)	(21,745)
Depreciation	(4,336)	(99)	(6,439)	(68)
Amortisation	(310)	(141)	(4,410)	(141)
Finance costs	(5,174)	(4,936)	(6,816)	(6,482)
	(118,832)	(55,647)	(151,822)	(59,884)
Net profit/(loss) before tax for the period	176,006	119,718	(203,940)	(110,036)
Income tax expense	(1,815)	-	(757)	-
Net profit/(loss) after tax for the period	174,191	119,718	(204,697)	(110,036)
Other comprehensive income				
Unrealised fair value gains/(loss) on financial assets at fair value through other comprehensive income	77,751	77,751	(66,288)	(66,288)
Total other comprehensive income/(loss) for the period	77,751	77,751	(66,288)	(66,288)
Total comprehensive income/(loss) for the period	251,942	197,469	(270,985)	(176,324)
Basic earnings / (loss) per share attributable to Parent Company	0.006	0.004	-0.007	-0.004

On request by any shareholder, the complete accounts either in English or Arabic will be sent by mail within 7 days of receipt of such request to P.O.Box 68 pc 117 al wadi al kabir, Muscat, sultanate of Oman tel. 24856658 , fax 24856698.

MG Motor launches MG T60 pick up truck in Oman



The British born brand with a commitment to 'Do More', MG Motor has launched its first ever pick up truck - the MG T60 - for its customers in Oman. The MG T60 is a reliable and versatile partner in the light-weight pick up category.

It has been designed to offer superior performance as a practical truck made for cargo as well as personal transportation needs.

The truck is available in two engine types: diesel and gasoline. It is also available in two transmission systems: 2WD and 4WD. This makes the MG T60

an ideal vehicle that meets all your needs - wherever you go and for whatever purpose.

Mohsin Hani al Bahrani; CEO, MHD ACERE - the sole distributor of MG Motor vehicles in Oman - said, "This launch is indeed a special one. Till now we have brought superior MG sedans and SUVs for individuals and families in Oman but with MG T60 we have forayed into commercial vehicles category and will be able to meet the needs of wider customer segments. MG T60 is a highly versatile and highly reliable vehicle.

"At MHD ACERE, our efforts

are always inclined towards bringing high quality products for our customers and with this launch, we feel we have moved a step ahead in pursuit of excellence and customer satisfaction."

Whether you are hauling loads to a construction site or taking your family on an off-road adventure, the MG T60 enables you to Do More.

With two engine options - a 2.8lt turbo diesel producing 150 HP and 360 Nm and a 2.4lt petrol engine producing 143 HP, MG T60 promises to give power packed as well as economical performance.

Its exterior is strong and graceful. The high ground clearance is one of the key features of the MG T60 as it allows the truck to be driven on various road types, including rocky and rough terrains.

The large front grille made of vertical bars surrounded by a bright chrome frame adds a touch of defiance and boldness to the vehicle.

While the MG T60's exterior is all muscle, its interior is crafted for comfort. Behind the wheel, both the driver and passenger can benefit from a range of adjustment settings, while the intu-

itive cockpit is designed to ensure every control is within easy reach. The cabin is roomy and can seat up to five, offering plenty of head and legroom for adults.

There is automatic air conditioning that circulates to the rear via dedicated vents, as well as a four-speaker stereo system with radio to keep you informed as well as entertained.

The MG T60 also comes with superior safety features to meet all challenging situations. It comes with ABS with EBD, stability control, EBA and traction control as standard to assist with

the drive, as well as inner and outer rope hooks, a cargo bed fender and a sidestep for load security and safe access. Passive safety features include front and side airbags and a tyre pressure monitoring system.

To know more about the vehicle, you can visit MG Motor showrooms located in Watayah, Azaiba, Al Manuma, Bidaya, Sohar, Nizwa, Salalah, Sur, Ibra and Ibri. You can also book a test drive and purchase the vehicle online on <https://mg-om.com/>

MG is a British-born automotive brand established in 1924,

known for its historic models, awards and achievements throughout the past 97 years. MG was founded by William Morris and Cecil Kimbers and has one of the oldest car club in the automotive industry.

Best known for its two-seat open sports cars, MG also produced saloons and coupes. Since its acquisition of MG, SAIC Motor, as a Global Top 500 company, has opened a new chapter for this British icon. MG is at the forefront of the introduction of innovative technologies and new energy vehicles for car buyers.



AJIA names Z4 raffle winner

Al Jenaibi International Automobiles LLC (AJIA), the official importer of BMW Group vehicles in Oman announced Areej al Mawali as the winner of its Ramadan Z4 Raffle.

On July 1, AJIA held the draw at the BMW Showroom, which was overseen by a representative from the Ministry of Commerce.

The raffle was just one of many incredible benefits included in AJIA's exclusive 2021 Ramadan deals.

After the raffle, Areej was called into the showroom to pick up her prize, which was a black BMW Z4 with a red interior. A true showstopper, the BMW Z4 presents a timeless roadster, reinterpreted for the modern-day thrill seeker with spirited performance and refined styling.

Ibrahim al Habsi, general sales manager of Al Jenaibi International Automobiles said, "At AJIA, we aim to always introduce the best offers for our customers. We are happy for the winner and

we look forward to bring joy to other customers in future."

On another note, he added, "In light of the current sanitary restrictions, we encourage our prospects to digitally discover our models through our social media platforms and official website.

"On the other hand, we have extended our showroom operating hours from 8.30am to 7.30pm to better cater to visitors, and as always, while maintaining all safety precautions."

Mazoon Dairy continues qualitative steps towards sustainability

Since its inception in 2015, Mazoon Dairy has been adopting qualitative initiatives to ensure the achievement of the company's strategic objectives, with an emphasis on reducing any possible negative impacts on the environment, as well as adopting the best modern practices in all its operations and commercial activities.

Yousuf bin Khamis al Fazari, corporate affairs manager, said, "Believing in the importance of promoting the concept of sustainability and its applications in the company's operations, Mazoon Dairy continues its activities aiming at adopting the best methods to reduce any potential impacts on the environment, as well as developing modern and innovative solutions for the efficient management of resources and waste recycling.

"It also continues to work actively to build strategic partnerships through (Athar) programme that includes all initiatives aiming at maximising the social and economic impact of the company."

Fazari added, "The biogas production plant project, the most important step in the establishment phase, is the first plant of its kind in the sultanate



and the region. It relies on cow waste in the biogas production processes.

"The company also signed an agreement to convert biogas into electrical energy in cooperation with the Oman Liquefied Gas Company and Ejad Corporation, to take advantage of modern technologies in converting biogas generated from organic waste into electrical energy to be a sustainable source of renewable power."

He also indicated that the afforestation is one of the company's projects. It includes planting the company's site in the wilayat of Al Sunaynah with about 8,000 trees as a first

stage, along with ornamental trees, fruit trees, windbreaks trees, and others. However, the afforestation continues in parallel with the increase of the quantities of water extracted from the wastewater treatment plant which is used in irrigation and cleaning works.

The company is yet working on increasing the green area like grassy yards, playgrounds, etc.

Regarding solid waste recycling, Mazin bin Abdullah al Saadi, HSE manager, indicated that Mazoon Dairy has embraced the solid waste recycling project by signing an agreement with the Service Company for Recycling.

"By adopting such projects, Mazoon Dairy seeks to recycle a percentage of 90 per cent of its waste. This agreement is the first of its kind in the sultanate, where the company owns spaces dedicated to sorting and classifying waste of all kinds and recycling them within its facilities.

The project expands the company's waste recycling scope to include more types and quantities of waste that goes to other activities, like plastic and solid waste as part of the company's social responsibility and its commitment to efficiently manage the waste generated from its operations.

CBSE Class 10 Board Exams: Success story continues at ISWK

With an astounding six centums in Mathematics (standard), four in Science and four in French, Indian School Wadi Kabir (ISWK) students have once again proved their academic prowess in the CBSE Class 10 Board Examinations.

Shaan Shetal Vora was ranked first with a percentage of 98.8 while Megha Menon Valiya Naduvath was ranked second with 98.4 followed by Antariksh Das with 98.2.

The subject toppers:

Lael Alva, Shaan Shetal Vora,

Megha Menon Valiya Naduvath, Pranav Jois, Ashwin Arun, Pavithra Harish scored 100 per cent marks in Mathematics (Standard)

Siddharth Sudeep Ramachandran, Ashly Skariah, Antariksh Das, Shaan Shetal Vora scored 100 out of 100 in Science

Adele Margarida Pinheiro, Mahek Himanshu Porecha, Nikitha Rajendran, Brijesh Kara Shingadia scored 100 out of 100 in French

In English, Aleena Shynu, Nathan Naveen Lewis, Shubham Rao Moyila, Antariksh Das,



Shaan Shetal Vora

Megha Menon Valiya Naduvath are the toppers with 99 per cent.

The Malayalam toppers are Aleena Roy, Arundhathi



Megha Menon Valiya Naduvath

Krishna, Kris Thomas Kurumbeswarath, Aarcha Chen-thamarakashan Kanakath with 99 per cent. Abhay Raaj Mishra



Antariksh Das

scored 99 per cent in Hindi. The toppers in Social Science are Antariksh Das, Brijesh Kara Shingadia with 99 per cent.

