



WEDNESDAY, 10 MARCH 2021

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SAHALA - NEW PLATFORM FROM MOSD, EMUSHRIF

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HM chairs Council of Ministers meeting, endorses Economic Stimulus Plan



Manah - His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq presided over a meeting of the Council of Ministers at Hsinal Shumoukh Palace on Tuesday.

At the outset of the meeting, His Majesty the Sultan thanked and praised Almighty Allah for the bounties and riches He has bestowed on Oman and its noble people.

Then His Majesty the Sultan reviewed the position of the national economy and the challenges posed to it due to the slump in oil prices and the ensuing rise in fiscal deficit and general debt. These challenges ran alongside the impact of measures that had to be implemented due to the prevalence of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020, when the sultanate took quick action through a set of precautionary and preventive measures that overshadowed economic growth in general.

His Majesty the Sultan pointed out that as part of steps undertaken by government departments, an Economic Stimulus Plan (ESP) aimed to achieve high growth rates, as per Oman Vision 2040, has been endorsed.

His Majesty the Sultan reaffirmed that the ESP covers a variety of incentives and initiatives,

Royal Decree ratifies visa agreement with Sri Lanka

Muscat - His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq issued a Royal Decree on Tuesday reading as follows:

Royal Decree No 24/ 2021 ratifies an agreement between the government of Oman and the government of Sri Lanka on mutual visa exemption for the holders of diplomatic, special, service

and official passports, signed in Muscat on February 17, 2021.

Article 1 ratifies the aforesaid agreement as per the version attached to the decree.

Article 2 states that the decree will be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from its date of issue.

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such as cutting down taxes and fees imposed on companies that are actively engaged during 2021 in economic diversification sectors such as industry, tourism, logistics, agricultural and fisheries resources, and mining. The incentives also include cutting down Income Tax for small and medium enterprises during 2020 and 2021, in addition to the reduction of the lease value of land in the Special Economic Zone in Duqm and industrial estates till 2022.

Other procedures related to the ESP include incentives to spruce up business and investment through facilitation of en-

trepreneurship, offering prolonged residency for a number of foreign investors in line with terms and conditions to be announced later by the Council of Ministers, as well as incentives related to the labour market to generate employment opportunities for Omani job seekers.

His Majesty the Sultan, in particular, expressed his keenness on the steps undertaken by the departments concerned to address labour market developments.

His Majesty the Sultan also stated that the Council of Ministers has endorsed the National Urban Development Strategy

(NUDS). He pointed out that strategy is a prime enabler for the realisation of Oman Vision 2040. It is the first long-term strategy that orients urban development in a manner that strikes a balance between socioeconomic development and the environment over the next 20 years. His Majesty the Sultan informed that the NUDS has been the product of wide-scale institutional and societal partnership.

The NUDS is sufficiently flexible to accommodate new developments and future challenges. It charts out a general framework of urban development policies, both at a countrywide level and at the level of each governorate. It also introduces investment programmes and development projects across different sectors.

During the meeting, His Majesty the Sultan touched on the latest developments of COVID-19 and the concerted efforts undertaken by the government to provide vaccines and make them available to different segments of society. His Majesty the Sultan commended these efforts and underscored the need to accelerate the pace of providing vaccines to the maximum number of citizens and residents.

He also laid emphasis on maintaining the ongoing public awareness drive and applying precautionary and preventive measures against the spread of the pandemic.

On the occasion of International Women's Day, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere greetings to women in Oman and in all parts of the world.

In this context, His Majesty the Sultan commended Omani women's accomplishments as they attend to their families' needs and the upbringing of their children, while simultaneously performing the tasks entrusted to them in public life.

His Majesty the Sultan reiterated the great attention accorded to women by enabling them to shoulder responsibilities in the nation-building process. He noted that women in Oman have proved their mettle in this regard.

Speaking about regional and international relations of the sultanate, His Majesty the Sultan reviewed Oman's continuous co-operation and its support for all efforts made to establish security and stability for all countries and nations of the world.

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ESP to ensure speedy economic recovery

Muscat - The Economic Stimulus Plan (ESP) endorsed by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq on Tuesday aims to support economic recovery efforts and enhance the performance of the national economy. A set of mechanisms and procedures has been adopted to ensure a speedy recovery of economic activities and to ensure fast economic growth.

In October 2020, the Ministry of Economy set up a working group to develop policies and programmes to stimulate the Omani economy.

Measures of ESP expected to contribute to -

- Recovery of the local market
- Stimulate small and medium enterprises
- Enhance efforts to improve the business environment
- Attract more investments
- Stimulate enterprises active in the economic diversification sectors that were identified in the Tenth Five-year Plan (2021-2025)
- Protect institutions from exiting the market due to the current temporary economic and financial effects

Incentives for labour market and employment

- Allocate RO20mn in the 2021 budget to train and qualify Omani jobseekers to be appointed in vacancies in government and private sectors
- Reduce licence fees for recruitment and renewal of expat labour permits

Incentives to improve business and investment environment

- Allow starting businesses and commercial and investment activities after obtaining an initial licence that allows the investor to do business without waiting for the final licence, which will be issued after meeting all requirements later.
- Postponement of loan installments of Al Rafd Fund to small and medium enterprises until the end of December 2021.
- Grant permanent residency to foreign investors in accordance with the controls and conditions that will be announced by the concerned authorities.
- Grant foreign investment companies, upon their incorporation, three licences to hire expatriates in accordance with the regulations in force after the issuance of the Commercial Registration.
- Restructuring of municipal fees related to business licences, within one month of its date. Some of these fees will be merged and un-

necessary ones will be cancelled to facilitate procedures and speed up processing of applications.

- Government procurement tenders not exceeding RO10,000 in value are restricted to small and medium enterprises registered with Riyada.

Incentives related to taxes and fees

- All companies that operate in economic diversification sectors are exempted from Income tax with effect from January 2021 until the end of 2022.
- Income Tax rate is reduced from 15 per cent to 12 per cent for SMEs for the tax years 2020 and 2021.
- Fees for environmental licences that will be renewed in 2021 reduced by 50 per cent for the licence validity period.
- Rent for land in the Special Economic Zone of Duqm and in the industrial zones of the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn) reduced by 25 per cent until the end of 2022.
- Tourist establishments exempted from Tourism and Municipality Tax until the end of 2021.
- Hotel establishments exempted from Income Tax due for the tax years 2020 and 2021.

Banking incentives offered by Central Bank of Oman

- Repayment of loans taken by Omanis who have been laid-off and those whose wages were reduced to be further postponed until the end of September of this year.
- Banks instructed to respond to requests for postponement of installments and interest of all borrowers affected by the repercussions of the current situation for six more months until the end of September 2021, without prejudice to their credit rating.
- Continue incentive packages related to granting credit, including raising the ceiling of the loan ratio, facilitating loans to affected and productive sectors, reducing reserve capital ratios and other measures aimed at helping banks, finance and leasing companies to play their roles in supporting economic recovery efforts and improving the liquidity ratio in the local market.
- Cooperate with banks, finance and leasing companies to reschedule loans to match the new cash flow of borrowers so as to enhance their capabilities to fulfil their contractual obligations to financing institutions - in accordance with emerging economic developments - without imposing fees for rescheduling.

'Halting night business limits spread of virus'

Our Correspondent
Muscat

With COVID-19 infections rising and a contagious new variant threatening to accelerate the pandemic, many countries have resorted to curfews, lockdowns and other measures. In Oman, commercial activities across the country have been suspended between 8pm to 5am until Saturday, March 20 to contain the virus.

The question is do such measures work to slow transmission of the virus?

In an interview with Oman TV, Dr Faryal al Lawati, consultant, Infectious Diseases at The Royal Hospital, said the decision of the Supreme Committee dealing with COVID-19 to close all commercial activities, will help encourage social distancing that will lead to reduced chances for the spread of different strains of the virus.

The Supreme Committee recently said that there had been a steep surge in number of infections and deaths due to the prevalence of new mutated variants of the virus, and added that a rise in the number of patients admitted to hospitals and deaths in all parts of Oman forced the suspension of

commercial activities.

Dr Feryal said until vaccination programmes are fully successful social distancing is the key. It will "help individuals stay healthy and also break the chain of transmission" - giving more vulnerable populations a fighting chance of surviving the pandemic.

"Anti-vaccination campaigns pose a great challenge as some negative videos advising against vaccination tend to spread among the population. Some people believe them more than what officials and experts might say in favour of vaccines," Dr Faryal said.

427 new cases

The Ministry of Health (MoH) on Tuesday announced 427 new cases of COVID-19, taking the total to 144,831. The number of deaths reported during the same time is three. The number of those who have recovered also increased by 321.

'The number of recoveries has increased to 135,005 while the number of deaths has reached 1,597,' an MoH statement said, adding the rate of recovery now stood at 93.2 per cent.

As of Tuesday, a total of 210 patients were admitted in health institutions with 75 in ICU.

New platform to facilitate institutional isolation

Our Correspondent
Muscat

In its ongoing efforts to curb the spread of COVID-19 and prevent fraud, the Ministry of Social Development (MoSD) has signed an agreement with eMushrif to create an electronic platform called 'Sahala'.

The platform aims to achieve the highest level of safety, limit the spread of infection and verify information of travellers to prevent fraud. It also aims to assist travellers coming to the sultanate with institutional quarantine procedures and provide



the necessary public safety guidelines.

H E Sheikh Rashid bin Ahmed al Shamsi, Undersecretary in MoSD and head of the Relief and

Shelter Sector, informed that the platform will be launched soon.

"It will facilitate the choice of hotels for travellers arriving in the sultanate through airports.

GCC health officials discuss possibility of mandatory vaccination

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The health undersecretaries of the GCC countries on Tuesday met on a digital platform to discuss the possibilities of making COVID-19 vaccination mandatory, besides the other issues related to the pandemic.

According to a ministry statement, the GCC Undersecretaries of Health held their 15th virtual meeting to discuss several matters related to the COVID-19 pandemic, "including institutional quarantine manual, the possibility of mandatory vaccination, as well private sector engagement in disseminating vaccination knowledge".

H E Dr Mohammed bin Saif al Hosni, Oman's Undersecretary



for Health Affairs, attended the meeting along with a number of senior officials from the ministry, the statement added.

The senior officials reviewed the current pandemic situation in

the GCC and discussed at length actions taken by each country in the ever-changing scenario, besides discussing proposals presented for upcoming phase.

The meeting further reviewed

updates on COVID-19 vaccines and distribution mechanisms of each country, in addition to the importance of exchanging information in the vaccination domain,' the statement said.

platform will give travellers access to the instructions issued by the Ministry of Health, and procedures in the registration process for hotel reservations.

Speaking to *Muscat Daily*, Hamoud bin Mohammed al Mundhiri, from the Relief and Shelter Sector, said, "Every traveller wears a bracelet and the platform helps track him throughout the quarantine period."

He added that starting from February 15 to March 8, a total of 15,863 individuals registered for institutional quarantine in 461 approved centres. Of these, 12,063 are still in quarantine.

'Gulf COVID-19 Vaccines Guide was also discussed and previous proposals and applications of countries were further reviewed,' it added.

The GCC health undersecretaries commended the significant efforts of health workers as well as their tangible contribution in mitigating the spread of the virus.

The undersecretaries urged upon all GCC citizens and residents to adhere fully to the preventive measures such as wearing masks, avoiding gatherings, maintaining physical distance and hand hygiene. They further stressed the importance of taking the information from reliable sources and not to pay attention to rumours and unofficial social media platforms.

Board of Directors' Report for the year ended 31 December 2020

Dear Shareholders,
On behalf of the Board of Directors, I would like to present your Bank's full year financial results for 2020.

Performance Summary

Our performance shows a net loss of RO8.2 M for the year ended 31 December 2020 compared with a net profit of RO29.3 M for 2019. This has been driven mainly by the increase in the Expected Credit Losses (ECL) and other credit impairment charges, reflecting the challenging economic environment following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and the drop in the oil price, lower revenues impacted by the low interest rate environment, and an impairment charge on our non-financial assets. While we have seen a relaxation relating to the movement of people and the opening of economic activity, we will continue to monitor the situation in 2021, especially in the light of recent concerns about new coronavirus variants as the rollout of the COVID-19 vaccine continues in various parts of the world.

Net interest income was down 11.1% to RO53.8 M for the year compared with RO60.5 M for the same period in 2019. Interest income was impacted negatively by the low interest rate environment and the upward trend in cost of deposits, which has resulted in a margin squeeze. Net fee income was RO8.1 M for the period ended 31 December 2020 compared with RO11.0 M for the same period in 2019 as the impact of the economic slowdown hit the launch of new projects and also impacted the cards business as spending was reduced.

Net Trading income was down 38.6% to RO8.9 M compared with RO14.5 M for the same period in 2019, owing largely to low interest rates and a decrease in the commercial surplus.

A net charge of RO18.0 M has been reported for the Bank's ECL and other credit impairment charges compared with a net charge of RO3.4 M for the same period last year. Wholesale's ECL were up RO8.7 M while Retail's ECL were up RO5.9 M. As explained above, the incremental ECL largely reflected the change in key macro-economic variables due to the outbreak of COVID-19. Operating expenses rose by 25.8% to RO61.0 M compared with RO48.5 M for 2019 owing to a RO12.7 M impairment of non-financial assets, as stipulated by International Accounting Standard (IAS) 36 'Impairment of Assets'. This impairment charge reflected the deterioration in the future outlook and macroeconomic conditions.

Loans and advances to customers decreased by 9.3% to RO1,363.6 M compared with RO1,502.7 M as at 31 December 2019.

Customer deposits decreased by 8.0% to RO1,905.8 M compared with 2019 and, as intended, our liquidity remains the strongest in the market, as evidenced by an Advances to Deposit ratio (ADR) of 71.6% at the end of 2020. HBON's Capital Adequacy Ratio (CAR) stood at 20.9% for the year ended 31 December 2020 compared with 18.8% as at 31 December 2019.

Considering the unprecedented circumstances and the financial performance, the Board of Directors has not proposed a cash dividend for 2020.

Delivering the best customer experience

In 2020, our Wealth & Personal Banking business (WPB) launched several campaigns targeting customer growth in the premium segment of the market. These included a fresh Mandoos scheme and "Step-up" savings account campaign. This was supplemented by the launch of an Employee Benefit Solutions (EBS) programme for our commercial and global banking relationship clients.

We also laid the foundation for some of the key initiatives aimed to place us back on a growth trajectory in 2021, with the focus on acquiring new customers and increasing our share of wallet in the market. This is backed up by competitive rates on loans and deepening the relationship with our top corporates under the EBS programme.