Shreedevi Mohan Raman Iyengar And Zakir Hussain Mehdi Hussain topped in Mathematics (Basic) with 75 per cent. Sadesh Roopa Dheepak Kumar topped in Painting with 95 per cent and Foundation of IT with 86 per cent.

The performance of the students is truly commendable. Shaan Shetal Vora has topped the list of successful candidates with a stupendous performance with 98.8 per cent. Following him is Megha Menon Valiya Naduvath in the second place with an aggregate of 98.4 per cent and

Antariksh Das (98.2 per cent) in the third place.

The total number of registered students from ISWK for the academic year 2020-2021 in Grade X were 384.

All of the 384 students of Grade X came out successful. The students' hard work, unrelenting commitment and an earnest desire to excel have culminated in this great success.

The School Management and principal would like congratulate all the staff members, students and their parents on the grand success.

Huge force struggling for 8 days to contain Greek fires

Avgaria, Greece - Backed by a huge multinational force, Greek firefighters on Tuesday struggled for an eighth day to control wildfires on the island of Evia that have caused massive damage, prompting an apology from the prime minister.

Nearly 900 firefighters, reinforced overnight with fresh arrivals from abroad, were deployed on the country's second largest island as major towns and resorts remained under threat.

Most of the attention was focused on keeping the fire out of the island's northern hub of Istiaia, which has several thousand residents.

Istiaia Mayor Yiannis Kontzias on Tuesday told public television ERT that he was 'optimistic' the fire can be prevented reaching his town, now a focal point of southern European fires that have underscored global alarm about climate change.

Unprecedented weather disasters bulked up by climate change have swept the world this summer, with a landmark UN assessment published Monday warning the world is warming even faster than forecasted.

Hundreds of homes have been lost in Evia, greater Athens, the Peloponnese and other parts of Greece in wildfires that have been raging almost without pause since late July, as the region suffers through an intense heatwave.

The fires have claimed three lives in Greece, while blazes in neighbouring Turkey have killed eight.

'Hand-to-hand combat'

Firefighters and volunteers had been engaged overnight in 'hand-to-hand combat, fighting heart and soul' to erect fire breaks outside villages neighbouring Istiaia, Kontzias said.

The Evia force includes hundreds of firefighters from Romania, Serbia and Ukraine. They were reinforced on Tuesday with units from Cyprus, Slovakia and Poland, the civil protection authority said.

The island is popular with holidaymakers and many Greeks have summer homes in Evia. Some 3,000 people were evacuated by sea this past week as the flames neared.

In the village of Avgaria, many locals have turned out to help the professionals.

"If we don't come, who will?" asked Yiannis, a burly youth in his 20s. "My aunt's house burned down, that of my grandfather almost did too."

The fire has also wrought havoc on the island's agricultural economy that included resin,



A local resident gestures as he holds an empty water hose during an attempt to extinguish forest fires approaching the village of Pefki on Evia (Euboea) island, Greece's second largest island, on Sunday (AFP)

Putin orders reinforcements in Siberia fire

Moscow, Russia - Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered officials on Tuesday to send in reinforcements to fight forest fires that continue to tear through Siberia.

Wildfires have ripped through Siberia's forests with growing intensity in recent years, which Russian weather officials and environmentalists have linked to climate change and underfunded forestry management services.

Putin ordered Russia's emergencies ministry to 'increase the group for extinguishing fires' and 'raise the intensity of the work of aviation' in one of Siberia's hardest-hit regions of Yakutia.

The emergencies ministry branch in Yakutia said on Tuesday that more than 4,200 people were currently fighting the fires.

More than 9,500 tonnes of water had been dropped from



Cars drive down a road covered with smoke from nearby forest fires between the village of Magaras and the city of Yakutsk, Siberia (AFP)

the air onto the blazes, it added.

But Moscow's weather monitoring institute Rosgidromet said the situation in Yakutia - Russia's coldest and largest region - remains one of the 'most difficult' in the country. In the vast and sparsely populated region nearly five times the size of France, blazes have burned through almost 8.7mn hectares, according to

Russia's forestry agency.

The total burned area is quickly approaching the annual average since 2000 of 8.9mn hectares for the entire country.

During a visit to Yakutia last month, local firefighters told AFP that they lacked the people, equipment and resources to deal with the scale of the wildfires.

AFP

PM apologises

Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis apologised to the nation and vowed to punish those responsible.

"I apologise for any shortcomings" in the state response, Mitsotakis said in a televised address on Monday.

"We may have done what was humanly possible, but in many cases it was not enough." Mitsotakis said more than 580 fires had broken out in re-

cent days around the country, exposing Greece to a 'natural fury without precedent'.

"Because of the unprecedented heatwave and prolonged drought, (the fires) are hard to extinguish."

The PM has pledged hundreds of millions of euros in additional funds for civil protection, reforestation and flood prevention.

He is chairing a cabinet meeting on Tuesday to finalise support measures, and will address the press on Thursday.

There was still concern on Tuesday about three separate fires in the Peloponnese peninsula, where villages were still without electricity and water, according to local officials.

More than 400 firefighters were active in that area, including reinforcements from the Czech Republic and Britain.

In the foothills of Mount Parthenon north of Athens, local mayor Spyros Vrettos told ERT that at least 80 homes have been completely destroyed, while some 1,500 electricity pillars in the area will also need to be replaced.

EU states and other countries have so far contributed 21 aircraft, 250 vehicles and more than 1,200 firefighters, some of whom were expected between Tuesday and Friday, the civil protection authority said.

A draft United Nations assessment seen exclusively by AFP has warned the Mediterranean is a 'climate change hotspot'.

AFP



Protesters gather outside court as the trial of Hamid Noury, a former Iranian prison official accused of killing dissidents, starts in Stockholm

Iranian ex-official denies part in 1988 executions

Stockholm, Sweden - Lawyers for a former Iranian prison official denied his involvement in the 1988 execution of thousands of political dissidents on Tuesday on the first day of a landmark case in Sweden likely to stoke tensions in the Islamic republic.

Hamid Noury (60) appeared relaxed and smiling in Stockholm District Court while his defence counsel Daniel Marcus refuted the charges including 'murder' and 'war crimes' dating from between July 30 and August 16, 1988, when Noury was assistant to the deputy prosecutor of Gohardasht prison in Karaj, near Tehran.

Earlier Kristina Lindhoff Carleson, for the prosecution, read out the indictment which accused Noury of 'intentionally taking the life of a very large number of prisoners sympathetic to or belonging to the People's Mujahedin' (MEK).

MEK supporters were among several hundred protesters who

gathered outside the court carrying photos of the dead and called for justice for the estimated 5,000 prisoners killed across Iran, allegedly under the orders of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khomeini in reprisal for attacks carried out by the MEK at the end of the Iran-Iraq war of 1980-88.

The demonstrators urged Swedish and international justice to condemn Iran's newly inaugurated president Ebrahim Raisi, also accused by rights groups of involvement in the extra-judicial killings.

Swedish court officials believe Tuesday's case is the first of its kind against someone accused over the killings.

A verdict in the three-day case is expected in April 2022.

The allegations were brought to the attention of the Swedish authorities by a group of 30 complainants, as well as justice campaigner and former political prisoner Iraj Mesdaghi.

AFP

CIA chief visits Israel amid Iran tensions

Jerusalem - US Central Intelligence Agency chief William Burns is visiting Israel for talks on common foe Iran, as rising tensions overshadow talks on restoring a landmark nuclear deal.

A spokesman for Prime Minister Naftali Bennett gave no details of the agenda for the CIA chief's talks in Israel.

But the Walla News website said he would discuss Iran's nuclear programme and its activities in the region with both Bennett and his Israeli counterpart David Barnea.

Burns will also travel to Ramallah in the Israeli-occupied West Bank for talks with Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas, a Palestinian official said.

His visit comes amid what analysts have called a 'shadow war', that has seen a spate of attacks on vessels linked to Iran and Israel.

Last month, the MT Mercer

Street, an oil products tanker operated by Israeli-controlled Zodiac maritime, was struck by a drone killing two crew members - a Briton and a Romanian.

G7 foreign ministers on Friday pointed the finger of blame for the attack at Iran, as the US military released the findings of an investigation alleging the drones were made in the Islamic republic.

Iran dismissed the allegations. A career diplomat, Burns played a key role in the US rapprochement with Iran that led to a 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and major powers.

With strong support from Israel, then president Donald Trump abandoned the agreement in 2018 and reimposed punishing sanctions on Iran.

But his successor Joe Biden's administration has held multiple rounds of indirect talks with Iran on returning to the deal.

AFP

Climate-vulnerable island nations call on world to save 'our very future'

New York, US - Dozens of small island states most vulnerable to the effects of climate change have called on the world to save 'our very future' after a landmark UN report said accelerating global warming and rising sea levels threaten their existence.

The call to action comes after the climate report warned that catastrophic global warming is occurring far more quickly than previously forecast, an assessment met with horror and hopefulness by world leaders and green groups.

"We have to turn this around," Diann Black-Layne, lead climate negotiator for the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) and ambassador of An-

tigua and Barbuda, said in a statement late on Monday.

"The stark fact is that if we keep warming to 1.5°C we are still facing half a metre of sea level rise. But if we stop warming from reaching 2°C, we can avoid a long term three metres of sea level rise. That is our very future, right there."

The group comprises 39 states including Cuba, Jamaica, Papua New Guinea and the Maldives, the world's lowest-lying country.