We rolled out a fresh customer experience improvement programme, 'Smile', covering the Bank's entire staff population, which will help improve the customer focus of all of our staff from frontline to back-end processing.

On the Digital front, we launched a new mobile App at the beginning of the year, and we released the Mobile Payment Clearing and Switching System (MPCSS). We have also installed 57 new state of the art ATMs to provide an improved customer journey that offers greater functionality to our customers. On the wholesale side of the business, we worked with our colleagues in HSBC Singapore to support the Asian subsidiary of OQ with another successful Blockchain trade finance pilot. We introduced several enhancements to our digital platforms, including the launch of the HSBCnet Mobile App, Trade

Transaction Tracker and Get Rate. This has further demonstrated our capability to support Omani clients with digitising their cash management, trade finance and FX needs both in Oman and abroad.

We were also very proud to receive two awards from Euromoney. The first was the Best Investment Bank in Oman at the 2020 Euromoney Middle East Awards for Excellence, and the second was the Best Cash Management Bank in the Sultanate of Oman for the ninth consecutive year as voted for by corporates.

Our COVID-19 relief measures

We worked hard to maintain seamless support and services to our customers despite the challenges. Our contingency measures ensured that critical processes continued to be maintained by leveraging our split-site operations, work transfer arrangements and extensive homeworking capabilities. Through our digital channels, our customers were able to continue to manage their accounts and perform banking transactions from home using Online Banking, the HSBC Mobile Banking App, or Phone Banking.

For our corporate clients, the implementation of Message Center (a self-service tool within HSBCnet) has helped our corporate clients activate additional value-added services on HSBCnet, including Internet Trade Services (ITS) and payment entitlements, without the need to send physical documents to the Bank.

We have also established relief measures for our retail and wholesale customers who have been impacted by COVID-19 including the deferring loan instalments and fee waivers.

Investing in our people and community

We remain committed to supporting the national people agenda and are proud to have maintained an Omanisation rate of 93% as at 31 December 2020, which is ahead of the 90% target set by the Central Bank of Oman (CBO). At the senior management level, the Omanisation rate is 80%, which is in line with CBO's threshold.

We continued to invest in our staff training programmes, and initiated a bank-wide 'Future Skills' programme in November 2020 to ensure that we are creating a Bank that is fit for the future by building the skills our employees need for the Bank to thrive. Staff engaged with experts on five strategic themes of Curiosity, Connectivity, Creativity, Resilience and Growth Mindset. As part of our Corporate Sustainability commitment, and in coordination with charitable organisations such as Dar Al Atta and the Oman Charitable Organization, we made contributions to a range of projects in the Sultanate to help underprivileged families who had been impacted by COVID-19.

The disbursements helped provide relief and recovery to individuals and families impacted by COVID-19, as well as helping hospital workers to combat the virus. We also supported the Directorate General of Health in Muscat in conducting deep cleaning and disinfection of Al Amirat and Boushar Health Centers.

This followed the HSBC Group's announcement of a USD25m COVID-19 charitable fund to support the international medical response, protect vulnerable people and ensure food security.

Conclusion

With the Government's heightened focus on fiscal reform and diversification of the economy, we remain positive about the opportunities for the year ahead. The 2021 budget and the 10th Five-Year plan set out bold measures to drive fiscal sustainability. We are confident that HSBC Oman is well positioned to contribute to the country achieving its long-term growth objectives. We also remain committed to continuing to deliver the level of service and support our customers expect from us.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I would like to thank all our customers, staff and management for their commitment and dedication in what has been a year of unprecedented challenge. Special thanks also go to the CBO and the Capital Market Authority for their continued support and guidance. In closing, I wish to express our deepest appreciation to His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tariq. We offer our full support as His Majesty continues to lead the Sultanate to further prosperity and development.

Sir Sherard Cowper-Coles
Chairman

Statement of comprehensive income for the year ended 31 December

	2020	2019
	RO'000	RO'000
Interest income	70,153	76,788
Interest expense	(16,379)	(16,247)
Net interest income	53,774	60,541
Fee income	11,484	14,870
Fee expense	(3,416)	(3,908)
Net fee income	8,068	10,962
Net trading income	8,918	14,498
Changes in fair value of financial investments measured at Fair Value Through Profit and Loss (FVTPL)	(105)	(33)
Dividend income	11	19
Other operating income	(588)	613
Net operating income before loan impairment charges and other credit provisions	70,078	86,600
Change in expected credit losses and other credit impairment charges	(17,978)	(3,427)
Net operating income	52,100	83,173
Employee compensation and benefits	(22,575)	(23,052)
General and administrative expenses	(23,014)	(21,729)
Depreciation and impairment of property, equipment and right-of-use assets	(11,096)	(2,484)
Amortisation and impairment of intangible assets	(4,303)	(1,211)
Total operating expenses	(60,988)	(48,476)
(Loss) / profit before tax	(8,888)	34,697
Tax expense	677	(5,413)
(Loss) / profit for the year	(8,211)	29,284
Other comprehensive income		
Items that may be reclassified subsequently to profit or loss		
Debt instruments at Fair Value Through Other Comprehensive Income (FVOCI)		
Fair value gain	423	927
Expected credit losses recognised in income statement	713	19
Income tax	(64)	(139)
	1,072	807
Items that will not be reclassified subsequently to profit or loss		
Remeasurement of defined benefit liability	36	63
Other comprehensive income for the year - net of tax	1,108	870
Total comprehensive (loss) / income for the year	(7,103)	30,154
(Loss) / earnings per share – basic and diluted	RO(0.004)	RO0.015

Statement of financial position as at 31 December

	2020	2019
	RO'000	RO'000
Assets		
Cash and balances with central bank	220,485	281,186
Due from banks	227,448	205,595
Loans and advances to customers - net	1,363,582	1,502,734
Financial investments	483,569	488,085
Other assets	36,610	45,099
Intangible assets	-	1,572
Property and equipment	19,488	23,648
Deferred tax assets	4,405	2,078
Total assets	2,355,587	2,549,997
Liabilities and equity		
Liabilities		
Due to banks	63,774	54,754
Deposits from customers	1,905,771	2,071,457
Other liabilities	54,354	64,407
Current tax liabilities	4,202	7,387
Total liabilities	2,028,101	2,198,005
Equity		
Share capital	200,031	200,031
Legal reserve	45,944	45,944
FVOCI reserve	1,689	617
Retained earnings	79,822	105,400
Net equity	327,486	351,992
Total liabilities and equity	2,355,587	2,549,997
Net assets per share – RO	RO0.164	RO0.176
Off-balance sheet items:		
Contingent liabilities and commitments		
- Documentary credits	82,622	97,014
- Guarantees and performance bonds	510,843	535,007
- Others	1,001,567	1,093,526
	1,595,032	1,725,547

The above annual financial results for the year ended 31 December 2020 are subject to the approval of the shareholders of the bank.



رمضان كريم Ramadan Kareem

Mar 11 - Mar 24, 2021

10PCS R.O. 6.750 Sadia Chicken 10X1000gm	20KG R.O. 7.995 Al Madinah Basmati Rice 20KG	1SET R.O. 2.495 Rahma Extra Virgin Olive Oil 750ml+250ml	48PCS R.O. 6.500 Al Hamra Evaporated Milk 48x170ml	
12PCS R.O. 0.950 UAE Oasis Water 12x1.5ltr	2.25KG R.O. 3.995 Anchor Milk Powder 2.25kg	2KG R.O. 3.995 Tang Orange 2kg	5KG R.O. 4.550 Dates Khalas Bucket 5kg	2PCS R.O. 0.725 Goody-Pasta penne lisce 2x500gm
R.O. 1.250 Vimto Cardial Syrup 710ml (Also Available In Box At R.O 14.990)	4PCS R.O. 1.300 Almarai UHT Milk Full Fat 4x1ltr	2PCS R.O. 2.950 Noor sunflower oil 2x1.5ltr	2PCS R.O. 2.950 Omo Active Detergent Powder 2x2.5kg	R.O. 6.200 Pampers Act Baby
7PCS R.O. 14.990 Prestige 7 Pc Value Pack Set		R.O. 9.990 Nayasa Casserole Ambrosia 3s 2.5,3.5,5l		R.O. 3.900 Asian Casserole Olympic 6000ml
These Items Available In Azaiha, Barka Only R.O. 23.900 GEEPAS Microwave Oven Manual 20 L + Dry Iron		R.O. 149.900 GEEPAS 90x60 5 Gas Cooking Range + Dry Iron		R.O. 179.900 1.5 Ton R410 GAS 7.5 ★ Rating HOT & COOL Super General Split AC

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TERMS AND CONDITIONS APPLIED

Oman takes part in GCC economic authority meet



Muscat - A high-profile virtual meeting of the GCC Economic and Development Affairs Authority was held on Tuesday with the participation of representatives from the ministries of Economy and Finance, and the private sector in the GCC countries.

As per a statement, the meeting discussed a number of issues including the Gulf Customs Union, the Unified GCC Market and the initiatives to reach economic unity among the GCC

states by 2025.

The meeting came in response to the recommendations of the GCC Ministers of Finance and Economy, members of the Permanent Ministerial Preparatory Committee of the Supreme Commission for Economic and Development Affairs to hold meetings for the under-secretaries to evaluate the initiatives and projects listed in the roadmap for the GCC economic unity.

The sultanate’s delegation headed by H E Dr Nasser bin Rashid al Mawali, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Economy, included representatives from the Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, Ministry of Finance, and the Royal Oman Police represented by the Directorate General of Customs.

New fish market in Seeb nearing completion

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The construction of the new fish market in the wilayat of Seeb has reached its final stage, said Ibrahim bin Abdullah al Qurtubi, director of the Fisheries Development Department in Seeb.

As part of its effort to support the fisheries sector and fishermen, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources (MAFWR) is currently working on shifting to the new fish market, which is coming up with better infrastructure and other facilities, the official said.

“The construction of the market, inside the fishing port, is nearing completion,” Qurtubi said, adding that the new establishment “will provide facilities for a number of traditional professions related to fish trade”.

“The new market - consisting of two floors - offers several service facilities, the most prominent ones being a spacious daily auction hall, numerous retail places and fish shops,” he said.



“The fishing port, which has an area of 1,278,868sqm, contains a number of government and service facilities, including the Fish Quality Control Department of MAFWR, maintenance workshops for the engines of

boats and ships, three floating berths - each being 35m in length - and an 145m long fixed berth for unloading of fish.”

According to the ministry, the wilayat of Seeb has around 1,500 fishermen and 600 fishing boats.

More Bags for Less: Oman Air removes ‘two bags’ limit

Muscat - In its ongoing commitment to provide guests with optimal flexibility, Oman Air has introduced a revised 'Excess Baggage Policy'.

By replacing its existing ‘extra

bag’ fee with a new weight-based fee, the airline now effectively offers ‘More Bags for Less’ to passengers who require more baggage allowance.

As per a statement, previ-

ously, economy class passengers (excluding Super Saver) were allowed two bags and a total of 30kg, and passengers exceeding the 30kg were required to pay a fixed excess bag fee. While the

revised policy maintains the 30kg free baggage allowance, it differs in the fact that passengers are no longer limited to two bags and excess fees are calculated based on 5kg weight increments.

NATIONAL MINERAL WATER COMPANY (SAOG)

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DIRECTOR'S REPORT 04/03/2021

Dear Shareholders,
On behalf of the Board of Directors , I am pleased to present the Annual Report on the activities and performance of your company for the financial year ended 31st December 2020.

Review of Operations:
The consolidated financial statements include the results and the financial position of the Parent company and its subsidiary Valuedcal Trading LLC, for the twelve months ended 31st December 2020 (together referred to as the Group).

Sales and Operational Performance:
The Parent Company's sales for the twelve months ended 31st December 2020 were RO 7,211,741 compared to RO 6,908,600 in the previous year during the same period.
The parent company's operating profit for the twelve months ended 31st December 2020 was RO 147,499. This compares with the operating profit of RO 95,572 for the twelve months ended 31st December 2019.
The net sales of the group for the twelve months ended 31st December 2020 were RO 7,454,007 compared to RO 6,924,861 in the previous year, and its operating profit was RO 149,031 in 2020 compared to a profit of RO 95,275 in 2019 for the same period.

Subsidiary Company:
Valuedcal Trading LLC (VDT): The company trades in manufactured bottle preforms.

Future Outlook
Demand for the company's core products continue to grow and a number of initiatives for improved profitability in the parent company are being considered . Management has identified that the main drivers for change are 'ine creased output ' and ' greater efficiency ' with this in mind, management is confident that the overall profitability of the business will continue to grow.

Human Resources
Your company is currently employing 40% Omani Staff and will continue to support this initiative of employing more Omanis. Your company recognizes the importance of human asset to achieve its short term and long term objectives.

Internal Control System
The board continues to review the effectiveness of the existing internal control systems and considers the controls to be adequate for the size and nature of the business operations.

Corporate Governance Code
The company has complied with CMA directives on the Corporate Governance Code. A detailed report on compliance with Corporate Governance Code together with the Auditor ' s Report is included in the Annual Report.

Acknowledgement
On bchalf of the Board of Directors, I wish to thank our patrons, cus tomers, bankers and shareholders for all the support they have extended to us during this year. I also take the opportunity to thank the management for their continued efforts in growing the company and delivering another year of profitable performance and extend sincere appreciation for the dedication, loyalty and hard work of all our employees.
We seek your continued support whilst we plan and prepare for future growth and increased company profitability in the company years.
On behalf of the Board of Directors, I would like to express our sincere gratitude to the government for the support extended to the private sector. May God protect his majesty the Sultan and continue to bless him with good health and a long prosperous life.

Chairman
Khalid bin Hamad bin Hamoud Al Busaidi

1) The complete accounts, in either Arabic or English as requested, will be sent by mail to any shareholder within 7 days of written request at the above address.

2) The complete accounts have been uploaded on Website of MSM.

3) Any shareholder who is having incorrect address or not having any address in the company's register or Co. (MDSRC) may approach the registered office to register their correct address. Register maintained by Maintained by Muscat Depository Securities Registration.

SEPARATE AND CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2020 (EXPRESSED IN OMANI RIAL)

	Parent Company		Group	
	2020	2019	2020	2019
ASSETS				
Non-current assets				
Property, plant and equipment	2,756,766	1,690,703	2,757,538	1,691,754
Right-of-use assets	90,732	-	90,732	-
Intangible assets	18,812	-	18,812	-
Investment in a subsidiary	95,000	95,000	-	-
Total non-current assets	2,961,310	1,785,703	2,867,082	1,691,754
Current assets				
Inventories	747,960	887,955	747,960	893,646
Trade and other receivables	2,789,528	3,099,103	2,947,778	3,108,471
Due from related parties	159,009	12,201	16,052	12,186
Cash and bank balances	131,317	103,482	140,714	111,198
Total current assets	3,827,814	4,102,741	3,852,504	4,125,501
Total assets	6,789,124	5,888,444	6,719,586	5,817,255
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES				
Capital and reserves				
Share capital	2,700,304	2,700,304	2,700,304	2,700,304
Share premium	135,169	135,169	135,169	135,169
Legal reserve	478,388	475,680	478,534	475,680
Accumulated losses	(623,664)	(648,038)	(694,733)	(720,416)
Equity attributable to shareholders of the Parent Company	2,690,197	2,663,115	2,619,274	2,590,737
Non-controlling Interest	-	-	1,267	1,190
Total capital and reserves	2,690,197	2,663,115	2,620,541	2,591,927
Non-current liabilities				
Employees' benefit liabilities	349,216	313,712	349,216	313,712
Bank borrowings	816,737	419,528	816,737	419,528
Lease liabilities - non-current	78,785	-	78,785	-
Capital expenditure payable	337,922	-	337,922	-
Total non-current liabilities	1,582,660	733,240	1,582,660	733,240
Current liabilities				
Lease liabilities - current	14,400	-	14,400	-
Trade and other payables	1,114,051	1,272,114	1,114,168	1,272,113
Bank borrowings	1,387,817	1,211,664	1,387,817	1,211,664
Income tax payable	-	8,311	-	8,311
Total current liabilities	2,516,267	2,492,089	2,516,385	2,492,088
Total liabilities	4,098,927	3,225,329	4,099,045	3,225,328
Total equity and liabilities	6,789,124	5,888,444	6,719,586	5,817,255
Net assets per share	0.100	0.099	0.097	0.096

SEPARATE AND CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF PROFIT OR LOSS AND OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2020 (EXPRESSED IN OMANI RIAL)

	Parent Company		Group	
	2020	2019	2020	2019
Revenue	7,211,741	6,908,600	7,454,007	6,924,861
Cost of revenue	(4,591,441)	(4,286,794)	(4,810,612)	(4,297,393)
Gross profit	2,620,300	2,621,806	2,643,395	2,627,468
Other income	999	1,512	999	1,512
Total	2,621,299	2,623,318	2,644,394	2,628,980
Expenses				
Selling and distribution expenses	(1,973,558)	(2,008,387)	(1,984,480)	(2,012,805)
General and administrative expenses	(500,242)	(519,359)	(510,883)	(520,900)
	(2,473,800)	(2,527,746)	(2,495,363)	(2,533,705)
Operating profit for the year	147,499	95,572	149,031	95,275
Finance costs	(102,600)	(73,332)	(102,600)	(73,337)
Provision for expected credit losses on trade receivable	(17,817)	(107,239)	(17,817)	(107,239)
Net profit / (loss) before tax for the year	27,082	(84,999)	28,614	(85,301)
Taxation	-	(8,311)	-	(8,311)
Net profit / (loss) after tax and total comprehensive income / (loss) for the year	27,082	(93,310)	28,614	(93,612)
Net profit / (loss) attributable to:				
Equity holders of the Parent Company	-	-	28,537	(93,612)
Non-controlling interest	-	-	77	(15)
Basic and diluted earnings / (loss) per share attributable to equity holders of the Parent Company	0.001	(0.003)	0.001	(0.003)

SUMMARY OF ASSETS & LIABILITIES of Al Jadeed Exchange LLC

403, 4th Floor, Bank Sohar Building, Al Khuwair, SULTANATE OF OMAN (MONEY CHANGING ESTABLISHMENT) AS AT 31st DECEMBER 2020

	ASSETS		LIABILITIES	
	2020	2019	2020	2019
1. Cash on hand	1,805	2,390	1. Capital and reserve	3,801
2. Deposit with CBO	120	130	2. Borrowings from banks	393
3. Balance due from banks	3,201	2,431	3. Members' account	908
4. Fixed assets	502	563	4. Balance due to branches	-
5. Other assets	693	922	5. Balance due to money changers	412
			6. Loans and advances payable	-
			7. Cheques and drafts issued outstanding	7
			8. Other Liabilities	800
TOTAL	6,321	6,436	TOTAL	6,321

For Al Jadeed Exchange LLC

BDO LLC

C.R. No. 1612581

Members

NATIONAL MINERAL WATER COMPANY (SAOG)

Post Box No. 2740, Ruwi, Postal Code: 112, Sultanate of Oman, Tel: +968 24628900, Fax: +968 24628999, Email: contact@tanufwater.com, Web: www.nmwc.om

Notice and Invitation to attend the Annual General Meeting

The Board of Directors of National Mineral Water Company S.A.O.G (the **Company**) has the pleasure to invite all the Shareholders to attend the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Company scheduled to be held at 5 p.m. on Thursday, 25 March 2021 through the electronic platform for holding General Meetings, which you can login through the website of Muscat Clearing and Depository Company (www.mcd.gov.om); and in the event that quorum was not achieved for the AGM, the second AGM, shall be held at 5 p.m. on Sunday, 28 March 2021 at the same electronic platform above to discuss the following agenda items:

- To consider and approve the report of the Board of Directors about the business of the Company and its financial position for the financial year ended 31 December 2020.
- To consider and approve the Company's Corporate Governance Report for the financial year ended 31 December 2020.
- To consider and approve the Auditors Report about the Company's audited financial statements for the financial year ended 31 December 2020.
- To approve the sitting fees being availed by the members of the Board of Directors and members of the Board's sub-committees for the previous financial year and to fix the sitting fees for the next financial year.
- To notify the general meeting regarding the related parties' transactions during the financial year ended 31 December 2020.
- To notify the AGM of the status of the Company's social responsibilities activities for the financial year ended on 31 December 2020.
- To discuss and carry forward OMR 7,000/- (being the Company's unutilised CSR budget of 2020) and allocate a further amount of OMR 7,000 thereby allocating a total amount of OMR 14,000 to fulfill the company's social responsibilities for the year ending on 31 December 2021.
- To approve the appointment of the statutory auditors for the financial year ending 31 December 2021 and the proposed remuneration.
- To elect a new Board of Directors of the Company. Any person who wishes to be nominated to the Board of Directors of the Company is required to fill in a Director's Nomination Form. Such form can be obtained from the Company or the CMA website. The completed form should be delivered to the Company at least five (5) days prior to the date of the Annual General Meeting (no later than end of business hours on Thursday, 18 March 2021). The candidate must satisfy the Company's board membership requirements.

Only juristic persons may deputize a natural person to attend the AGM and vote on their behalf through the electronic systems, provided that the deputized natural person has an investor number at Muscat Clearing and Depository Company.

Voting on the subject items offered for voting in the agenda starts before a period of not more than 3 days and until the end of the voting process on the meeting's day. If the investor's balance of shares increased or decreased during, his/her voting will be cancelled and they should vote again on the AGM's date.

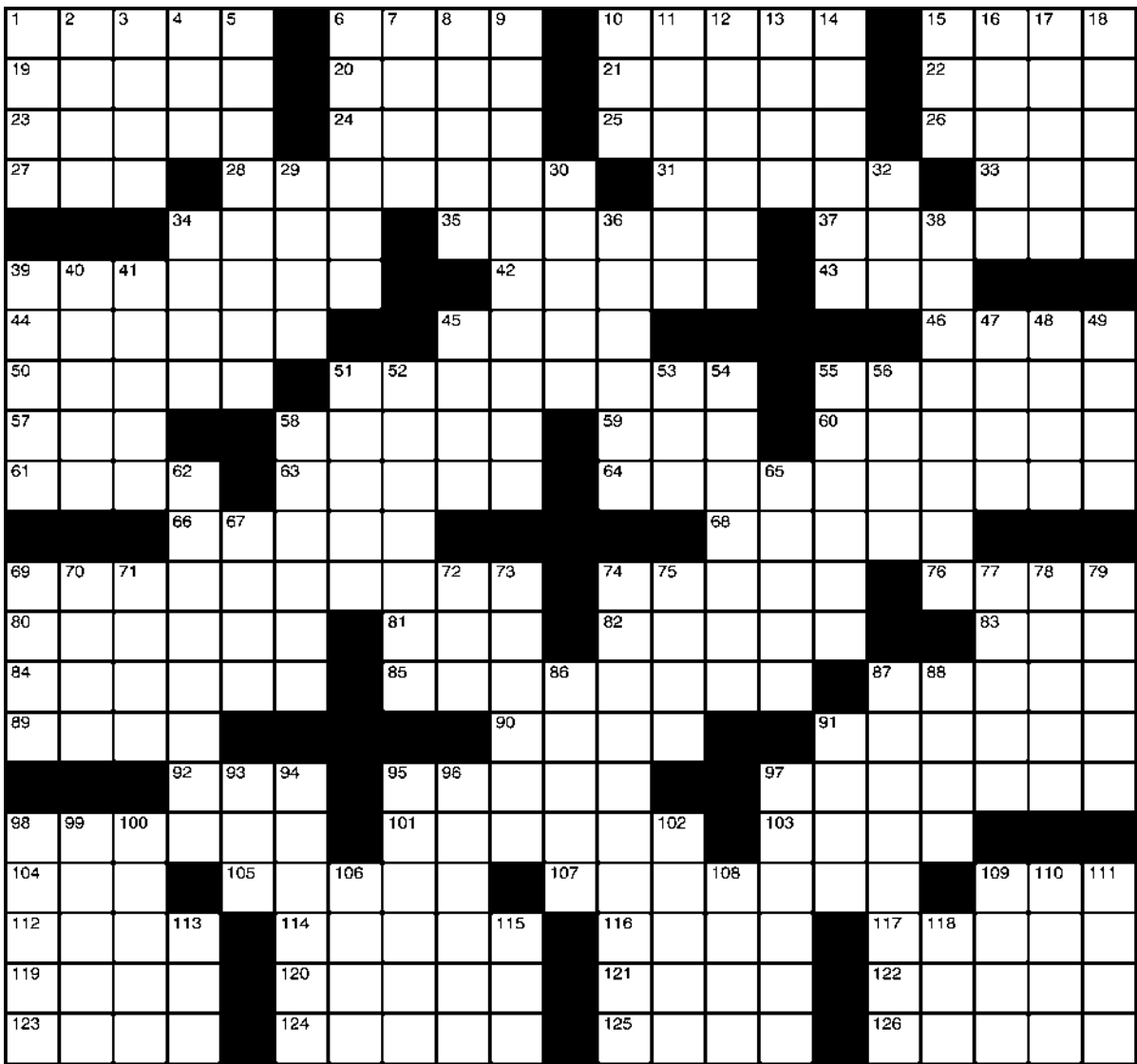
For any queries please contact Jood Al Amri on 96990724 or e-mail at: jood.alamri@dentons.com.

Chairman

Legal Advisor

Auditor

DAILY CROSSWORD



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ACROSS

- 1 Pursued
6 Cellphone signal search
10 French flight
15 Formerly “wild”
19 Typeface
20 ___ May Oliver, actress
21 Ave ___ vale
22 Continuously
23 Shrek and family
24 Masked nocturnal carnivore
25 “Beauty is ___”:
Keats
26 Tube’s inside diameter
27 Aberdeen’s river
28 Scrutinizes
31 Mitigates
33 Kith’s companion
34 Louts
35 Equal in Paris
37 French silver
39 Peter and Harvey
42 Raise spirits
43 High craggy hill
44 Ne’er-do-wells
45 Eros
46 The old ___: man’s nature
50 Earthy materials
51 Source of power
55 St. Francis’ birthplace
57 Corn’s seed

DOWN

- 104 Diamonds: sl.
105 A San Juan Island, WA
107 Noisy sleepers
109 Con’s adversary
112 Attack verbally
114 Patron saint Klaus
116 ___ go bragh
117 AFL
119 Ago
120 Cantilevered window
121 RBI
122 Hair treatment
123 British gun
124 Exigencies
125 Transfer of property
126 Rapiers

DOWN

- 1 Goad
2 Theater box
3 Concerning: L.
4 Netherlands commune
5 Gives up
6 Break in routine
7 Repute
8 Win by ___: close call
9 Union’s adversary
10 ___ crow: take humiliation
11 Downing ___
12 Conformist
13 Three of them retire a side

- 14 Warm over
15 Arachnid’s lair
16 Summon
17 Canary relative
18 Ex-Sen. Lott
29 Newts
30 Wastepile, in solitaire
32 No seating: init.
34 Conform
36 More extensive
38 More sodded
39 Strained into strings: cookery
40 Late UN ambassador Stevenson
41 Fanfare
45 Greek Mars
47 Harrow
48 Continent
49 Look
51 Moses’ mountain
52 Long hair
53 ___ foil: clover family
54 Comes by chance
55 New York’s capital
56 Wit
58 Blessed: archaic
62 Senator Warren
65 Mt. boundary, Europe and Asia
67 Argentine people
69 Unconscious state
70 Source: abbr.
71 Storehouse
72 Best

- 73 Informal male gathering
74 Resemblance to a largeeyed bird of prey
75 Normandy city on the Orne
77 German submarine
78 Pan fry
79 Bacchus’ attendant
86 Evaluation devices
87 “___ Island”:
Stevenson
88 Scan words
91 God of thunder
93 Unit of electrical conductance
94 Individual
95 ‘90s Babies
96 Continued
97 Thirty in Paris
98 Speech defects
99 Fanfare
100 Raise nap
102 Great artery
106 Ministration
108 Iranian coin
109 Long
110 It has edible hips
111 On ___ own: independent
113 Shasta, California: abbr.
115 Gore and Capone
118 ___ in the bud: cut short

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

You could feel a strong magnetic pull toward beautiful things from other cultures. This increase in your aesthetic sensibilities and curiosity is probably a clear signal that it’s time for you to break away from a life that’s too oriented toward facts and figures. Try to step out of your daily routine. Watch a foreign film, eat food from a different culture, or listen to some music.



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

You’re like a mother bear today, ready to pounce on anyone who says a bad word about one of your friends! Your boundless energy is manifesting itself in an interesting way. You aren’t usually combative, but why play nice when the bullies don’t get the message unless you yell it at them? The time for being sweet and collaborative is over, for a little while, anyway.



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

A friendly competition with someone you really like is starting to become a not-so friendly power struggle! This is certainly an unexpected development given the good relationship you two have always had, but that doesn’t mean you can’t overcome it. Declare a truce today and send them an e-mail or text message. Tell them you want to talk things over.



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

Your heart is feeling generous, and it’s telling you to do things because they’re the right thing to do and not because they’re profitable. You’re coming to understand that if you only think about financial gain before getting involved with other people, you’ll ultimately be selling yourself short. Acting selflessly today is very likely to create greater gain down the road.