It said the report confirmed that governments around the world must take critical action to cap warming to the 1.5°C temperature goal of the 2015 Paris Agreement.

The UN's Intergovernmental

Panel on Climate Change report, published on Monday, said the world is on course to reach that level around 2030, a decade earlier than predicted just three years ago.

That level of global warming will have devastating impacts on humanity, including more extreme weather events such as fires, typhoons, droughts and floods.

In its first major scientific assessment since 2014, the IPCC said by mid-century, the 1.5°C threshold will have been breached across the board, by a tenth of a degree along the most ambitious pathway, and by nearly a full degree at the opposite extreme.

UN Secretary-General Anto-

nio Guterres said greenhouse gas emissions from fossil fuel burning and deforestation are 'choking our planet and putting billions of people at immediate risk' and said countries must 'combine forces' to avert catastrophe.

Many world leaders reacted to the report by calling for immediate action to curtail the rise of the world's temperature.

But Australia's conservative prime minister rejected growing calls on Tuesday to adopt more ambitious emissions targets, while China insisted it was implementing its climate commitments and signalled no new policies despite the report's findings.

AFP



Waves lap ashore near condo buildings on the day the United Nations released a report with a dire warning for humanity, in Sunny Isles, Florida, on Monday (AFP)

Taliban eye full control of north Afghanistan

Kabul, Afghanistan - The Taliban were in control of six Afghan provincial capitals on Tuesday after a blitz across the north forced tens of thousands of people to flee their homes for the relative safety of Kabul and other centres.

The insurgents now have their eyes on Mazar-i-Sharif, the north's biggest city, whose fall would signal the total collapse of government control in a region that has traditionally been anti-Taliban.

Government forces are also battling the extremists in Kandahar and Helmand, the southern Pashto-speaking provinces from where the Taliban draw their strength.

The United States - due to complete a troop withdrawal at the end of the month and end its longest war - has all but left the battlefield.

However, Washington's special envoy Zalmay Khalilzad is now in Qatar to try and convince the Taliban to accept a ceasefire. Khalilzad 'will press the Taliban to stop their military offensive', the State Department said, and 'help formulate a joint international response to the rapidly deteriorating situation'.

Envoys from hosts Qatar, Britain, China, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, the United Nations, and European Union were also due to discuss the situation in Afghanistan, a source told AFP.

But even with a new round of talks in the works, Pentagon spokesman John Kirby said it was down to the Afghan govern-



Afghan families, who fled from Kunduz and Takhar province due to battles between Taliban and Afghan security forces, arrive in Kabul on Tuesday (AFP)

ment and its forces to turn the tide, and there was 'not much' the United States could do to help.

Michael Kugelman, at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, doubted Washington had the means to change anything.

"I fear that the Taliban (are) just so strong and the Afghan military is so beleaguered right now, it's going to be hard to find some type of momentum-changer from the US," he said.

Brutal treatment

The Taliban have appeared largely indifferent to peace overtures, and seem intent on a military victory to crown a return to power after their ouster 20 years ago in the wake of the September 11 attacks.

As fighting raged, tens of thousands of people were on the move inside the country, with families fleeing newly captured Taliban cities with tales of brutal treatment at the hands of the insurgents.

"The Taliban are beating and looting," said Rahima, now camped out with hundreds of families at a park in the capital, Kabul, after fleeing Sheberghan province.

"If there is a young girl or a widow in a family, they forcibly take them. We fled to protect our honour."

"We are so exhausted," added Farid, an evacuee from Kunduz who did not want to be further identified.

In the northern city of Kunduz

that was captured by the Taliban over the weekend, residents said shops had begun to reopen in the centre as insurgents focused their attention on government forces who had retreated to the airport.

"People are opening their shops and businesses, but you can still see fear in their eyes," said shopkeeper Habibullah.

Another resident, living close to the airport, reported days of heavy fighting for days.

"The Taliban are hiding in

UN rights chief warns of possible war crimes

Geneva, Switzerland - The UN human rights chief on Tuesday urged an end to the Taliban offensive on Afghan cities and said her office was receiving reports of possible war crimes.

"The Taliban must cease their military operations in cities. Unless all parties return to the negotiating table and reach a peaceful settlement, the already atrocious situation for so many Afghans will become much worse," Michelle Bachelet said in a statement.

The Taliban's sweeping takeover of cities and districts 'have struck fear and dread into the population', she said, warning that the proliferation of pro-government militias mobilised against the Taliban could also put civilians at risk.

"We know that urban warfare results in scores of civil-

ians being killed. We have seen it before, too many times.'

'In Afghanistan, since 9 July in four cities alone - Lashkar Gah, Kandahar, Herat and Kunduz - at least 183 civilians have been killed and 1,181 injured, including children,' she said, adding that these were just the civilian casualties the UN had managed to document.

'The real figures will be much higher.'

Bachelet said her office was receiving reports of 'summary executions, attacks against current and former government officials and their family members, military use and destruction of homes, schools and clinics, and the laying of large numbers of improvised explosive devices (IEDs)'.

AFP

people's houses in the area and government forces are bombing them," said Haseeb, who only gave his first name.

The Taliban earned notoriety during their first stint in power from 1996-2001 for introducing a harsh interpretation of Islamic rule that barred girls from education and women from work.

Crimes were punished by public floggings or executions, while a host of activities - from playing music to non-religious TV - were also banned.

Following the capture of Aibak on Monday, the insurgents have now overrun five provincial capitals in the north. They have also taken Zaranj, the capital of Nimroz province, in the southwest.

On Tuesday, the Taliban reiterated they were closing in on Mazar-i-Sharif - the largest city in the north and a linchpin for the government's control of the region - after capturing Sheberghan to its west, and Kunduz and Taloqan to its east.

AFP

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Bangladesh begins vaccinations for Rohingya refugees in camps

Kutupalong, Bangladesh - Bangladesh began vaccinating on Tuesday Rohingya refugees living in congested camps as the impoverished South Asian nation battles a record surge in coronavirus cases.

Health officials say 2,600 COVID-19 cases and 29 deaths have been recorded in the camps housing 850,000 Rohingya but many experts say this is likely a gross underestimate.

The initial inoculation phase will see around 48,000 refugees aged over 55 get Chinese-made Sinopharm shots in the coming three days, local health chief Mahbubur Rahman told AFP.

At Kutupalong, the largest refugee settlement home to more than 600,000 people, Rohingyas including many elderly people queued up to get their shots from health workers in protective suits.

"We are scared of corona. We heard it would be good for us if we get vaccinated, that's why I came here today," said 60 year old grandmother Rahima Khatun.

"We need the vaccine to live



Rohingya refugees wait to receive a dose of the vaccine in Kutupalong refugee camp in Ukhaia on Tuesday (AFP)

through the current crisis. It will save us from the disease everyone is worried about," said Mohammad Zafar, an elderly man.

Officials said they conducted a massive awareness campaign in the camps with volunteers going door to door among the flimsy shacks where the refugees live.

Shamsud Douza, Bangladesh's deputy refugee commissioner, told AFP that a vaccination drive would also

begin this week for 18,000 Rohingya controversially relocated to an island in the Bay of Bengal.

Bangladesh has been hit by a major surge in cases in recent months and much of the country of 169mn people is under lockdown, including the Rohingya camps.

The coronavirus has killed nearly 23,000 people and infected about 1.4mn in Bangladesh, most of them in recent months. Around 98 per

cent of new infections are from the more transmissible Delta variant first detected in neighbouring India.

'Global divide'

Most of the Rohingya in Bangladesh fled an offensive by security forces in neighbouring Myanmar in 2017 and four years later, there remains little prospect of them returning home.

"Vaccination of all age groups

is the only effective way to stop the virus (from) spreading further among the Rohingya population in the camps," said Romain Brie, head of the medical charity MSF in Bangladesh.

Hrusikesh Harichandan from the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies said the Rohingyas were 'living in the shadow of the global vaccine divide'.

"Vaccinations are vital for families to live with dignity because staying home is so tough for people in these cramped camps and most still have limited access to water and sanitation facilities, escalating risks from COVID-19."

Officials said they were worried that rains could compel many Rohingyas to stay at home and not get vaccinated.

Last month monsoon rains triggered flash floods that destroyed 2,500 shelters and forced the evacuation of over 12,000 refugees.

"Fortunately, there were no rains this morning," said Rahman, the local health chief.

AFP



Students wearing face masks arrive to receive their first dose of the Pfizer vaccine in Sydney on Monday (AFP)

Sydney hits new case record as outbreak spreads

Sydney, Australia - Sydney posted a new record of COVID-19 infections on Tuesday as the city struggles to control an outbreak that is sending other Australian regions into lockdown.

New South Wales state announced 356 new cases, a fresh record for a Delta-variant outbreak that began in mid-June and continues to grow in a population with low vaccination rates.

More than five million people in Sydney, Australia's biggest city, are now in their seventh week of lockdown as the cluster hit 5,805 cases with 32 deaths to date.

"Our strategy is to get to as close to zero as we can... but regrettably we have seen those numbers increase in the last few days," state premier Gladys Berejiklian said.

The coastal town of Byron Bay became the latest put under stay-at-home orders - joining regional centres such as Newcastle and Tamworth - with a snap seven-day lockdown announced late on Monday after an infected person travelled there from Sydney.