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

One of your negotiations might feel like it’s going in a negative direction. If you feel like one of the people involved (including you) is about to sacrifice too much, speak up! This applies to any kind of dealings at work, in a relationship, or even in terms of your family obligations. Being balanced and fair isn’t always possible, but it’s still a good thing to aim for.



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

Restriction never feels comfortable, but right now it’s going to feel like even more of a hassle than ever before. You yearn to be free and unencumbered, and any situation that is big on discipline and structure could feel stifling to you. If you can, try to schedule formal events for another day or cancel them altogether. You need to be able to obey your whims.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

One of your friends could become an authority figure in your life, and you need to establish the ground rules before things get complicated. Make sure that the two of you have a serious and honest conversation about how this whole thing is going to work. You could take a big risk with your relationship if you just assume everything will be okay. Get the rules established.



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

One of your current projects is having a more confusing effect on your life than you expected, and you might be feeling like you’re in a fog. But you can gain clarity over whatever is bugging you if you simply ask for some help. There is sure to be someone around who understands what you’re going through or who has perhaps even been through it once themselves.



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

You need to keep an open mind. Try to accept the changes that will happen in your day today. Don’t waste time trying to find out why they’re happening. Just go with the flow and see what the next hour brings. You might not be comfortable with this idea at first, but by the afternoon you’ll begin to get into the groove and enjoy the unexpected twists and turns that your day takes.



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

Talking is the best way to work through whatever you’re confused about, but who do you talk to? One of your co-workers might be the perfect candidate. They know you from dealing with you on a near-daily basis, and they have seen you in some of your victorious moments. They know what you’re capable of, and they’re ready at any moment to remind you what that is.



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

Your enthusiasm for what you believe in is more powerful than ever, but today someone else will be even more enthusiastic about their own pet project or cause. They’ll be so excited about someone or something that you won’t be able to resist soaking up a little bit of their zeal. It’s contagious! This person could be very persuasive in helping you change your way of thinking.



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

When people start throwing blame around, you need to be the voice of authority. Step into the fray and help everyone focus on what needs to be fixed rather on who broke what. Group dynamics are going to be tricky because everyone thinks they’re right, but only one person can guide the decision-making process. You’re going to have to develop a thick skin.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. Vedanthangal Bird Sanctuary at Tamil Nadu has reserves of

- a. wild ass, wolf, nilgai, chinkara
b. important bird sanctuary
c. pantha, chital, sloth bear, wolf
d. elephant, deer, wild boar, crocodile, crangetic dolphin

2. The term of office of a judge of the International Court of Justice is

- a. five years
b. six years
c. nine years
d. ten years

3. Unesco (United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization) was established in

- a. 1919
b. 1957
c. 1945
d. 1946

Answers: 1. b 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

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

BOGGLER

Y	I	I	R
B	E	D	S
U	I	R	S
A	G	A	A

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

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

CAISE	MAIL	ABIANQ	BARIES
APEX	AIN	LAIVIE	SOLAGE
STIRE	SRAREN	TIDITON	
HAG	CIAPTA	INCOURA	GEOUIS
EMPIRITC		SLAG	NOTE
AVAILIS	GAREN	LINGE	NEED
CANS	COLONEL	BOGVEY	
TITLEEO	SODOTI	REAMED	
ALPIERT	ASS	ILITS	DRITVE
EDITOR	BREAMA	EDEN	
TAP	COMMANDER	SIND	SLY
UMPS	NEARAT	BAK	FISH
YEETH	SOB	OIA	AVOIDIS
UNREAL	AOSTIA	TRAMPER	
CAJIO	BARBARA	AMMO	
ORT	SPAN	PARSI	GLAIS
MOON	LIES	ASPLATIN	
ADMIRAL	HORNBLOWE	FEAR	
NEATEN	ARTIEL	BIG	MAINE
INTEND	NERVE	TRA	AISTA
STONE	DREID	SEL	DYED

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



Liverpool seek solace in Europe but Leipzig loom

London, UK - Liverpool have a rich history of turning on the style in Europe to make up for disappointing domestic form, but even a 2-0 first-leg lead over RB Leipzig in their Champions League last-16 tie looks precarious.

Jürgen Klopp's stumbling English champions will approach Wednesday's second leg with trepidation - knowing they will not even be at Anfield for the 'home' match.

Liverpool's dramatic exploits in European competition over the years have been fuelled by the colour, noise and energy provided by fans packed into their famous old stadium.

But after a year of largely empty stadiums as a result of the coronavirus, Anfield's fear factor has vanished.

Klopp's men had been unbeaten in 68 English Premier League games at home until January, but they have now lost a club-record six in a row.

Liverpool's 'home' match against Leipzig will be played in the Puskas Arena in Budapest as a result of COVID-19 travel restrictions, the same stadium that hosted the first-leg.

European football's governing body UEFA is determined that the show must go on - fearful of taking another sharp economic hit.

Without their fans at Anfield, Liverpool's Premier League title defence has collapsed.

Sunday's 1-0 defeat by relegation-threatened Fulham left them eighth in the table.

Injuries have played a major role in their dramatic decline, which has left them struggling



Liverpool players train ahead of their round-of-16 second-leg match against RB Leipzig, which will be held in Budapest, Hungary, on Wednesday

just to qualify for next season's Champions League.

Former Liverpool defender Jamie Carragher labelled the current squad 'mentality midgets' - in sharp contrast to the 'mentality monsters' moniker previously used by Klopp to describe his team.

Klopp has pointed to the unavailability through injury of captain Jordan Henderson and Virgil van Dijk as reasons for a loss of leadership.

"We obviously have a lot of players who stand for mentality not on the pitch in the moment," said the Liverpool boss.

But questions are beginning to be asked about his ability to summon a response from his players now the malaise has set in. "The next game is in a different competition where we

didn't do too bad so far," said the German. "If we can go through, which is not guaranteed, then that could give confidence."

Klopp's lack of faith that his men can defend a 2-0 lead is revealing, with Leipzig smelling blood.

Julian Nagelsmann's men are flying on the back of six straight Bundesliga wins, threatening Bayern Munich's stranglehold on German football. Leipzig dumped Tottenham out at this stage of the competition last year and Manchester United in the group stage this season.

Liverpool's scalp would be the biggest given their record in the Champions League under Klopp.

But as this season has clearly shown, the spluttering Reds are no longer the formidable force they were just a year ago.

'Leipzig still underdogs'

Nagelsmann, however, insists his side remain underdogs.

"We are heading into the game with the necessary humility and respect," Nagelsmann said on Tuesday.

He added that Liverpool's miserable run of six defeats from their last seven league games had no bearing on Leipzig's chances in the Champions League.

"We're not interested in Liverpool's league results, because we are losing this tie at the moment. We are the challengers, not the favourites," said the 33 year old Leipzig coach.

Nagelsmann added that he backed Liverpool to bounce back under fellow German boss Jur-



gen Klopp. "It's a hard phase for them, but they are still a world-class team with a world-class coach," said Nagelsmann.

"Jurgen has already mastered a few crises in his career," he added.

AFP

'Remontada' repeat unlikely but Barca can regain dignity

Madrid, Spain - "Let's go to Paris and see if we can pull off a comeback," shouted Joan Laporta, the cheers rebounding around the room as he and his team celebrated his election on Sunday as Barcelona's new president. Laporta was imagining the kind of result against Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) on Wednesday that an incoming club president could only dream of.

Barca will carry a 1-4 deficit into the second-leg and not only that but memories fresh of a hiding at the Camp Nou, a 45-minute whirlwind when Kylian Mbappe ran and ran, and PSG ran riot. The gulf in class, not just the score, meant nobody was talking up a repeat of the famous 'remontada' of 2017 in the return game, least of all Barcelona's coach and players.

"I don't know, there is one leg left. It will be very difficult, we all

know that," said Frenkie de Jong moments after full time, barely able to find the energy to speak.

"There is always another match," said coach Ronald Koeman. "But after a 1-4 at home I'm not going to lie to you, there is very little chance."

"Maybe I'm just more realistic than other people," said Koeman.

"Let's be realistic," says Joan Bertran, president of Barca fan group Penya Anguera.

"For Barca fans, this last-16 tie is basically already lost. Barca can win in Paris maybe 2-0, 3-1 at best but to score four without conceding any? It's practically impossible."

Yet perhaps that is all they need - any victory at all, a positive performance even - to sustain the current incline ahead of the final two months of the season.

AFP

PSG's Neymar ruled out for Barcelona tie

Paris, France - Neymar will not be available for Paris Saint-Germain's Champions League decider with Barcelona after failing to shake off a thigh injury, the French champions said on Tuesday.

In a statement, PSG said that Brazil forward Neymar 'will continue his individual training', saying that a new assessment would be made 'in the coming days'.

The 29 year old had begun training with the squad again

last week but will not return in time for Wednesday's last-16, second-leg clash with his former club at the Parc des Princes.

Neymar has been out of action since mid-February after picking up the thigh injury in PSG's French Cup victory over Caen.

The injury meant he also missed the first-leg at the Camp Nou, which PSG comfortably won 4-1.

AFP



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Derek McInnes

Aberdeen part ways with boss McInnes

Glasgow, UK - Aberdeen manager Derek McInnes left the Scottish Premiership club on Monday after eight years in charge. McInnes departed after a run of just two wins in ten matches left fourth placed Aberdeen in danger of missing out on a European place.

Aberdeen chairman Dave Cormack claimed the decision was made by mutual consent despite reports McInnes had been sacked. "Derek and I reviewed where we were and agreed that this was the right time for him to step down," Cormack said.

McInnes took over in 2013 and led Aberdeen to their first silverware in two decades the fol-

lowing year when they beat Inverness on penalties to win the Scottish League Cup.

He steered the Dons to four second-placed finishes and was almost lured away from Pittodrie when both Rangers and Sunderland were linked with him in 2017.

But the pressure mounted on former Bristol City boss McInnes after a run of poor displays culminated in Saturday's goalless draw against Hamilton.

Aberdeen will be led through their remaining six league games by an interim coaching team of Paul Sheerin, Barry Robson and Neil Simpson.

AFP

Fans likely to be barred from Olympic torch relay start

Tokyo, Japan - The starting ceremony for this month's Olympic torch relay will likely be held without spectators, a Japanese newspaper reported on Tuesday, but fans will still be able to line the route.

The Yomiuri Shimbun daily reported that organisers feared crowding at the March 25 event in Fukushima, and would probably bar the 3,000 spectators initially planned.

A spokesman for Tokyo 2020 organisers would say only that 'details of the (relay) Grand Start are still under discussion'.

The organisers have already laid out strict rules for the virus-delayed, nationwide relay, which was called off in 2020 after the historic decision to postpone the Games by a year.

Cheering along the relay route will be strictly banned, and people are asked to only attend sections near their homes and avoid crowding.

Mask-wearing will be mandatory, and spectators are

A file photo dated March 24, 2020 shows the 2020 Olympic flame being displayed outside Fukushima railway station in Fukushima Prefecture

asked to offer 'support with applause and by using distributed goods rather than shouting or cheering'.

Portions of the relay could also be suspended if there is overcrowding. Organisers are battling persistent doubts about whether the Games can be held

safely this summer and have unveiled a rulebook with various virus countermeasures.

They are set to decide this month whether foreign fans will be able to attend, with limits on overall spectator numbers to be set next month.

AFP

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C.R. No.: 1736545/2

IPL 2021: Ganguly hints at no crowds for entire event

Mumbai, India - Will the entire 2021 IPL be played behind closed doors? BCCI president Sourav Ganguly has hinted that the option cannot be ruled out, saying allowing crowds into the venues could pose a potential 'risk', something a 'huge' tournament like the IPL can't fancy.

While announcing the IPL schedule on Sunday, the BCCI secretary Jay Shah said in a media release that an unspecified segment of initial half of the IPL will be played behind closed doors.

The BCCI's cautious move for the IPL is in contrast to it allowing both Chennai and Ahmedabad venues being filled up to 50% capacity for the final three matches of the four-Test series against England which ended last week-end.

Ganguly pointed out that there was a marked difference between hosting the IPL, an eight-team event, compared to a bilateral series.

"Don't know yet, depends on the situation," Ganguly told *India Today TV* channel on Monday.

"It's [IPL] slightly different than a bilateral [series]. If you open up to crowds, there are teams playing in middle, there are teams practising outside as well. Lot of these stadiums have practice pitches outside, and teams practice there because they play every day. So to open it up to crowds, you expect them to get closer to the practicing teams. So that could be a bit of a risk."

This is the second time that the IPL is being played amid the pandemic.

Ganguly said that the BCCI had adopted a similar policy even in 2020 when the IPL had been played without crowds in the UAE.

"Dubai also was the same: we



started closed doors and expected to open out to the crowds, but since it went so well, we didn't take the risk of having crowds back, so we'll see."

As explained previously, one big reason the BCCI wants to have an incident-free IPL is because India will be hosting the 16-team men's ICC T20 World Cup, scheduled to begin late October with the final on November 14.

The ICC has not yet finalised the venues and the schedule for the T20 World Cup, but its chief executive officer Manu Sawhney recently said the global body will be monitoring closely



the T20 events like IPL before finalising the protocols.

This time the IPL has shortlisted six venues - Chennai, Bengaluru, Kolkata, Mumbai, Delhi and Ahmedabad - for the 52-day tournament comprising

It's [IPL] slightly different than a bilateral [series]. If you open up to crowds, there are teams playing in middle, there are teams practising outside as well.

Lot of these stadiums have practice pitches outside, and teams practice there because they play every day

SOURAV GANGULY



said. "So there will be three flights maximum for every team, hopefully we'll manage. Because, see, with the England tour, India have gone to Chennai, Ahmedabad and will go to Pune. And also the domestic teams [would've travelled to a couple of venues - one for group stages and another for knockouts]. We're trying to do it that way only. Hopefully it'll be fine, the numbers are much less, it's a lot better but fingers crossed.

It's a huge tournament. The BCCI did it successfully in Dubai and hopefully we'll be able to get through this time as well."

Cricinfo

WTC final to be played at Southampton: BCCI chief

New Delhi, India - The World Test Championship (WTC) final between India and New Zealand in June has been moved from Lord's to Southampton because of the pandemic, Indian cricket chief Sourav Ganguly said. The inaugural championship's final had long been planned for Lord's, known as the 'home of cricket', in London.

But Ganguly told Indian media that Southampton's Ageas Bowl was preferred because the venue has a built-in hotel. The date of the final has not yet been announced. "I'm looking forward to attending the World Test Championship final between India and New Zealand in Southampton," the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) president said.

"It was decided long time ago. Due to Covid and they (in Southampton) have the hotel absolutely close," he told the *India Today TV* channel late on Monday.

"When England resumed play after Covid, they had a lot of matches in Southampton due to the same reason."

England played all their home Tests last year in biosecure 'bubble' conditions at Southampton and Manchester's Old Trafford ground, which also has hotel facilities.

The World Test Championship was initially launched in 2019 but had to be drastically changed after the coronavirus crisis erupted last year, forcing the cancellation of several tours.

India confirmed their place in the final last week by beating England 3-1 in their Test series.

Cricinfo

Williamson ruled out of Bangladesh ODI series

Wellington, New Zealand - New Zealand captain Kane Williamson has been ruled out of the ODI series against Bangladesh due to an elbow injury. The ODI series starts on March 20.

The small tear in his left elbow tendon has been troubling Williamson in the second half of the season and it has reached a point where he needs to take some time out.

Williamson made one significant score in the T20I series against Australia, 53 in the second game in Dunedin, but fell for single-figures in the last three matches. It was already likely that Williamson would miss the T20I series against Bangladesh due to his commitments at the IPL, a tournament coach Gary Stead still expected him to be available for.

"Kane loves playing for his country - so it hasn't been an easy decision to step back," Stead said. "We've got a huge year of cricket ahead with an England Test tour and ICC World Test Championship Final first up in May and June, and we want to make sure we have Kane fit and firing for that."

Williamson's recovery timeline, which is due to see him aim to start batting again in 10-12 days, is expected to fit with the IPL which starts on April 9.

Cricinfo

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CBO ISSUES RO162MN BILLS
The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) has issued treasury bills worth RO162mn for a maturity of 91 days, from today until June 9

BUSINESS

Chairman's Report



Dear Shareholders,

On behalf of the Board of Directors, it is my pleasure to present the financial statements of Ahli Bank for the year ended 31 December 2020.

Oman's banking sector has always been evolving, constantly adopting to the changes in the global financial services sector's dynamic landscape. With this comes the adoption of new technologies and paradigm shift in client offerings. The recent and ongoing shift was further accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has disrupted current operations, systems, and ways of doing business and has forced the sector to quickly innovate and fully embrace the digital transformation happening in almost all the sectors.

In order to continue to serve its clients, on the back of the government's objectives to enhance the banking sector's capabilities and capacities to support the economy, the Central Bank of Oman (CBO) is working to enable the sector and its stakeholders to reap the benefits of greater technological usage and innovation.

Despite the current economic challenges posed by COVID-19, Ahli Bank has successfully completed 2020 with a steady and strong performance in terms of asset growth and other key financial indicators. This is the result of the implementation of several initiatives targeted at its valuable clients and customers. The Bank looks forward to sustaining this growth momentum in 2021.

In its 13 years of service and more so during these challenging times, Ahli Bank has been swift in adopting new modes of service delivery and technologies and continuously developing its products and services to serve the market more effectively and efficiently. Along with this, it has employed sustainable business practices, balancing growth with moral and social responsibilities.

It boasts of several milestones that have contributed to its eminent position in the market, while continuing to support the growth of the economy by aligning itself with the goals of the Oman Vision 2040 under the wise leadership of His Majesty the Sultan.

Financial Performance

Ahli Bank continues to grow steadily in terms of its asset portfolio and most of its key financial indicators:

	31-Dec-20	31-Dec-19	Growth %
	RO Million		
Total assets	2,702.5	2,518.5	7.3%
Loans & advances and financing, net	2,218.9	2,055.0	8.0%
Customers' deposits	1,924.7	1,711.7	12.4%
Equity	388.4	389.2	-0.2%
Operating income	71.5	69.7	2.6%
Operating expenses	30.1	27.6	9.1%
Profit for the period	24.0	31.0	-22.6%

Amid the exceptional circumstances, the Bank's total assets grew by 7.3 per cent in 2020, reaching RO2.70 billion, compared to RO2.51 billion in 2019. Customer deposits went up by a whopping 12.4 per cent to reach RO1.92 billion compared to RO1.71 billion. Loans and advances and financing, net grew by 8 per cent, reaching RO 2.21 billion. The Bank's operating income increased by 2.6 per cent, reaching RO71.50 million in 2020. Operating expenses increased by 9.1 per cent, while the profit for the period was lower by 22.6 per cent, largely due to the pandemic-related slowdown and additional impairment charges on account of the prevailing operating environment due to the COVID-19 impact.

Highlights and Key Milestones

Ahli Bank continues its robust and prudent growth strategy and remains focused on high-quality assets and well-managed liquidity. During the year

2020, the bank donated RO1million to support the Sultanate's efforts to mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ahli Bank has ensured organizational resilience and continuity of business services during this time through its various digital and remote banking assets and a greater focus on the retail banking segment. The Bank is continuing to expand its branch network across the Sultanate, including Ahli Islamic, in line with its customer-first approach.

Ahli Bank recently added to its product and services portfolio with the new youth account, "MyChoice," and the retiree segment account, "Istqrar." It has also made significant progress in building its retail and corporate business lines by funding both small and large-scale projects.

The 2020 Wafra and Qitaf prizes included more categories and draws than in previous years, targeting a wider range of customers across the Bank's branch network in the Sultanate.

Ahli Bank's commitment to providing outstanding services has resulted in prestigious awards and accolade to its credit. It won the respected "Best Performing Company" award in the Large Capital category for the third consecutive year at the 10th edition of the Alam Al-Iktisaad Awards and the 'Best Bank-Mid Size' award at the prestigious Oman Banking & Finance Awards 2020.

Corporate Social Responsibility

Ahli Bank's strategic approach to social responsibility is reflected in its efforts to achieve greater sustainable value with the participation of individuals, institutions and society as a whole. In line with its social, ethical values and vision, it undertook numerous initiatives targeting different segments of society over the past year to support various social, educational, health and sports activities in Oman.

Ahli Bank places great value on human capital and considers them as the ambassadors of the brand and the backbone of its various operations. Over the years, it has demonstrated a strong commitment to the enrichment of the youth, paying significant attention to nurturing young Omani talent.

Looking Ahead

Moving forward, the Bank is well-positioned to build further on its marketing excellence and capitalize on new opportunities by continuing to add value for its clients and customers. The 2021 Wafra and Qitaf prize schemes and other initiatives are seen to propel growth.

As the Bank continues its remarkable growth path, it has embarked on the ambitious project of expanding its head office building as a smart and innovative infrastructure, which will contribute towards creating a suitable and stimulating and performance-driven work environment.

Moreover, it will cement its position as a trusted financial partner in Oman, and will continue to make meaningful efforts to achieve financial inclusion, commitment and, most importantly, encourage a savings-oriented lifestyle to fulfill the demands of the changing world.

Acknowledgments

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I would like to thank Ahli Bank's stakeholders for their trust and faith in us. Their support has been instrumental in helping us protect the interests of our customers and retain the confidence of our employees.

The Bank remains true to its pledge to support His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq's goals and vision and contribute towards the advancement of the country's economy.

We share the national agenda for growth and remain supportive to the Government, the Ministry of Health, the Supreme Committee, the Central Bank of Oman, and other regulatory authorities in adhering to the procedures that protect the Sultanate and all its residents.

Finally, I would like to convey our acknowledgement and appreciation to the Bank's Executive Management team and employees for their commitment and dedication to the success that the Bank has achieved so far, especially in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Lastly, but certainly not the least, I would like to thank our customers for their continued loyalty and trust.

Hamdan Ali Nasser Al Hinai
Chairman

Financial Statements

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2020

	2020 RO '000	2019 RO '000
ASSETS		
Cash and balances with Central Bank of Oman	79,020	108,492
Due from banks	46,174	50,276
Loans & advances and financing, net	2,218,897	2,054,986
Investment securities	306,368	258,148
Other assets	29,154	25,431
Property and equipment	22,864	21,194
TOTAL ASSETS	2,702,477	2,518,527
LIABILITIES		
Due to banks	135,244	197,705
Customers' deposits	1,924,654	1,711,726
Borrowed funds	159,775	127,050
Deferred tax liability	286	121
Other liabilities	82,168	75,730
Subordinated liabilities	12,000	17,000
TOTAL LIABILITIES	2,314,127	2,129,332
EQUITY		
Share capital	164,966	157,110
Legal reserve	34,028	31,632
Subordinated debt reserve	11,400	14,000
Fair value reserve	(4,066)	(4,233)
Special reserve	998	1,893
Impairment reserve	10,127	9,334
Retained earnings	46,897	55,459
TOTAL NET EQUITY ATTRIBUTABLE TO THE OWNERS OF THE BANK	264,350	265,195
Tier 1 Perpetual subordinated bonds	124,000	124,000
TOTAL EQUITY	388,350	389,195
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET EQUITY	2,702,477	2,518,527
Net assets value per share (baizas)	160	169
Contingent liabilities and commitments	239,738	290,487

STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2020

	2020 RO '000	2019 RO '000
Interest income	112,604	105,504
Interest expense	(63,754)	(60,769)
NET INTEREST INCOME	48,850	44,735
Income from Islamic financing and investments	18,654	19,068
Unrestricted investment account holders' share of profit and profit expense	(7,410)	(6,764)
NET INCOME FROM ISLAMIC FINANCING AND INVESTMENTS	11,244	12,304
Fees and commission income	8,161	10,265
Fees and commission expense	(540)	(261)
Net fees and commission income	7,621	10,004
Other operating income	3,781	2,706
OPERATING INCOME	71,496	69,749
Net impairment on financial assets	(14,402)	(5,871)
NET OPERATING INCOME	57,094	63,878
Staff expenses	(18,591)	(17,015)
Depreciation and amortisation	(2,608)	(2,274)
Other operating expenses	(8,896)	(8,360)
OPERATING EXPENSES	(30,095)	(27,649)
PROFIT BEFORE TAXATION	26,999	36,229
Tax expense	(3,031)	(5,214)
PROFIT FOR THE YEAR	23,968	31,015
OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME / (LOSS)		
<i>Items that will not be reclassified to profit or loss</i>		
Equity investments at FVOCI - net changes in fair value	107	(556)
Realized gain on equity investment at FVOCI	31	64
<i>Items that will be reclassified to profit or loss</i>		
Cash flow hedge - net changes in fair value	(1,618)	(182)
Changes in fair value of FVOCI debt investments - net	1,678	3,366
OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE YEAR	198	2,692
TOTAL COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE YEAR	24,166	33,707
Basic and diluted earnings per share (baizas)	15	19

To obtain a full copy of the accounts please write to Head of Finance
PO Box 545, PC 116, Sultanate of Oman



MSM rises 0.8%; volumes decline

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The benchmark index of the Muscat Securities Market (MSM) rose by 0.8 per cent to close at 3,697.06 points on Tuesday.

Trading activity deteriorated from the previous session as turnover declined 93.58 per cent to RO2.85mn and volumes fell 95.19 per cent to 18.68mn shares.

While Industrial index fell 1.36 per cent, Financial and Services indices rose 1.29 per cent and 0.26 per cent, respectively. The MSM Shariah index closed up by 0.24 per cent at 541.58 points.

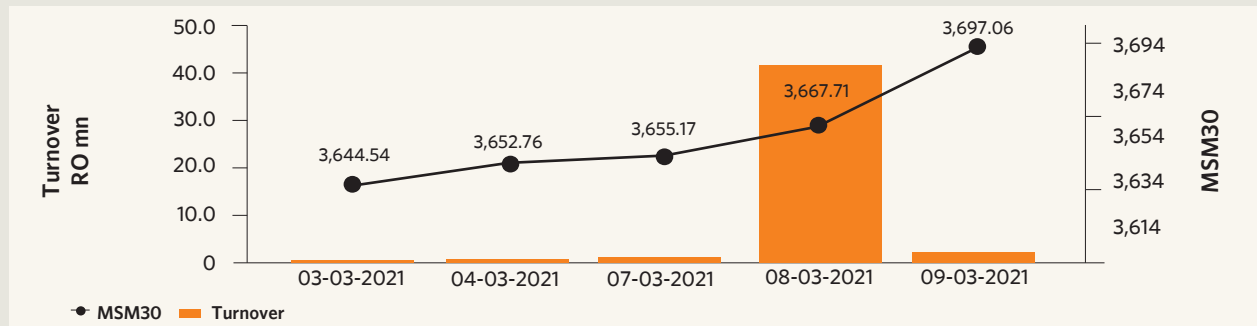
Market breadth remained positive as 18 companies closed up, while 11 companies closed down. The rest 18 traded stocks closed flat for the day.



Top gainers were Sohar International Bank (7.06 per cent), National Aluminium Products Company (6.31 per cent), Oman Arab Bank (4.29 per cent) and National Gas (3.76 per cent).

Top losers were Raysut Cement (-6.67 per cent), Oman Cement (-4.82 per cent), Dhofar Cattle Feed (-4.35 per cent) and Al Jazeera Steel Products (-3.14 per cent).

MSM INDEX AND TURNOVER OF FIVE TRADING DAYS



Bank Muscat seeks shareholders' nod for RO100mn capital raise

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Bank Muscat, in its upcoming annual general meeting (AGM) and extraordinary general meeting (EGM), will seek shareholders' approval to increase the bank's authorised share capital by RO100mn.

The board of directors of Bank Muscat has invited shareholders to attend the AGM and EGM which will be held on March 23 via the electronic platform.

As per the disclosure filed to the Muscat Securities Market (MSM), Bank Muscat board at the EGM will ask shareholders to consider and approve the proposed increase of the authorised share capital of the bank from RO350mn to RO450mn and amend the Articles of Association accordingly.

However, the bank has not disclosed about the modes of raising the authorised share capital.

In a separate disclosure to the MSM on Monday, Bank Muscat said it is planning to raise US dollar funds under its existing Euro Medium Term Note (EMTN) Programme which is listed on the Ireland Stock Exchange.



The bank said it has appointed a number of leading banks to act as joint lead managers and book runners to arrange a series of meeting with fixed income investors, to be conducted after this disclosure.

'A Regulation S only benchmark five-year bond issuance will follow subject to market conditions. The issuance is designed to support long-term US dollar funding requirements of the bank for project finance and wider asset growth,' Bank Muscat said.

The bank's AGM on March 23 will consider and approve the proposed cash dividend of 25bz per share and the distribution of stock dividend of 10 per cent of issued share capital of the bank (10 bonus shares for each 100 shares) for the financial year 2020.

Bank Muscat said if the quorum requirement for holding the AGM is not fulfilled on March 23, a second AGM shall be held on March 25 to discuss the items on the agenda.