Meanwhile, another five mil-

lion residents of Melbourne are in their sixth pandemic lockdown after a fresh cluster emerged in the city last week.

Australia had dodged the worst ravages of the pandemic through a strategy of closed borders, lockdowns, mandatory travel quarantine, and aggressive testing and tracing.

But those tools appear blunted in the face of the highly transmissible Delta variant and have left Australians weary of repeated lockdowns.

Australia's glacial vaccine rollout has been one of the slowest in the OECD.

Just over 20 per cent of the population is now fully vaccinated, but the under-pressure conservative government has promised a boost to supplies from September.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison said the country was in a 'tough fight' against the Delta strain but he wanted to get 'everybody around that table at Christmas time'.

The nation has recorded about 37,000 cases of COVID-19 and 940 related deaths to date in a population of 25mn.

AFP

China cases rise as Delta variant challenges Beijing

Beijing, China - China's coronavirus cases hit a seven-month high on Tuesday, after a cluster at a test site helped drive up numbers as the Delta variant challenges Beijing's grip on the pandemic.

State media has described the current outbreak - which has sparked local lockdowns, mass testing and travel restrictions - as the most severe since the virus emerged in the central city

of Wuhan.

Authorities had brought domestic infections down to virtually zero, allowing economic activity to rebound albeit with tight border restrictions.

But now, cases are rising.

On Tuesday, Chinese health authorities reported 143 new coronavirus infections - 108 of them locally transmitted.

Dozens of cases in recent days have been linked to a

COVID-19 testing site in eastern Yangzhou city.

In a sign of the anxiety over even relatively minor outbreaks, several officials have been issued warnings for mishandling mass testing, which city authorities said allowed the virus to spread. Yangzhou city authorities said 'a small number of party members and cadres have yet to perform their duties properly'.

The city of about 4.6mn peo-

ple has so far conducted five rounds of widespread testing, collecting 1.6mn samples in an attempt to stamp out the spread. The latest surge started after infections among airport cleaners in neighbouring Nanjing city sparked a chain of cases across the country.

Tuesday's numbers are the highest since January, when the country logged 144 new cases and 126 domestic infections,

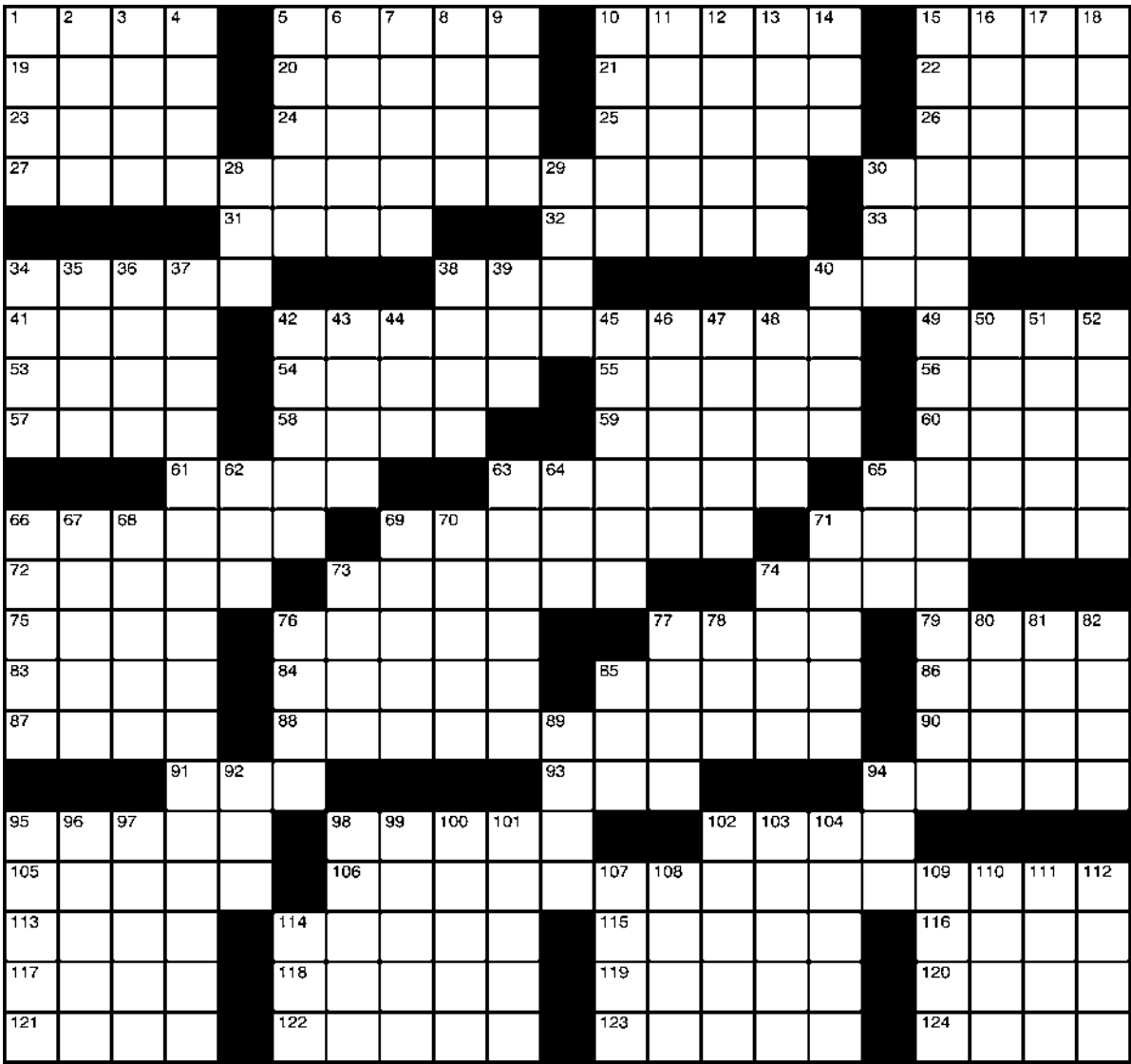
mostly in the northern regions.

Authorities are now working to shore up confidence that the latest resurgence is controllable.

"We have successfully contained the epidemic in Guangzhou, and the epidemic in Nanjing is gradually being put under control," the official Xinhua news agency cited infectious diseases specialist Zhang Wenhong as saying.

AFP

DAILY CROSSWORD



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ACROSS
1 Mardi ____
5 Power elite
10 "Grown Ups"
David
15 Soviet news
agcy.
19 Season before
Easter
20 "All ____, by the
telephone ..."
21 "____ looking at
you kid!"
22 Arm bone
23 Take apart
24 Auditions
25 Come full-circuit
26 Mob scene
27 Barking lad?
30 Seeing red
31 Tundra denizens
32 Doorway
33 Daisy Mae's
boyfriend
34 Pinwheel sound
38 Type of cat
40 DC mortgage ins.
gp.
41 Adjutant
42 Existential
bovine?
49 Actor James
53 Unkempt one
54 Goslings,
eventually
55 Overhead
56 Thousand: comb.
form
57 Pit
58 Feedbag contents

59 Relief pitcher's
stat
60 Very, in Versailles
61 Give temporarily
63 Substance
65 Research author
Hite
66 Paris's Metro for
one
69 Not as big
71 Company
72 Characteristic
73 Freeload
74 French heroine
Jeanne ____
75 "It ____ necessarily
so"
76 Mrs. Helmsley
77 Ramone or
Kramer
79 Walesa of Poland
83 One of the Three
B's
84 "The Old ____
Bucket"
85 Aesop ending
86 Cal's rival
87 Scram!
88 Solitary turkey?
90 Bird gullet
91 High moods
93 Dorothy's Auntie
and others
94 Pepe LePew
family
95 Condition
98 Early Central
American
102 Sax key control,
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105 Esther's enemy
stat
106 Nostalgic goat
note?
113 Grand drama
114 Viewpoint
115 Skateboard trick
116 Karl or Zeppo
117 Actress Merrill
118 Beings
119 NOW: Equality
for ____
120 French friend:
fem.
121 Popular Stowe
forecast?
122 Garlic juicer
123 Oodles
124 The Seven ____
DOWN
1 Underwater word
2 Clinton's attorney
general
3 Commentator
Rooney
4 Stash away
5 Actress Channing
6 Smart ____
7 Wild male pigs
8 "The King ____"
9 ____ majesty
10 Portrayed
11 1992 also-ran
12 Bower
13 Consider godlike
14 NJ time
15 Chicken rebuttal?
16 Straighten
17 Zzzzz
18 Half-goat, halfman
dietary

28 Him opposite
29 Obligation
30 Sound from the
hot tub
34 Household task
35 Mauna Loa site
36 Singer Billy
37 Speechless
maverick crow?
38 Eleanor, ____,
Mamie
39 Gem St. neighbor
40 Enemies
42 "The ____ of
defeat"
43 Headliner
44 Vegas transaction
45 Chess piece
46 Lessen
47 "____ and a shaker"
48 Finished
50 Buenos ____
51 Bright-eyed
52 Scent detectors
62 Nosh
63 Tomorrow, in
Toledo
64 Geom. cousin
65 California's Big ____
66 Pierces
67 'umble Mr. Heep
68 Spanish money
center
69 Uttered
70 Utrillo
contemporary
71 Oprah's pal
73 Char
74 Negotiate
76 Trunk parts

77 Tasks
78 Sphere
80 Wedding gown
color
81 Stewart, for one
82 Avian predator
85 Matriarch,
familiarily
89 Wilder or Kelly
92 Sword's superior
94 Health resort
95 Takes off
96 LeBron James
feat
97 ____ acid
98 Insignificant
99 Debate
100 Shouts
101 "____ of pottage":
Esau
102 Historic Alabama
city
103 Heard in court
104 Auguries
107 Cuts down grass,
etc.
108 Alliance of na-
tions,
e.g.
109 Amo, ____, amat
110 Famous Auntie
111 Kathleen Battle
offering
112 Paul Bunyan's
gear
114 Cleopatra's
nemesis

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

Look for promising signs of progress in one of your newer relationships today. You are finally getting some traction. Your charm is all you need to seal the deal, so unleash it without any limits. The time to play conservatively is over. You must act now and act boldly. Dangle the carrot and watch them jump for it -- then let them make the final move.



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

A fine line exists between devotion and obsession -- so make sure you are not spending too much time on activities that ultimately could be holding you back. Enjoy yourself, but make sure you are able to walk away at any time. Freedom is something you need to maintain. Keep moving around today, roaming among different groups of people and not staying too long in any one spot.



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

It's time to toot your own horn! If no one else is going to sing your praises today, you must step up to the microphone and belt it out by yourself! You deserve to feel pride in what you have done, because no one else could have done it as well. With every success comes a cloud of jealousy or anger from the folks who just couldn't pull it off.



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

To ensure you have the most pleasant day possible, stay flexible and just let the world show you something fantastic. Save yourself from trying to create special situations. The best moments in life are spontaneous -- when everything just falls into place. So forget about all the planning. If you can just let things be what they are going to be, the magic will take over.



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

Today a new opportunity for upward mobility will arrive on the scene bright and early. Don't wait too long to address it -- the good fortune pendulum is swinging back your way, and it's bound to swing away again before you know it. Reach out and grab this chance, even if you don't feel completely prepared. This sunnier weather will put you on a path to a bigger lifestyle.



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

Having power and having control are very different possessions. You don't have to be the one in charge to shape the future. Don't think small today -- focusing on the person behind the steering wheel is waste of time. Instead, you're plotting your own course, so break out the map and start planning your future. Let go of the wheel and go for a ride.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

Today, a direct relationship exists between how easy something is to attain and how worthwhile it is pursue. If someone is batting their eyelashes at you, dying for some attention, they're not the person you should be checking out right now. Seek out the person who stands apart from the crowd, who doesn't work so hard for the approval of others. This person is not playing hard to get.



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

Has someone been putting you under pressure to be perfect lately? Ignore them. Shake loose of their apprising gaze and invite them to focus on someone else for a while -- like their own self. You add sunshine to the lives of most of the people you touch, so why worry about one person who is still stuck in their own personal fog? Let go of the few missteps you have been making.



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

Growth is a good thing, but you should take a break from pushing yourself right now. Today will not be best spent challenging yourself or starting difficult conversations. Settle in to a routine right now and find comfort in doing the same things. There is something to be said for predictability. Let the dust settle on your newly renovated life.



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

Authority figures might cause you some stress today -- they will have a tendency to micromanage you and be somewhat of a hovering presence. It doesn't mean you're not doing a good job. On the contrary, they are experiencing some insecurities and the need to justify their existence. So don't be intimidated -- you should feel relieved that you're competent.



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

You are going to have to conserve your money to retain the peace in your friendships. And keep in mind, money isn't the only thing that's green -- envy can also put up a wall between the two of you. It's up to you to make sure you master the balance between knowing when not to make an issue of it and thinking about it when social events are planned.



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

Your new and improved take-charge attitude is starting to work today. Results are still coming slowly, but people are getting behind you more and more. No one else sees things like you do, and that is working in your favour. Resist taking on any more right now. Instead, take the path of least resistance and wait for everyone else to get on the same page as you.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

- 1. Nautical mile is a unit of distance used in**
- a. navigation
 - b. road mile
 - c. astronomy
 - d. measuring the boundaries of a nation
- 2. Knot is a unit of speed of which of the following?**
- a. Aeroplane
 - b. Light waves
 - c. Ship
 - d. Sound waves
- 3. Mesons are found in**
- a. Laser beam
 - b. X-rays
 - c. Gamma rays
 - d. Cosmic rays

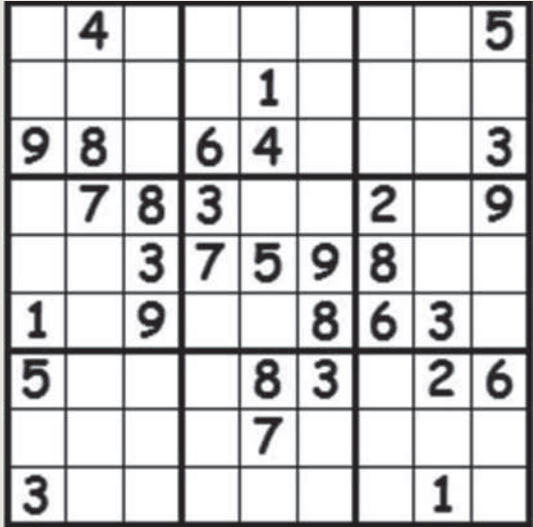
Answers: 1.a, 2.c, 3.d

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 (AUGUST 09)



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



FOOD DÉCOR



ART OF

Garnishing

Garnish is said to serve as the ultimate appetiser when food is presented on your table. It can lift an ordinary dish to unprecedented heights and even make a small portion appear much larger than it actually is. Garnish is, indeed, the driver in every culinary cruise from table to tummy

Food served on a plate or platter is never complete unless garnished well. It's like adorning jewellery to complete your attire. Hence, the chef or home cook's job is not over once the dish is ready – it is equally important to serve it out in an interesting manner and garnished appropriately.

There are many elements involved in garnishing to make a dish stand out, whether a soup or starter, a main course or a dessert. Imagine a bowl of carrot halwa devoid of toasted nuts or a biryani without a garnish of fried onions and chopped coriander, or even a humble bowl of tomato soup sans a few croutons and a swirl of fresh cream. It would most certainly be considered a culinary crime to simply dump a dish on a plate

without any elements that beckon the diner.

These are some of the key elements for garnishing:

Visual appeal

The importance of making food visually appealing cannot be emphasised enough. Grandmothers sparingly added a few raisins, a sprinkle of chopped herbs or even a streak of food colours to most dishes, often to add a silver lining to simple preparations. They say, you eat with your eyes first, so what you see is what decides how you tuck in. Garnish need not always be fancy, they can simply complement the colours of the dish or enhance the aromas and make it attractive. Look at the buffet counters in your supermarket,

they always throw in a few chopped coloured capsicums or carved carrots/tomatoes around their trays of food or chafing dishes.

Enhancement of flavour

Garnishes are not merely for colour or show, they also have to be relevant to the dish as well as play a somewhat supporting role. A slice of lemon wedged on the rim of a glass of lemon juice works well but it would be out of place on a glass of milkshake. Lemon wedges around a plate of glazed chicken wings also have a role to play, to suitably enhance the flavour of the dish, if required by some. Similarly fried onions and nuts complete the overall aroma

emanating from a biryani or a spicy curry.

Filling the plate

Often, after food is served out, the appearance suggest that something is lacking. Here, a garnish can make an empty looking plate appear full. You never leave a steak all alone on a plate, always provide an accompaniment of sauted vegetables or roasted/mashed potatoes and an extra helping of a jus on the side. A few pieces of sliced fruits go well with many desserts, so does a single slice of a fruit or a sprig of mint enhance the appearance of a mug of juice. With that, the appearance of the dessert or the juice does come alive in an instant. Remember that mini umbrella on the

mocktail you ordered or the cute cookie that comes on the side of your cappuccino!

Identification of a dish

Often, dishes served out without an announcement by the steward can leave you wondering whether you did get what you ordered. An orange coloured soup can leave you baffled whether it is the carrot soup you ordered or the pumpkin soup sought by someone else. In this case, garnishing with a few bits of the same vegetable helps in identifying the dish. The confusion may not happen on your dinner table at home but doing so will definitely put a smile on the face of the diner, besides adding more texture to the dish.



Herbs and leaves

The most popular leaves and herbs used for garnish include spring onions, coriander, parsley, cilantro, basil, oregano, rosemary, mint, chives, dill, thyme, etc. All these don't just add additional colour to the final presentation, they also enhance the aroma of the dish. You may also use root vegetables like radish, carrot, turnips or greens like lettuce, spinach, etc to add more colour and crispness to your dish.



Edible flowers

These are mostly used in commercial kitchens of hotels and restaurants, mostly for fine dining to enhance the appearance of dishes, though they play no real role in adding to the flavour or aroma of the dish. Nevertheless, for special occasions at home, you can try using these to give your preparations the touch of a professional chef.

Many flowers like dried roses, calendula, pansies, and jasmines are edible and can be used as a garnish in many dishes. There may be others typically available in your store, use them to give your culinary skills a visible boost.



Fruits and vegetables

Lemons/limes, oranges, berries, grapes, radish, asparagus, and tomatoes are the most common fruits and vegetables that are used as garnishes. They can be used as slices, wedges, or used for their zest. Chopped fruits go well in fruit punches or as toppings on custards as well as on cheesecakes.