OECD hikes 2021 world growth forecast to 5.6% on vaccine, stimulus rollout

Paris, France - The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) sharply raised its 2021 global growth forecast on Tuesday as the deployment of vaccines and a huge US stimulus programme have greatly improved economic prospects.

The Paris-based OECD says it now expects the global economy to grow by 5.6 per cent, an increase of 1.4 percentage points from its December forecast.

'Global economic prospects have improved markedly in recent months, helped by the gradual deployment of effective vaccines, announcements of additional fiscal support in some countries, and signs that economies are coping better with measures to suppress the virus,' it said in a report.

The world recovery will be largely carried by the United States, thanks to President Joe Biden's US\$1.9tn stimulus programme, Laurence Boone, chief economist of the OECD, told AFP.

The OECD now sees the US economy climbing by 6.5 per cent this year, an increase of 3.3 percentage points from its previous forecast.

Boone said the US recovery accounts for one percentage point of the global growth revision.



Customers wait in line to enter Frontier Fiesta store in Houston, Texas, US on February 17 (AFP)

sion.

'Significant risks'

The OECD said global output could rise above the pre-pandemic level in mid-2021.

It noted, however, increasing signs of divergence between countries as some nations are faster to roll out vaccines while others employ containment measures.

'Despite the improved global outlook, output and incomes in many countries will remain below the level expected prior to the pandemic at the end of 2022,' said the 37-nation organisation.

For the moment, only China, India and Turkey have surpassed pre-pandemic levels of economic output.

The OECD said the 'top policy priority' is to deploy vaccines as quickly as possible throughout the world, to save lives as well as to speed economic recovery.

"There are huge and significant risks to our economic projections, most notably the pace of vaccination," Boone told AFP.

"What we know if the faster countries vaccinate, the quicker they can reopen their economy," she said, adding that Europe should speed up its vaccination efforts.

Britain, which also has rolled out vaccines quickly, got a 0.9 percentage point increase to 5.1 per cent - higher than the UK's own forecast, which was lowered last week.

The eurozone, where vaccination campaigns have been slower, received only a 0.3 percentage point bump to 3.9 per cent, as the recoveries in both Italy and France were revised lower.

The OECD also urged advanced nations to step up their support to efforts to aid poorer countries obtain vaccines and get them into arms.

AFP

PDO opens three social investment projects

Muscat - Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) on Tuesday officially opened Al Wusta Sports Hall, Haima Slaughterhouse and livestock market and the revamped Haima camel racetrack under the auspices of H E Shaikh Sulaiman bin Salim bin Saif al Mahrouqi, Wali of Haima.

The projects were funded by PDO as part of its social investment programme to benefit communities and boost sustainable development across the sultanate.

Jointly funded by PDO and the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, Al Wusta Sports Hall serves the youth in Haima and the surrounding villages and aims to supplement the sports and culture sectors in the area. The facility, which also includes a dedicated seating area for spectators, is suited for five different sports and can be used to host cultural events.

The slaughterhouse and livestock market is a municipality-managed project that aims to



centralise livestock sales and meat processing activities to promote hygienic practices. The project, which will serve the Wilayat of Haima and the surrounding areas, has a compound for selling livestock and meat cutting stations along with a waiting room.

The maintenance of the Haima camel racetrack, which was funded by the company, included a number of improvements such as setting up a new podium, installing shades and adding new areas for spectators. PDO has been actively sup-

porting local communities and is currently developing a number of infrastructure projects in partnership with governmental bodies to provide communities with better access to key services and amenities as part of its social investment programme.

In Al Wusta Governorate specifically, PDO has also provided specialist medical equipment and ambulances for Haima and Al Jazir hospitals, and is currently working on several projects in the area including a food and water control laboratory and a fish market in Haima.

Italy factory to produce Sputnik vaccine, first in EU: Trade body

Rome, Italy - An Italian-Swiss pharmaceutical company has agreed to produce Russia's Sputnik V vaccine in Italy, the first such deal in the European Union, a trade body said on Tuesday.

"The vaccine will be produced from July 2021 in (pharma company) Adienne factories in Lombardy," northern Italy, a spokesman for the Italian-Russian Chamber of Commerce, Stefano Maggi, told AFP.

"Ten million doses will be produced between July 1 and January 1, 2022," he added, describing it as the 'first agreement on the European level for the production on EU territory of the Sputnik vaccine'.

Several European Union coun-



tries have already begun distributing Sputnik V, but it has yet to be approved by the bloc's medicines regulator.

Last week the Amsterdam-based European Medicines Agency launched a rolling review of the Sputnik V vaccine, a key step towards being approved as

the first non-Western jab to be used against the coronavirus across the 27-nation bloc.

"If the vaccine is not authorised in Europe by July 1, the doses produced [in Italy] will be bought by the Russian sovereign fund and distributed in countries where the Sputnik vaccine is authorised," Maggi said.

Italy's Health Ministry, contacted by AFP, declined to comment on the deal, while Adienne was not immediately available.

The EU has so far authorised three vaccines: The US-German Pfizer/BioNTech jab, US firm Moderna's shot, and the British-Swedish AstraZeneca/Oxford vaccine.

AFP

Vodafone towers unit set for €14.7bn value

London, UK - British mobile phone giant Vodafone on Tuesday announced the price range for the upcoming German stock market flotation of its towers business, valuing the unit at up to €14.7bn.

The float of up to one-quarter of Vantage Towers comes amid increasing demand for mobile telecommunications connectivity across Europe, driven by data growth, 5G rollout and regulatory coverage obligations.

German-headquartered Vantage Tower will have its first day of trading on the Frankfurt stock market on or around March 18, with a price-per-share range of between €22.5 and €29, Vodafone said in a statement.

The initial public offering (IPO) 'implies a total market



capitalisation for Vantage Towers of €11.4bn to €14.7bn," it added.

Digital Colony, a digital infrastructure investor and operator based in the US, has agreed to be a cornerstone investor in the IPO, alongside RRJ, a global equity fund based in Singapore, with commitments of €500mn

and €450mn, respectively.

"The Vantage Towers IPO is moving ahead at pace," Vantage chief executive Vivek Badrinath said in the statement.

"Today's price range announcement is accompanied by the news that two leading global investors have committed to cornerstone our IPO with the

purchase of €950mn of shares at the offer price."

Vantage Towers' portfolio includes 82,000 macro sites - towers, masts and rooftops - across ten European countries.

"Demand for data and connectivity across Europe is powering growth in the towers sector," Badrinath said.

"Our superior grid and leading market positions mean we are well placed to benefit from this growth and our recent financial results highlighted the good commercial and operational momentum across the business," he added.

Vodafone said it was targeting proceeds of up to €2.8bn from the IPO, helping to reduce its debt pile.

AFP

Bank Muscat's anti-fraud campaign raises awareness

In line with its commitment to social responsibility, Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the sultanate, is continuing its anti-fraud campaign to raise awareness amongst the general public against instances of electronic fraud. With digital payments building momentum over the past, especially in the aftermath of COVID-19, fraudsters from across the globe have increased efforts to defraud the general public.

Continuing its yearlong activities from last year, the bank has released its latest anti-fraud educational video in 2021 to help its customers and the general public easily recognise fraudulent practices.

This campaign advises people to always verify who it is they are dealing with before conducting a transaction and also follow 'best practices' for their digital safety. The bank's special educational campaign is being carried out using various methods including Oman TV, radio, print and online



media, and various social media channels.

The message provide examples of how fraudsters are perpetrating fraud and its consequences of blindly trusting people, especially when making purchases through the Internet without being sure of the seller's credentials. The bank has reminded the public that they can contact the Royal Oman Police at 800777444 for

advice and queries regarding electronic fraud.

Bank Muscat has also reminded its customers that times of global emergencies are almost always exploited by fraudsters. It has requested all customers as well as the general public to stay alert at all times and follow safe banking practices including not divulging their banking details to others. In particular, customers have been advised to double

check and verify the account details for fund transfers using alternative means of communication like telephone calls before initiating a fund transfer or payment. The bank pointed out that legacy communication channels like email need not be secure as fraudsters can use their technical knowhow to hijack emails between a customer and a legitimate business. In such instances, they replace the details mentioned for fund transfers with those of the fraudster such that funds are transferred to the wrong account.

The bank also pointed out that fraudsters may also pose as bank officials and pressurise victims to share OTPs, CVV numbers, passwords and PINs of bank accounts and credit/debit cards. Once these details are shared, the victim's bank account may be accessed by the fraudster and funds transferred out of the account. The bank has reminded all its customers that it never asks for any of these details.



NBO fetes Hash Code winners

As part of its commitment to support Oman's young innovators, National Bank of Oman (NBO) recognised four students for their recent success in Google's global programming competition, Hash Code.

Ahmed al Alawi, Ammar al Hidaifi, Khalfan al Busaidi and Loay al Habsi, software engineering students at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences, came first among Arab countries and 22nd globally for their project, Rakizah. The team was one of more than 9,000 from around the world.

Abdullah Zahran al Hinai, chief executive officer of Na-

tional Bank Oman, said, "As a bank, it's something that is strongly aligned with our strategic focus on innovation. This reward is about investing in Oman's future, and recognising the amazing contribution these students are making to their country, and the example they are setting to their peers. They have a bright future ahead of them and we wish them all the best."

Hash Code is a team programming competition organised by Google, for students and professionals around the world. Participants create a team and programming language and

Google assigns an engineering problem for them to solve. The competition measures the ability and potential of participants in applying innovative solutions to complex software problems.

NBO's long-standing commitment to young people is demonstrated by a number of initiatives that it organises and supports, including the Youth Awards, Hackathon, Ibtikar Lab, internships, Al Kanz Youth draw among others. The bank's various youth-centred activities are also reflective of its dynamic and innovative culture, demonstrated by a rising number of technological achievements.

KIMS Oman Hospital appoints new chief operating officer

The KIMS Oman Hospital, one of Muscat's leading private sector healthcare institutions, has appointed a new chief operating officer, Stefan James MacMillan Skrzywanek.

Skrzywanek is a healthcare professional with over 25 years of experience in managing and operating hospitals as well as working as a healthcare consultant, including five years as head of Healthcare Advisory Services

for the Middle East & North Africa for Ernst & Young.

Originally from Scotland, Skrzywanek started his career in the National Health Service (NHS) in London at a large teaching hospital, and has over 25 years' experience in managing public, private, and not-for-profit hospitals as well as valuable healthcare consultancy and hospital management experience in the GCC.

Talking about his new assignment, Skrzywanek says, "I am thrilled and proud to lead KIMS Oman Hospital which remains a well-known healthcare institution for its clinical expertise and excellence, quality of service and patient safety. Healthcare is all about touching the lives of our valued patients and their families, and through our continued efforts, usage of advanced diagnostics and medical equipment,



Stefan James Skrzywanek

as well as dedicated teamwork and innovation, I look forward to leading KIMS Oman Hospital on to greater successes."

Asked about his vision for KIMS Oman Hospital (KOH), Skrzywanek replied, "KOH is already a good hospital, but I believe that by channeling the efforts of the talented staff and working together, we can make it a great hospital.

"KOH is a multi-specialty hos-

pital offering a wide range of medical and surgical services, and I want to expand and build upon this foundation by adding much-needed services to our clinical offerings.

He added, "In the coming months, you can expect to see the addition of a brand new kidney dialysis unit, and plans are already underway to introduce chemotherapy oncology services to the hospital, both much-

needed and in demand services which will be a major benefit for the people of Muscat.

"It's an exciting time to be part of KIMSHealth. We have a fantastic group of staff at KIMS Oman Hospital and there is a great sense of camaraderie and 'esprit de corps' amongst us which I want to build on. I look forward to leading the hospital on to greater heights and achievements."

PO Box: 1935, PC: 114, Muscat, Sultanate of Oman
website www.mcdcoman.com



MUSCAT CITY
DESALINATION
COMPANY SAOG

Notice and Invitation to attend the Annual General Meeting

The Board of Directors of Muscat City Desalination Company S.A.O.G (the Company) has the pleasure to invite all the Shareholders to attend the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Company scheduled to be held at 3 p.m. on Monday, 29 March 2021 through the electronic platform for holding General Meetings, which you can login through the website of Muscat Clearing and Depository Company (www.mcd.gov.om); and in the event that quorum was not achieved for the AGM, the second AGM, shall be held at 3 p.m. on Sunday, 4 April 2021 at the same electronic platform above to discuss the following agenda items:

- To consider and approve the report of the Board of Directors about the business of the Company and its financial position for the financial year ended 31 December 2020.
- To consider and approve the Company's Corporate Governance Report for the financial year ended 31 December 2020.
- To consider and approve the Evaluation Report of the Board of Directors' performance for the financial year ended 31 December 2020.
- To consider and approve the Auditors Report about the Company's audited financial statements for the financial year ended 31 December 2020.
- To approve the sitting fees being availed by the members of the Board of Directors and members of the Board's sub-committees for the previous financial year and to fix the sitting fees for the next financial year.
- To notify the general meeting regarding the related parties' transactions during the financial year ended 31 December 2020.
- To consider and approve transactions to be conducted with related parties during the financial year ending 31 December 2021 and authorise the Board and executive management to undertake the necessary steps to implement the transactions.
- To notify the general meeting of the amounts spent for the Company's social responsibilities activities for the financial year ended on 31 December 2020.
- To consider and approve the proposal of allocating RO 2,000 for corporate social responsibility activities for the financial year ending 31 December 2021.
- To approve the appointment of the statutory auditors for the financial year ending 31 December 2021 and the proposed remuneration.
- To elect one new member to the Board of Directors to fill the vacancy (from the shareholders and/or non-shareholders). Anyone who wishes to nominate himself/herself for the position must complete the election form, which was made for this purpose and can be obtained from the CMA website and should be in compliance with the Company's Articles of Association and CMA regulations and submit it to the Company at its Head Office Building at least 5 days prior to the AGM date and that is before the end of the working day 4 pm on Monday 22 March 2021. No nomination form will be accepted after that date.

As per the regulations of the convening of the AGMs through electronic platforms, issued by the Capital Market Authority (CMA), we would like to attract your kind attention to the following:

- Only juristic persons may deputize a natural person to attend the AGM and vote on their behalf through the electronic systems, provided that the deputized natural person has an investor number at Muscat Clearing and Depository Company.
- Voting on the subject items offered for voting in the agenda starts before a period of not more than 3 days and until the end of the voting process on the meeting's day. If the investor's balance of shares increased or decreased during, his/her voting will be cancelled and they should vote again on the AGM's date.