Purees and drizzles

More than as a garnish, purees are often used to enhance the visual element on a platter by placing a decorative streak, a swirl or a set of drops. They bring in an artistic touch to the final presentation and give the main items on the platter a good get-up. Cauliflower, peas, carrots, beetroots, and tomatoes are commonly used for purees to add vibrance and colours to a dish.

A drizzle of honey, maple syrup, chocolate, etc are also used to enhance the look as well as taste of desserts and pastries as well as for some savoury dishes.

WINNING RETURN

Oman's Ahmad al Harthy claims win along with Charlie Eastwood in round five of the 2021 British GT Championship

Oman's Ahmad al Harthy in action during the fifth round of the 2021 British GT Championships at the Snetterton 300 circuit in Norfolk, UK, on Sunday

Our Correspondent

The absence from the track circuit for more than five months had little bearing on the experienced Oman racer Ahmad al Harthy as he made a triumphant return to the circuit with a win in round five, with his teammate Charlie Eastwood, of the 2021 British GT Championships at the Snetterton 300 circuit on Sunday. It was a sensational display by the Oman Racing duo with a dazzling lights-to-flag win in round five.

Prior to his participation at the weekend, Ahmad had competed in February during the Asian Le Mans Series in Abu Dhabi.

Both Ahmad and Eastwood had entered fifth and sixth

rounds of the British GT as guest entry as this was their one-off participation in the series this season. Ahmad was also making a return to British GT after a gap of six years and the Omani starred after converting a richly deserved pole position into a tremendous race win in the 60-minute contest. In round six, the duo finished fourth.

In addition to making headlines with victory on Oman Racing's long-awaited return to British GT, success for the TF Sport engineered No 97 Aston Martin Vantage GT3 also marked the first ever race win in the category for Irish driver Eastwood.

From sixth on the grid in a wet-and-drying race two later in the afternoon, Ahmad and

Eastwood combined to deliver another outstanding showing.

Eastwood produced an awesome start, leaping into fourth and climbing as high as second during the early running. Even with a ten-second success penalty from race one, due to winning, Ahmad was just as impressive and took the flag in fourth.

"It is a dream start to my season with our new partners, new sponsors, and everyone at Oman Racing," said Ahmad. "I'm so happy and proud to represent Oman and our partners, and delighted to win in our first race back in British GT."

"We've all been working so, so hard over the winter and the early part of this year to put together our programme and this



Ahmad al Harthy (third from left) and Charlie Eastwood on the podium

is the perfect start. The team gave me such a beautiful car to drive, the guys at TF, Charlie [Eastwood] and I have all worked so hard these past weeks. I'm delighted with our results this weekend and hope to

officially announce our next races very soon."

Light rain did threaten ahead of round five on Sunday morning but it soon passed, and the action got underway on a fully dry track. Making a textbook

It is a dream start to my season with our new partners, new sponsors

AHMAD AL HARTHY

launch at the rolling start, Ahmad led away from his expertly taken pole position. He led by a lap when he pitted at the end of lap 13 to hand over the car to Eastwood and the Irishman joined the race with 34 minutes to go.

When the order settled his lead was five seconds over the Bentley, and Eastwood took the chequered flag at the end of the

hour, 8.2 seconds clear to seal a fantastic victory for Oman Racing in its first race back in British GT since 2015.

Round six started on a wet track and Eastwood, from sixth on the grid, did a tremendous job off the rolling start by surging into fourth place early. He handed the car to Ahmad at sixth place, who produced a bold pass around the outside on lap 19 to seal fifth position into the chicane. Two laps later Ahmad moved to take fourth and finished P4 for a successful return to British GT.

"P4 was the best we could hope for in round six, especially having to spend an extra ten seconds in the pits as a success penalty for our round five win," said Ahmad.

Mumbai cricket team to tour Oman from August 20-September 3

Our Correspondent

With Oman's preparations for the ICC T20 World Cup and World Cricket League (WCL) 2 hit badly by the coronavirus pandemic, Oman Cricket (OC) is keen to provide the national team few warm-up games

ahead of their busy schedule in September-October.

As part of Oman's plans to prepare for the upcoming fixtures, OC has invited India's domestic cricket giants Mumbai to tour Oman in the coming weeks.

Duleep Mendis, OC's chief development officer and the chief coach, confirmed that

Mumbai will be visiting Oman for August 20-September 3. Mumbai, coached by Amol Mazumdar, are the most successful team in Ranji Trophy, the premier domestic cricket competition in India, winning 41 times.

During the tour, Mumbai will play three T20s and three

50-over games and the tentative dates for T20s are August 22, 24 and 26. The likely dates for 50-over games are August 29 and 31 and September 2. Mendis' Oman currently leads the seven-nation World Cricket League (WCL) League 2 (50-over format) tournament with 16 points from ten games.

With several Mumbai players busy with Mumbai Indians' IPL preparations, the visitors are likely to miss senior players for the Oman tour. IPL is set to resume in the UAE in September.

Mendis said, "We are happy to host Mumbai. They are an experienced side and we will be able to get much-needed

matches ahead of our packed schedule, which include WCL League Two tri-series in September and the T20 World Cup in October."

Oman are to host two tri-series as part of the WCL League 2 series; first against Nepal and USA from September 13-20 followed by series against Scotland

and Papua New Guinea (PNG) from September 25-October 2.

PNG are also pooled with Oman, Scotland and Bangladesh in Pool B of the first round of the T20 World Cup. Top two teams from Pool B will advance to the Super 12s. Oman will host one group of the T20 World Cup from October 17.

CLASSIFIEDS

SITUATION WANTED

Indian Civil Engineer with over 20 years experience in Construction Sector in Oman. Currently available in Oman with NOC. Able to join immediately. Contact: 78390920 / 94268227
Email: yousufyounusalkhan53@gmail.com

SITUATION VACANT

Looking for a male chef/cook to work in a private villa. Needs to be experienced in cooking Arabic, Indian and Continental food. Should be available in Oman for immediate transfer. Call 99892942

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Chelsea's Tuchel aims for winning start to season

Champions League winners take on Europa League champions Villarreal in Super Cup in Belfast on Wednesday

UEFA SUPER CUP CHELSEA VS VILLARREAL

Belfast, UK - Chelsea will aim to start the new season as they ended the last with more silverware when the European champions face Europa League winners Villarreal in the UEFA Super Cup in Belfast on Wednesday. The match kicks off at 11pm, Oman time.

Thomas Tuchel's stunning impact since taking charge of the Blues in January has raised expectations for Chelsea to challenge in all competitions this season, particularly with Romelu Lukaku on the verge of returning to Stamford Bridge for a club record fee of US\$135 mn.

Tuchel's men beat Manchester City to lift the Champions League in May, just five months after he replaced the sacked Frank Lampard with Chelsea languishing in ninth in the English Premier League.

Victory in Porto was Chelsea's third over City in six weeks towards the end of the season. Now they have the longer term goal of dethroning Pep Guardiola's side as English champions.

"We want to win, we want to compete and of course we want to be successful," said Tuchel ahead of his side's return to competitive action in Northern Ireland.

"This is in Chelsea's nature and of course we are up for the challenge.

"We will try to compete for every title in every competition we enter but I also think it will be a huge step forward if we can maintain the same quality,

attitude and effort that we showed last season."

No COVID-19 cash crisis for Chelsea

As many of Europe's traditional giants have been squeezed by the economic consequences of the coronavirus pandemic, the backing of billionaire Russian oligarch Roman Abramovich has again allowed Chelsea to strengthen at a time of crisis.

A US\$305mn spending spree on Edouard Mendy, Ben Chilwell, Hakim Ziyech, Kai Havertz and Timo Werner last summer was rewarded with Champions League glory.

Now Lukaku looks set to return for nearly four times the amount he was sold seven years ago to provide the missing piece of a proven goalscorer.

The Belgium forward's move should be completed before Chelsea's Premier League opener against Crystal Palace on Saturday, but will not be registered in time to face Villarreal.

Instead, Werner and Havertz will be tasked with starting their second season in England better than they did their first.

After a slow start, Havertz came good on his US\$98mn price tag with the winning goal in the Champions League final.

The 22-year-old was also one of few star performers for Germany at a disappointing Euro 2020.

"I think we have all a lot of goals this season. The Champions League title is not enough for us, we want to win more and that's our aim for the season,"



Chelsea's German head coach Thomas Tuchel gestures on the touchline during the pre-season friendly match against Arsenal recently

I think we have all a lot of goals this season. The Champions League title is not enough for us, we want to win more and that's our aim for the season

KAI HAVERTZ, CHELSEA STAR

said Havertz, who attributed the turnaround in his form to the return of fans to stadiums.

"With the fans now in the stadium, they give you a lot of support. I feel very comfortable.

I like it here, I like the city and I like the club, so all good."

A crowd of 13,000 will fill 70 per cent of Windsor Park this week. While Chelsea have become accustomed to lifting

trophies on an annual basis in nearly two decades since Abramovich took charge, Villarreal are aiming to back up their first ever piece of silverware when they beat Manchester United on penalties in Gdansk.

Unai Emery has now won the Europa League four times, but never won the Super Cup after his three previous successes with Sevilla.

The former Arsenal and Paris Saint-Germain boss believes Chelsea will become "the best

team in the world" this season, but is hopeful they suffer a European Championship hangover with a number of key players only just back into pre-season training.

"Chelsea have Italian and English internationals who haven't arrived back until this week. Their starting line-up will not be the same as the Champions League final," said Emery.

"Hopefully they misfire from the start."

AFP



Andy Robertson

Liverpool's Robertson suffers ankle injury

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE

Liverpool, UK - Liverpool will be without Andy Robertson for the opening weeks of the English Premier League (EPL) season, but manager Jurgen Klopp believes the Scotland captain 'got lucky' after initial fears his ankle injury could have been much worse. Robertson had to be helped off the pitch in Sunday's friendly against Athletic Bilbao after his ankle twisted as he blocked a cross.

"I think we got lucky with Andy, it could have been much worse," said Klopp. "The footage didn't look too well but we got lucky and it will not be too long. Before the international break (in September), after the international break, I don't know."

Robertson is remaining upbeat despite being pictured outside a Liverpool hospital on Monday with his foot in a protective boot. "Scan suggests nothing too major but there's some ligament damage which will need to mend," he said on Twitter. "I will be grafting every day so I can help the team again sooner rather than later."

Robertson is expected to miss clashes with Norwich, Burnley and Chelsea in the EPL and is doubt for Scotland's World Cup qualifiers against Denmark, Moldova and Austria next month.

AFP



John Stones displays his Manchester City jersey after extending his contract on Tuesday

Stones extends City contract to 2026

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE

London, UK - John Stones has signed a four-year contract extension that will keep him tied to Manchester City till 2026, the English Premier League champions announced on Tuesday.

The new deal rewards Stones, who joined the club from Everton in a US\$66mn deal in 2016, for a past year in which he has rejuvenated his career for club and country.

The 27-year-old formed a formidable partnership with Ruben Dias as Pep Guardiola's men cruised to a third league title in four years and reached the

Champions League final last season and Stones also started all of England's matches at Euro 2020 as the Three Lions reached a major final for the first time in 55 years.

"I couldn't be happier. I love being part of this squad. There are so many quality players here and I know we can continue winning trophies, which is my main focus," said Stones.

"Working with the manager is a dream - he has taught me so much about the game and I feel like I learn something new every single day.

"The success we've had in the

last four years has been incredible. To be a part of it has been a dream come true and I just want to continue winning.

"This is the best place for me to play my football and fulfil my ambitions."

Stones fell down the pecking the order at the Etihad during the 2019-20 campaign and appeared to be facing an uncertain future last summer when City spent a then club record fee on Dias.

However, he won a battle with Aymeric Laporte to partner the Portuguese at the heart of the City defence as 19 clean sheets in

27 games between November and February helped open up a commanding lead at the top of the table.

City director of football Txiki Begiristain said: "This is great news for our club. John is an exceptional footballer and a fantastic defender, whose attributes are well suited to our style of play." "We knew when we signed him that we were getting a talented centre-back, but he has really matured in his five years here and, as we saw last season, is at the top of his game right now."

AFP

India to mark Chopra's Olympic javelin feat with special day

New Delhi, India - Neeraj Chopra's historic feat in winning India's first-ever track-and-field gold at the Olympics will be commemorated every year, officials said on Tuesday, as the javelin star spoke of his desire to inspire future athletes.

A medal-starved India revelled in Chopra's stunning achievement in Tokyo, which ended a more than century-long wait for an athletics gold, with politicians, celebrities and the general public heaping praise on the 23-year-old.

The Athletics Federation of India said August 7 - the date of

Chopra's triumph - would be dubbed 'Javelin Throw Day', with annual state meets for the sport held across the nation of 1.3bn people.

"I feel honoured that I could become an inspiration for Indian athletics and javelin in particular," the farmer's son from Khandra village just outside capital New Delhi told reporters on Tuesday.

"I am happy kids will get an opportunity to compete in javelin events and hope that we get more medals in athletics."

The new poster boy of Indian sports, with his boyish charm

and tousled hair, has come a long way from being teased as an overweight child to throwing 87.58m for the gold in the javelin final.

Hundreds of fans had gathered at Delhi's international airport on Monday to give Chopra a hero's welcome.

Chopra said the enormity of the achievement only sunk in when he saw people banging drums and playing music as his car left the airport and headed for a party welcoming him back home.

"It is a dream of any athlete of the world to win an Olympic

medal and there is nothing bigger than gold, so the feeling was surreal.

"When I arrived in India the mood was different and when I landed, I realised I had done something big for the nation that I am getting this honour."

Chopra's gold on the final day took India's medal tally to seven, their best-ever Olympic showing.

Six podium spots at the 2012 London Games was the country's previous best finish but Indian athletes only managed two medals at Rio in 2016.

The best athletics showings

before Chopra's triumph in the modern Games was two silver medals won in Paris in 1900 when India was a British colony.

"Slowly but surely our sports is improving," Chopra said, adding that the newfound "self-belief" in athletes would lead to more success for his country at future Olympics.

Chopra, who won gold in the Commonwealth and Asian Games in 2018, said he was now targeting a top podium finish at the World Athletics Championships to be held in the United States next year.

AFP



India's Neeraj Chopra (C) poses with his Olympic gold along with his parents at a press conference in New Delhi, India, on Tuesday (AFP)



Cricket bids to return to Olympics in 2028

Paris, France - Cricket's world governing body said on Monday that it intends to push for the sport's return to the Olympics at the 2028 Games in Los Angeles, US.

The International Cricket Council (ICC) said it would start preparations on an Olympic campaign to point out 'the sport's inclusion in 2028 would mark the end of a 128-year absence'.

Cricket has appeared once in the Olympics, at Paris in 1900, where the Devon and Somerset Wanderers, representing Great Britain, beat the only other entrants, a team of British embassy staff appearing as France, by 158 runs in a

one-innings match.

ICC chairman Greg Barclay said the Tokyo Games, which ended on Sunday, had been an inspiration and that cricket's

an incredible Games in such difficult circumstances," Barclay said in an ICC statement.

"It truly was fantastic to watch and captured the imagination of

We have more than a billion fans globally and almost 90 per cent of them want to see cricket at the Olympics," said Barclay.

"Clearly cricket has a strong and passionate fanbase, particularly in South Asia where 92 per cent of our fans come from, whilst there are also 30mn cricket fans in the USA," Barclay said.

"The opportunity for those fans to see their heroes competing for an Olympic medal is tantalising."

Barclay pointed out that cricket will be returning to the Commonwealth Games in 2022 in Birmingham which will include a women's T20 competition. The sport previously appeared in the

Commonwealth Games in 1998 in Malaysia, when South Africa won a 50-over competition.

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

"We know it won't be easy to secure our inclusion as there are so many other great sports out there wanting to do the same. But we feel now is the time to put our best foot forward and show what a great partnership cricket and the Olympics are," Barclay said. AFP

We see the Olympics as a part of cricket's long-term future. We have more than a billion fans globally and almost 90 per cent of them want to see cricket at the Olympics

GREG BARCLAY, ICC CHAIRMAN

large fanbase meant it should be invited to the party.

"I would like to congratulate the IOC, Tokyo 2020, and the people of Japan for staging such

the world and we would love for cricket to be a part of future Games."

"We see the Olympics as a part of cricket's long-term future.



A file photo of Chris Cairns

New Zealand great Chris Cairns on life support: report

Wellington, New Zealand - Former New Zealand cricket star Chris Cairns was on life support in Australia following a serious cardiac problem, the *Newshub* website reported on Tuesday.

Cairns, one of New Zealand's all-time greats, suffered an aortic dissection - a tear in the body's main artery - last week in Canberra and is understood to have had several surgeries since, *Newshub* said.

However, the former Black Caps skipper 'has not responded to treatment as hoped', *Newshub* said, adding that the 51-year-old 'will be transferred to

a specialist hospital in Sydney'.

Cairns had a successful 17-year international career as an all-rounder, playing 62 Tests and 215 one-day internationals. He amassed more than 3,000 Test runs and close to 5,000 in ODIs while crossing the 200-wicket mark in both formats.

Cairns was named one of *Wisden's* cricketers of the year in 2000.

But his image was tarred by match-fixing allegations at the end of his career. A legal case against him in Britain ended with an acquittal.

AFP

Moeen Ali recalled for second Test vs India

ENGLAND VS INDIA

TEST SERIES

London, UK - Moeen Ali has been recalled to the England squad for Thursday's second Test against India.

The 34-year-old allrounder has played only one Test match in the last two years, against India in Chennai almost six months ago, but will link up with the team at Lord's.

England were outplayed for large periods of the drawn opener at Trent Bridge last week and are looking to rebalance the side in the continued absence of allrounders Ben Stokes and Chris Woakes.

Moeen has played only white-ball cricket since his last Test appearance in February



Moeen Ali of England

when he took eight wickets and hit a second-innings 43 in a losing cause.

He twice dismissed India captain Virat Kohli in that match but played no further part in the series, taking a scheduled rest as part of the ECB's rotation policy.

AFP

Wade looks to bowling for positives in Bangladesh loss

Dhaka, Bangladesh - Stand-in Australia captain Mathew Wade looked for positive in their bowling after being crushed by 60 runs in the final T20I of a five-match series against Bangladesh on Monday. The Aussies were bowled out for their lowest ever T20I score of 62 runs in the final match for 4-1 defeat in the series after restricting Bangladesh to 122 for eight.