For any queries please contact Jood Al Amri on 9699 0724 or e-mail at: jood.alaamri@dentons.com

Chairman

Legal Advisor

Auditor



AREEJ VEGETABLE OILS & DERIVATIVES SAOC

PO. Box 22, P.C. 124, Rusayl, Sultanate of Oman email: mail@avod.com.om

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING ("AGM") AGENDA

The Board of Directors of Areej Vegetable oils & Derivatives SAOC (the Company) is pleased to invite the shareholders to attend the annual ordinary general meeting (AGM) of the company, which is scheduled to be held at 2.00 pm on 30th March 2021 Tuesday via the electronic platform to hold general meetings (which can accessed through the website of the Muscat Clearing and Depository Company (www.mcd.gov.om) if the quorum of the meeting is not completed, a second annual ordinary general meeting will be held at 2 pm on 4th April 2021 to discuss the following agenda:

- To consider and approve the report of the Board of Directors on the activity of the company and its financial position during the financial year ended 31/12/2020.
- To consider the auditors' report and to approve the balance sheet and profit & loss account for the financial year ended 31/12/2020.
- To consider and approve the distribution of cash dividend to the shareholders as per the AGM date an amount of (250 Baiza for each share), for the financial year ended on 31/12/2020.
- To approve the sitting fees payable to the members of the Board of Directors for the financial year ended 31/12/2020 and to specify the sitting fees for the next financial year ending on 31/12/2021.
- To consider and approve the transactions entered into by the Company with related parties during the fiscal year ended 31/12/2020.
- To consider and approve the transactions which the Company will enter into with related parties during the fiscal year ending 31st December 2021.
- To elect a new board of directors for the company form among the shareholders and non-shareholders, anyone who wishes to be nominated for a membership in the Board of Directors must fill in the nomination form which can be obtained from the company, and submit the form after filling it to the company at least Five (5) working days before the meeting of date, (no later than the end of the business day of Thursday 25/03/2021) the company will not accept any application form after that.
- To appoint the Company auditors for the financial year ending on 31 December 2021 and to determine their fees.

According to the Company's Articles of Association and the controls of holding General Meetings using electronic platform issued by the ministry of commerce and industry, we would like to draw your attention to the following:

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

For further information, please contact to Mr. Mohammed Yaqoob As-Sarriri at Telephone Number 24448013.

Important Notice: Joint stock companies shall deposit amounts due to investors which have not been claimed by the investors after the expiry of six months of the due date with the Investors Trust Fund. Therefore, each shareholder is kindly requested to check with Muscat Depository and Securities Registration Company situated within the Muscat Securities building in order to enquire about any amounts which may be due to him.

Chairperson

Auditor

Legal Advisor

FREE
CLASSIFIED
LISTING

Muscat Daily now offers free classified listings for individuals in the following categories:
Situations Wanted/Accommodation Wanted or Available/Sale of Household Items/ Car for Sale or Wanted/Matrimonial Alliances (Word limit is 35)
Please email your listing to dailyclassifieds@apexmedia.co.om or call 99104346

Amazing offers from Dhofar Automotive

Dhofar Automotive, the official distributor of Chrysler, Dodge, Jeep, RAM, Fiat and Alfa Romeo vehicles in the sultanate, announced the launch of its amazing offers on a wide range of its distinctive models from Jeep, Dodge and RAM brands.

The offers, which last until March 15, provide customers with guaranteed cash gifts of up to RO5,110, free registration, warranty for 5 years/100,000km, five years roadside assistance and several other benefits.

The offer includes a wide range of models with cash gifts from RO2,100 to RO5,110. The Jeep Compass Longitude starts at RO7,490, Cherokee Longitude at RO9,990, Grand Cherokee Limited Laredo at RO13,900, Jeep Wrangler from RO14,990, Jeep Wrangler Unlimited (4 doors) from RO16,290, Jeep Gladiator Launch Edition at RO22,990 and Jeep Gladiator Sport at RO16,490.

Additionally, as part of the of-



fers, the Dodge Charger SXT comes at a starting price of RO9,990, Dodge Challenger SXT at RO12,990 and the Dodge Durango SXT at RO12,490. The RAM 1500 Bighorn Crew cab

model year 2021 starts at RO17,990. All the above-mentioned prices post-reduction of the cash gift.

Commenting on the offers, Hatem el Najar, general manager

at Dhofar Automotive, said, "Dhofar Automotive offers a wide range of its amazing models as part of the current offers. All cars included are renowned for the distinctive and incredible

capabilities that position them as leaders among other models in their class.

"These models have earned the trust of car enthusiasts looking for strong performance

due to their international quality. Through these valuable offers, we can provide our customers with the opportunity to purchase one of Jeep, Dodge and RAM vehicles at exceptional

prices. These models can be purchased through affordable installments and customers can receive a wide range of valuable benefits.

"Apart from including guaranteed cash gifts, they can enjoy a peaceful everyday drive and enhanced ownership experience with Dhofar Automotive."

The current offers are on selected models.

The value of the aforementioned monthly installments is calculated on the basis of a down payment of 20 per cent after calculating the value of the cash gift for a period of 7 years.

The financing process is subject to the approval of the bank or the financing company.

In the sultanate, Chrysler, Jeep, Dodge, Fiat, Alfa Romeo, RAM models are available at Dhofar Automotive showrooms with different equipment classes.

For more information on Dhofar Automotive visit www.dhofarautomotive.com or call +968 2458 4530.

Over 100 win prizes in OAB Hasaad draw

Oman Arab Bank (OAB) announced the results of the first draw of its Hasaad Savings Scheme for 2021. Some 101 customers won prizes of RO500 each, alongside 5 winners of RO1,000 each from the salary transfer segment. As for Elite account holders, two customers won RO10,000 each from the Ruwi and City Centre branches.

Commenting on the launch of the new scheme, Rashad al Shaikh, acting head of the Retail Banking Division at OAB, said, "We are delighted to announce the first batch of winners for the latest edition of the Hasaad Savings Scheme 2021. This is the largest scheme in the bank's history, specifically designed to encourage our valued customers to save more and ensure a stable future for them and their families. The Hasaad Savings Scheme is a motivational programme aimed at enabling individuals to manage their finances wisely and save on a monthly basis, so that they can deal with any emergency or unforeseen circumstances. We, in turn, reward them for their efforts by offering several prizes each month. The more they save, the greater their chances of winning."

The Hasaad Savings Scheme



2021 will see 101 lucky winners each month from the 54 branches winning RO500 each, as well as 5 winners of RO1,000 each, from those who transfer their salaries to Oman Arab Bank.

This is in addition to a Big Prize draw which will see two winners of RO10,000 each, every quarter.

The Elite Draws will see two winners every month of RO10,000 each. This is replaced by an Elite grand prize draw con-

ducted every three months with one lucky winner of RO25,000.

Shaikh added, "I would like to congratulate all the winners of the first Hasaad Savings Draw for January. We wish our valued customers the best of luck in the upcoming monthly draws, which will take place till the end of the year.

"We foresee over 1,300 customers winning incredible prizes, ranging from RO500 to RO25,000."

Oman Arab Bank has a rich

and proud history as one of the first financial institutions to be established in the sultanate.

Today, the bank operates a nationwide network of 54 branches and representative offices with 160 ATMs spread across Oman. OAB provides a complete range of financial products and services through its OAB Online App. Customers can now digitally open an account and benefit from several other services, directly from the convenience of their mobile phones.

Omran Group launches #DoubleYourDelight

Omran Group, the executive arm of the sultanate for tourism development, launched #DoubleYourDelight, a one-off promotional campaign aimed at encouraging locals and residents to focus on domestic travel opportunities. Designed to foster staycations, this promotion invites people to benefit from its exclusive and flexible offers; 'Pay 1 Stay 2' or 'Half Your Money Back' that could be spent at the hotel's in-house services and facilities.

The promotion aims to motivate people to explore and rediscover the beauty of Oman whilst introducing new tourism products that support reviving the tourism and hospitality sector amid the COVID-19 pandemic. The group is offering curated and personalised deals across 14 of its operating hotels to escape and relax while staying safe.

Guests can book and indulge in a peaceful getaway starting from March 9 until May 11 at one of the 14 participating hotels including InterContinental Muscat, Millennium Resort Mussanah, Alila Jabal Akhdar, Crowne Plaza Resort Salalah, Crowne Plaza Muscat OCEC, W Muscat,



Atana Khasab, Atana Musandam, Masira Island Resort, Ras al Jinz Turtle Reserve, Dibba Beach Resort, Atana Stay Salalah, Atana Stay Ashkara and Hilton Salalah Resort.

This exciting promotional offer will run through Ramadan, enabling the guests to enjoy a wide range of options that suit the needs of all types of travelers and offer them customisable experiences to spend unforgettable moments during the public holidays and special occasions.

These include dhow cruises, turtle watching, diving adventures, culinary and dining op-

tions, as well as sophisticated relaxation spa experiences.

Guests are invited to book at their preferred hotel destination directly through the dedicated #DoubleYourDelight online platform via Omran's website: <https://Omran.om/DoubleYourDelight/>.

In the light of the current situation, Omran hospitality assets have taken extensive steps to minimise the chances of infections.

All hotels will continue following relevant guidelines set by the Supreme Committee for dealing with COVID-19.

OTC meet introduces courses to hospitality representatives

Oman Tourism College (OTC) organised a meeting for tourism and hospitality representatives, with the aim to introduce them to the vocational, professional and short courses offered by the college.

In addition, the meeting sought to strengthen collaborations towards the support of employment opportunities for Omani graduates of these courses and enable them to kick-start their career in one of the sector's institutions. The meeting was also conducted to listen and benefit from the feedback of officials in these institutions concerning the current courses and means of improvement. This way, the college looks to meet market requirements, in line with the sultanate's approach towards enhancing Omanisation in the tourism and hospitality sector.

Shafia al Malki, assistant director of Training & Professional Development Unit at OTC said, "Oman Tourism College graduates who have been enrolled in various training courses are



widely accepted and welcomed by sector institutions for their competence, passion, and spirit of initiative and learning. The college provides a supportive environment for growth and development through the provision of leading educational facilities, including classrooms equipped with the latest modern tools and training halls that simulate the environment of hotels and various tourist facilities. By doing so, we can prepare stu-

dents in the respective training courses with optimal preparation, and ensure that they are ready to join the labour market upon graduation."

The meeting was attended by human resources managers and training supervisors from Omran Group, W Hotel, Grand Hyatt Muscat, IHG, Novotel, IBIS, Wyndham Garden, Chedi Muscat, Royal Tulip, Kempinski, Anantara and Dusit Jebel Akhdar.

W Store home to over 20 top artists and designers

The search for the ultimate gift ends now. W Muscat's iconic W Store has launched its latest collection, showcasing over 20 of the sultanate's most coveted local designers and artists.

Starting International Day of Awesomeness, visitors can shop till they drop with a wide range of unique clothes, art, and accessories. Every hand-picked piece reflects the brand's signature eclectic style, while paying homage to Oman's culture and energy. It's the latest in a series of bold activations W Muscat is rolling out as it disrupts Oman's scene with unexpected happenings throughout the year.

"Oman's art scene has just boomed in the last year and there are so many talented creators. At the W Store we are always keen to promote up-and-coming local designers while offering visitors something fun and different," said Gerald Chevasson, general manager, W Muscat.

"With a thoughtfully curated



selection of art, clothing, and accessories, the W Store is a treasure trove of awesome stuff, the perfect place to pick up a super chic gift or an indulgent treat."

In continuation of the hotel's Oman/ New York fusion, the store is full of quirky features including stacked suitcases to reflect the nomadic lifestyle of the

brand. At the heart of it is a mini replica of the hotel's iconic frankincense tree surrounded by locally-inspired products and must haves. Grab some cute stationery from Pastel Design, hand-painted wearable art from Miimzart or beach-ready bags and towels from Weekend Vibe. Get kitted out in fresh and funky fashion pieces from La corde, Kodes, Bin Ali and Selfish.

Or, make it a self-care session with a little something special from Crescent Candles. With a rotating collection of local brands, there is sure to be something that catches the eye every single visit.

In celebration of International Day of Awesomeness, W Muscat will also be posting some of its favorite fashion steals from its list of designers on its Instagram (@WMuscat), stay tuned on Match 10.

Located on the ground floor of W Muscat in the heart of Shatti Qurm, the store is open daily between 9am and 6pm.

Joyalukkas announces its Pre-Vat Sale

World's favourite jeweller, Joyalukkas, has announced its Pre-Vat Sale with an attractive Advance Payment Plan. During the booking period, customers can book their gold by paying an advance of just 10 per cent and enjoy guaranteed gold rate protection. The offer is applicable at all Joyalukkas showrooms in Oman.

Announcing the Pre-Vat Sale, John Paul Alukkas, managing director, Joyalukkas Group, said, "The days of happiness are back again as the gold prices continue to fall. We want to add more delight to our customers by gifting them the joy of securing their gold at the lowest price possible. I invite our patrons in Oman to take advantage of our affordable Advance Payment Plan option and enjoy our offerings of a wide range of collections."

The booking period is open until March 31, and customers can redeem them until April 15.



A woman walks with her children in a commercial district in Syria's northeastern city of Qamishli on Tuesday (AFP)

Children can't see future in Syria after 10 years of war

Beirut, Lebanon - Many Syrian children, both inside and outside the country, cannot imagine a future in their homeland as the conflict there enters its 11th year, a charity said on Tuesday.

"This ten year war has cost Syria's young people their childhoods," Save the Children's regional director Jeremy Stoner said. "Protracted conflict has led to fear and pessimism about children's ability to build their lives in a country scarred by war," he said in a statement.

Syria's war has killed more than 387,000 people and displaced millions since starting in 2011 with the brutal repression of anti-government protests.

Between November and December 2020, Save the Children interviewed 1,900 displaced children and their caregivers inside Syria and across Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey and the Netherlands.

On average, 86 per cent of surveyed Syrian refugee children said they would not want to return to their country of origin, the British charity said, citing a report it published marking the anniversary.

"I don't want to go back there. I don't want to go back and live in Syria again. I don't want to stay

Sanctions complicate return to Arab League: UAE

Abu Dhabi, UAE - The United Arab Emirates said on Tuesday that tough US sanctions on war-ravaged Syria make it more challenging for Damascus to return to the Arab League.

Through Washington's Caesar Act, a law that took effect in June last year, the United States is hoping to prevent any reconstruction effort or normalisation of trade without accountability for atrocities under Syrian President Bashar Assad.

Emirati Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed said

that while efforts were required by both the Syrians and the Arab League bloc, the 'bigger challenge today facing coordination and working with Syria is the Caesar Act'.

"To keep the Caesar Act as it is today makes this path very difficult, not only for us as a nation, but also for the private sector," he added, during a press conference with his Russian counterpart, Sergey Lavrov.