Australia had never lost to Bangladesh in a T20I before coming to this tour.

"Obviously, there is not a lot of positives out of it to take, the fashion we get beaten, especially tonight," said Wade, who took over as the captain for the series from

injured Aaron Finch. "The biggest positives probably are the way our bowlers bowled, especially our spinners bowled on this wicket, in this condition that's something we have asked our spinners.

"Over the five games and in West Indies they were terrific in condition that suited spinners. I think that was a real positive, big inspiration that some of our younger players got in this condition obviously a positive going forward over their career.

"I can look back on and say I have learnt a lot in Bangladesh. It's certainly the most challenging T20 pitches that I have ever played on."

AFP

NZ announce T20 World Cup squad

Skipper Williamson, senior players to miss Bangladesh and Pakistan tours

Wellington, New Zealand - Black Caps captain Kane Williamson and several other senior players were on Tuesday excluded from upcoming tours to Bangladesh and Pakistan as New Zealand focuses on the T20 World Cup.

New Zealand confirmed their World Cup line-up in an unprecedented 32-man white ball squad to handle a heavy workload over the next four months.

In addition to the World Cup in the UAE and Oman and tours of Bangladesh and Pakistan, New Zealand also have a Test series in India with that squad to be

named next month.

New Zealand Cricket chief executive David White said changing times demanded changing strategies, with player welfare and support one of professional sport's biggest challenges, particularly in the current pandemic environment.

New Zealand players involved in this year's prematurely suspended IPL would be allowed to re-join their franchises when it re-starts in September.

Tom Latham will captain the side in Bangladesh and Pakistan with Williamson linking up for



New Zealand skipper Kane Williamson

the T20 World Cup which starts on October 17 in the UAE and Oman.

Ross Taylor was initially selected for the three one-day internationals in Pakistan but, with the brief nature of the one-week series and the length of quaran-

tine protocols, it was decided he would remain in New Zealand to prepare for the Indian Test tour.

New Zealand squad for the T20 World Cup and India T20Is: Kane Williamson (capt), Todd Astle, Trent Boult, Mark Chap-

man, Devon Conway, Lockie Ferguson, Martin Guptill, Kyle Jamieson, Daryl Mitchell, Jimmy Neesham, Glenn Phillips, Mitchell Santner, Tim Seifert, Ish Sodhi, Tim Southee.

Squad for Bangladesh T20s and Pakistan ODIs: Tom Latham (capt), Finn Allen, Hamish Bennett, Tom Blundell, Doug Bracewell, Colin de Grandhomme, Jacob Duffy, Matt Henry (ODI only), Scott Kuggeleijn, Cole McConchie, Henry Nicholls, Ajaz Patel, Rachin Ravindra, Ben Sears (T20 only), Blair Tickner, Will Young.

Squad for Pakistan T20Is: Latham (capt), Allen, Astle, Bennett, Blundell, Chapman, de Grandhomme, Guptill, Henry, Mitchell, Patel, Sodhi, Sears, Tickner, Young.

AFP



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Messi agrees to PSG deal

Argentine superstar arrives in Paris to complete move, French giants to unveil new signing on Wednesday

Paris, France - Lionel Messi landed in Paris on Tuesday with the 34-year-old Argentinian superstar set to sign a two-year deal with Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) following his departure from boyhood club Barcelona.

Messi arrived at Le Bourget airport to the north of the French capital around 3:30 pm (1330 GMT) and was greeted by hundreds of PSG supporters who had gathered hoping to catch a glimpse of their new signing.

Messi, who waved to the crowds while sporting a Paris T-shirt, was then taken to undergo a medical at a hospital just outside the city, the final step before his signing could be made official by the Qatar-backed club.

Messi's father Jorge, who is also his agent, earlier confirmed the inevitable as he arrived at Barcelona's El Prat airport to board a flight to France. Asked by reporters if his son would sign for the French club, he replied, "Yes".

According to several media reports Messi agreed to an initial two-year deal with the PSG and the French giants are set to unveil Messi at a press conference at their Parc des Princes stadium on Wednesday.

The completion of his move will close a whirlwind few days following the announcement last Thursday that he would leave Barcelona, the club he has represented for the entirety of his 17-year professional career.

PSG's move for Messi had been an open secret for days, although reports in Spain on Monday night talked of a 'final offer' by Barcelona to try to keep the player. Instead, the six-time



Lionel Messi salutes supporters from a window after he landed at Le Bourget airport, north of Paris, on Tuesday, to complete his move to PSG

Ballon d'Or winner will join a PSG attack already featuring Neymar and Kylian Mbappe.

PSG see Messi as the missing piece in their jigsaw as they chase the Champions League, the trophy they want more than anything else. 'Back together', Neymar, who played with Messi at Barcelona before moving to PSG in 2017, posted on Twitter.

Coming to terms

Barcelona are still coming to terms with the departure of their greatest ever player, who said goodbye to his club of two

four Champions Leagues and ten La Liga titles.

"It will be difficult to see him in another shirt than that of Barca," Messi's old Barcelona teammate Andres Iniesta, now playing in Japan, told in an interview on Tuesday. "As a player he just transcended everything. I've not seen a player like him - and I don't think I ever will. You look at what he did and for so long..."

New life in Ligue 1

Messi, who flew in to Paris with his wife and three children, is now preparing for a new life in

As a player he just transcended everything. I've not seen a player like him - and I don't think I ever will. You look at what he did and for so long...

ANDRES INIESTA, FORMER BARCA TEAMMATE

decades at a tearful news conference on Sunday. Despite offering to cut his salary by half to seal a new five-year contract with Barcelona, the deal foundered on Spanish league salary cap rules.

Barcelona, carrying debts of US\$1.41bn, are unable to register new signings because of their financial predicament. PSG were about the only club who could afford what is expected to be a deal worth US\$41 mn a year.

Messi leaves Barcelona with 672 goals in 778 appearances, a record tally for one club. He won 35 trophies at the Camp Nou after joining Barca aged 13, but his last appearance was a damp squib: a 1-2 home defeat behind closed doors against Celta Vigo in May. His trophy haul includes

Paris and in French League (Ligue 1). His arrival makes PSG even more obvious favourites to reclaim a French title they missed out on last season to Lille.

This summer PSG have already added veteran Spanish defender Sergio Ramos from Real Madrid and Italy goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma, the star of Euro 2020. They have also signed Liverpool midfielder Georginio Wijnaldum, and got Inter Milan right-back Achraf Hakimi, who scored on his PSG league debut at the weekend.

An added attraction in moving to Paris is that coach Mauricio Pochettino, like Messi, started his career at Newell's Old Boys in Rosario, Argentina.

AFP

Juma takes over as OHA chairman; Kishry re-elected as OSA president

Ashok Purohit
Muscat

It was only a formality for Marwan bin Juma al Juma on Tuesday as he was elected as the new Oman Hockey Association (OHA) chairman for the 2021-2024 term after he was the only contestant left in the fray. *Muscat Daily* had reported in June that Juma was the only contestant left after the closing of nominations.

Earlier on Monday, experienced administrator Taha al Kishry was re-elected as the chairman of the Oman Swimming Association (OSA) for the 2021-24 term after a close fight against his rival Nasser al Alawi of Al Talee'a Club. Kishry polled 11 to edge Alawi, who received nine votes.

At the annual general meeting of the OHA, a total of 15 clubs' representatives were

present. Madian bin Ahmed Habza, who was a member in the previous board, was elected as the vice-president. Incumbent Khamis al Rahbi retained the post of general secretary. Zuhair al Ajmi was also re-elected as treasurer.

The reserved board member seat for woman at the OHA was won by Hannan al Harassi while the other board members elected were former Oman international player and referee Thani Sahim al Wahaibi, Ahmed al Yafei, Said al Mamari and Abdullah al Obaidani.

Juma is also the chairman of Ahli-Sidab Club, one of the powerhouses of hockey in the sultanate. The club are current holders of the coveted His Majesty's Cup title and have won a record 12 times in the tournament's 50-year history. Juma succeeds Talib al Wahaibi, who was the helm



Marwan al Juma, OHA president

for the past five years.

Wahaibi's tenure was marked by spotlight on Oman hockey across Asia and world with Oman hosting the Asian Champions Trophy (2018), the Asian Hockey Federation Congress (2017) and winning the rights to host the inaugural FIH Hockey5s World Cup in January 2024.



Taha al Kishry, OSA chairman

Kishry's reign to continue

Kishry's re-election as the OSA chief makes him one of the longest-serving association chairman in Oman. He first took over as the OSA boss in 2009.

A well-respected name in swimming circles across the world, he is also the FINA (world swimming body) Bureau

member besides being the director-general of the Asian Swimming Federation (AASF) and Arab Swimming Federation chairman from 2013.

An executive member of the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) and the secretary-general of Oman Olympic Committee (OOC), Kishry will have Tariq al Hashmi as his deputy, who was re-elected as the vice-chairman.

Malallah al Busaidi was elected as the general secretary and Salim al Hassani will be the treasurer.

Madiha al Suleimani will be the woman board member at the OSA. The other members elected are Said al Matrooshi, Ibrahim al Wahaibi, Ahmed Hakeem and Ahmed Marhoon.

The OSA's annual general meeting at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex was attended by representatives of 20 clubs.

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