Abdullah said it was an issue that 'should be part of dialogue we address clearly with our friends in the United States'.

Syria's conflict, sparked by the brutal repression of anti-government protests in 2011, has killed more than 380,000 people and displaced millions.

Syria was suspended from the 22-member Arab League bloc in November 2011 as the death toll mounted.

Several regional powers, betting on the demise of Assad's regime, suspended diplomatic ties with Damascus.

The UAE and Bahrain reopened their diplomatic missions in the Syrian capital in December 2018.

AFP

in Lebanon either," Nada, a 17 year old Syrian refugee living in northern Lebanon, was quoted as saying.

"No matter where I go, if we go to school, they bully us and tell us they don't want us."

Inside Syria, one in three displaced children surveyed said they would rather live in another country, the non-governmental organisation reported.

They include Lara, a seven-

year-old who lives in a displacement camp in northwestern Syria.

"After ten years, our future became all about war," she was quoted as saying.

"I wish to live in any country other than Syria, where it's safe and there are schools and toys."

More than 8.5mn Syrian children are dependent on assistance inside Syria and in neighbouring countries, says the

United Nations child agency UNICEF.

Up to 60 per cent of children are unable to consistently access or afford adequate food inside Syria, and more than half are missing out on school, the UN says.

Of almost 5.6mn registered Syrian refugees outside the country, more than 1mn children have been born in exile, it says.

AFP

Desert country Jordan aims for green with 10mn trees

Kufranjah, Jordan - On a bare hill in Jordan's verdant Ajloun region, dozens of people plant saplings as part of a reforestation effort that aims to reach 10mn trees in ten years.

"The trees in our region are beautiful," says 11 year old Mohammed al Ananza, helping his father Mustafa plant a carob sapling.

"It's a real shame that we have lost so many to fires... We should work together to protect them," he says as they work near the Kufranjah forest north of the capital Amman.

Forests make up only one per cent of the desert kingdom's territory, according to the Agriculture Ministry, though Jordan also has an estimated 23mn orchard trees, half of them olives.

Forest fires strike almost every year in the Middle Eastern country due to high summer temperatures, in a trend scientists expect to intensify with climate change.

The blazes are often started by picnickers' barbecues or carelessly discarded cigarettes.

There were 499 fires in wood and forest areas last year alone, according to the Agriculture



This file photo shows Jordanians taking part in a plantation event near the Kufranjah forest in north of Amman, on February 11 (AFP)

Ministry. "We must make up for what has been lost in the fires," said Belal Qtishat, head of the nature protection department at the environment ministry.

"It's the only way to fight desertification and climate change and to protect biodiversity."

Mahmoud al Ananza watched on as his grandson and son got to work on the hill in Kufranjah.

The family has volunteered but agriculture and environment ministry employees were also among the 150 people in charge of planting 30,000 trees in the area. "I was born here and I can tell you that if you plant cypress

trees, eucalypts, olives, carob or oak, they will grow on their own," the man in his 70s said, wearing a traditional red-and-white keffiyeh scarf.

The programme focuses on species that, after the initial phase of taking root, can survive without a lot of additional water.

Mohamed Daoudia, agriculture minister at the time of the project's launch last month, said fires were the biggest problem for Jordan's wooded areas.

"Illegal tree felling only represents one per cent of the damage to forests," he told AFP.

AFP

UN 'appalled' by killing of nine activists in Philippines

Geneva, Switzerland - The United Nations said on Tuesday it was 'appalled' by the apparent arbitrary killing of nine activists in the Philippines by security forces targeting alleged communist insurgents.

Eight men and one woman were killed as the authorities executed search warrants before dawn on Sunday, the UN rights office said.

"We are appalled by the apparently arbitrary killing of nine activists," Ravina Shamdasani, a spokeswoman for the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, said in Geneva.

The killings happened in simultaneous police and military operations in the Batangas, Cavite, Laguna and Rizal provinces surrounding Manila.

The spokeswoman said that among those killed were labour rights, fishing community, housing and indigenous rights activists, while six people were reportedly arrested.

The Philippines government said the operation was part of its counter-insurgency campaign.

AFP

Russia urges US and Iran to coordinate return to deal

Moscow, Russia - Russia called on Washington and Tehran on Tuesday to take mutual steps and coordinate their return to the Iran nuclear deal, as signatories to the historic accord work to salvage it.

Formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), the 2015 deal offered sanctions relief in exchange for curbs on Tehran's nuclear ambitions and guarantees it would not seek an atomic bomb.

But the accord has been hanging by a thread since former US president Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew from it in 2018 and reimposed

To resolve this urgent task, we believe it is perfectly possible to work out synchronous steps

SERGEY LAVROV

punishing sanctions on Tehran. "To resolve this urgent task, we believe it is perfectly possible to work out synchronous steps - simultaneous steps to be taken in stages by both the Iranians and the United States," Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said.

"If we deliberate on which side should be first to return to compliance, then this bargaining could go on forever," he said during a visit to Abu Dhabi.

Following Joe Biden's US presidential election victory in November, Washington, Tehran and the European parties to the deal - France, Germany and Britain - have been trying to salvage it. Biden has signalled his readiness to revive the accord, but insists Iran first return to all its nuclear commitments, most of which it suspended in response to the US sanctions.

AFP

 Lakhoo's SINCE 1904 شركة لكشميداس تهاريا ويد وشركاه للصرافة ش.م.م Laxmidas Tharia Ved (Exchange) Co. LLC					
SUMMARY OF ASSETS AND LIABILITES AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2020					
ASSETS	31.12.2020 (R0' 000)	31.12.2019 (R0' 000)	LIABILITIES	31.12.2020 (R0' 000)	31.12.2019 (R0' 000)
1. CASH IN HAND	834	1,150	1. CAPITAL AND RESERVE	1,462	1,793
2. DEPOSITED WITH CENTRAL BANK OF OMAN	100	100	2. BORROWING FROM BANKS	-	-
3. PRECIOUS METALS	-	-	3. BALANCES DUE TO BRANCHES	-	-
4. BALANCES DUE FROM BANKS	695	736	4. BALANCES DUE TO MONEY- CHANGER	183	314
5. BALANCES DUE FROM BRANCHES	-	-	5. LOANS AND ADVANCES PAYABLE	-	-
6. BALANCES DUE FROM MONEY-CHANGER	68	174	6. CHEQUES AND DRAFTS ISSUED AND OUTSTANDING	-	-
7. CHEQUES AND DRAFTS PURCHASED	-	-	7. OTHER LIABILITIES	555	489
8. LOANS AND ADVANCES	-	-			
9. INVESTMENTS	-	-			
10. FIXED AND INTANGIBLE ASSETS	133	184			
11. OTHER ASSETS	370	252			
TOTAL	2,200	2,596	TOTAL	2,200	2,596
WE CERTIFY THAT THE ABOVE BALANCES ARE IN AGREEMENT WITH THE BOOKS AND RECORDS OF THE COMPANY AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2020					
21 FEBRUARY 2021			MGI VISION CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS		

شركة الخليج للصناعات البلاستيكية (ش.م.ع.م.)

GULF PLASTIC INDUSTRIES CO. (SAOC)

ص.ب: ٥٥، الوكيل، الرمز البريدي ١٢٤، منطقة صابان - هاتف: ، فاكس: ، P.O. Box 55, Rusayl, Postal Code 124, Sultanate of Oman - Tel.: 24446688 / 24446699, Fax: 24446766, C.R. No: 1/54106/4 Email : info@gulfpasticoman.com Website : www.gulfpasticoman.com

GP

Notice for Annual Ordinary General Meeting

The Board of Directors of GULF PLASTIC INDUSTRIES (the "Company") has the pleasure to invite the shareholders to attend the Annual General Meeting, which will be held at 3.00 pm on 28/03/2021, via the electronic platform to hold general meetings which can be accessed through the website of Muscat Clearing and Depository Company (www.mcd.gov.om). If the quorum requirement for holding the Annual General Meeting is not fulfilled, a second Annual General Meeting will be held at 03.00 p.m. on 31/03/2021 to discuss the following agenda:-

Ordinary Agendas Annual:

- To consider and approve the Board of Director's report for the financial year ended 31 December 2020.
- To consider the Auditor's report and to approve the Financial Statements (Balance Sheet and Profit and Loss Account) of the company for the financial year ended 31 December 2020.
- To consider and approve Board of Director's proposal to determine and distribute interim cash dividends to shareholders (registered with Muscat Clearing & Depository SAOC on the dates decided by the Board during the month of June 2021) provided that the total of these dividend does not exceed 10% of the paid up share capital of the Company (i.e 100 Baisa per share) for the financial year ended on 31 December 2020.
- To approve and ratify the sitting fees paid to the Board of Directors and Audit Committee members for attending meetings for the previous financial year 2020 and fixing it for the forthcoming financial year 2021 (as attached).
- To consider and approve the transaction entered into by the company with related parties during the financial year ended 31/12/2020 (as attached).
- To approve the donations amounting to R.O 5,000/= for Charitable and Social Institutions for the Financial year ended 31 December 2021 .
- To elect new Board of Directors for the Company from amongst Shareholders or non-shareholders. Any person who wishes to be nominated to the Board of Directors of the Company is required to fill in a Director's Nomination form which can be obtained from the Company. The completed form should be delivered to the Company at least three (3) days prior to the date of Annual Ordinary General Meeting of the Company (by the end of business hours on Thursday 25th March 2021). The candidate must ensure, the requirements for the membership of the Company's board of directors are fulfilled.
- To appoint the Auditors of the company and fix their remuneration for the financial year ended 31 December 2021.

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

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

For further information please contact on Telephone No. 95053198 or email: abuhamed1414@hotmail.com

Chairman

Legal Advisor

External Auditor

Myanmar nun pleads with forces

Yangon, Myanmar - Kneeling before them in the dust of a northern Myanmar city, Sister Ann Rose Nu Tawng begged a group of heavily armed police officers to spare 'the children' and take her life instead.

The image of the Catholic nun in a simple white habit, her hands spread, pleading with the forces of the country's new junta as they prepared to crack down on a protest, has gone viral and won her praise in the majority-Buddhist country.

"I knelt down... begging them not to shoot and torture the children, but to shoot me and kill me instead," she said on Tuesday.

Her act of bravery in the city of Myitkyina on Monday came as Myanmar struggles with the chaotic aftermath of the military's February 1 ouster of civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

As protests demanding the return of democracy have rolled on, the junta has steadily escalated its use of force, using tear gas, water cannon, rubber bullets, and live rounds.

Protesters took to the streets of Myitkyina, the capital of Kachin state, on Monday wearing hard hats and carrying home-made shields.

As police started massing around them, Sister Ann Rose Nu Tawng and two other nuns pleaded with them to leave.

"The police were chasing to arrest them and I was worried for the children," she said.

It was at that point that the 45 year old nun fell to her knees.

Moments later, as she was begging for restraint, the police



This handout photo released by the Myitkyina News Journal shows a nun pleading with police not to harm protesters in Myitkyina in Myanmar's Kachin state, on Monday (AFP)

started firing into the crowd of protesters behind her.

"The children panicked and ran to the front... I couldn't do anything but I was praying for God to save and help the children," she said.

First she saw a man shot in

the head fall dead in front of her - then she felt the sting of tear gas.

"I felt like the world was crashing," she said.

"I'm very sad it happened as I was begging them."

A local rescue team con-

firmed to AFP that two men were shot dead on the spot during Monday's clash, though it did not confirm whether live rounds or rubber bullets were used.

On Tuesday, one of the deceased, Zin Min Htet, was laid in a glass casket and transported

on a golden hearse covered in white and red flowers.

Mourners raised three fingers in a symbol of resistance, as a musical ensemble of brass instrument players, drummers and a bagpiper in crisp white uniforms led the funeral procession.

'All Myanmar is grieving'

Kachin, Myanmar's northernmost state, is home to the Kachin ethnic group, and the site of a years-long conflict between ethnic armed groups and the military.

Tens of thousands have fled their homes to displacement camps across the state - and among the organisations aiding them have been Christian groups.

Monday was not Sister Ann Rose Nu Tawng's first encounter with the security forces - on February 28 she made a similar plea for mercy, walking slowly towards police in riot gear, getting on her knees and pleading for them to stop. "I have thought myself dead already since February 28," she said of the day she made the decision to stand up to the armed police.

On Monday, she was joined by her fellow sisters and the local bishop, who surrounded her as she pleaded for mercy for the protesters. "We were there to protect our sister and our people because she had her life at risk," Sister Mary John Paul told AFP.

The city has seen frequent crackdowns from authorities since the coup, including a violent dispersal of peaceful teachers last month that sent several into hiding.

So far, more than 60 people have been killed in anti-coup demonstrations around the country, according to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners monitoring group.

Fear runs deep for Sister Ann Rose Nu Tawng, but she said she must be brave and will continue to stand up for 'the children'.

"I can't stand and watch without doing anything, seeing what's happening in front of my eyes while all Myanmar is grieving," she said.

AFP

US daily toll below 1,000 for first time in months

Washington, US - For the first time in nearly three and a half months, the United States recorded fewer than 1,000 deaths in a day from COVID-19 on Monday, according to Johns Hopkins University.

In 24 hours, 749 people died from the coronavirus, far below the peak of 4,473 deaths recorded on January 12.

The daily US death toll has not been below the thousand mark since November 29, when 822 people died in a 24-hour period.

That indicates that the slowdown in the epidemic is continuing in the United States, where infection rates and deaths have fallen to similar levels as before Halloween, Thanksgiving and other end-of-year holidays that were marked by travel and larger gatherings that boosted the spread of the virus.

The slowdown is good news for President Joe Biden, whose colossal US\$1.9tn aid plan suc-



President Joe Biden visits a vaccination centre, in Washington, DC (AFP)

cessfully passed the Senate on Saturday, and will bolster his large-scale vaccination strategy.

The US vaccine campaign launched in December is now in full swing, with nearly ten per cent of the American population - about 31.5mn people - having received either the two shots necessary for the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines, or the single shot in the case of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine.

Health authorities on Monday announced that vaccinated people could meet together in small groups indoors without wearing masks or the need for social distancing.

AFP

Meghan's father suggests she exaggerated British royal racism

London, UK - Meghan Markle's estranged father on Tuesday suggested that his daughter exaggerated racism in the British royal family during her interview with US chat show host Oprah Winfrey.

Thomas Markle told ITV the couple's two-hour chat with Winfrey was 'way over the top' and suggested a royal family member could have asked a 'dumb question' about her future baby's skin colour.

The 76 year old Emmy-winning former lighting director was interviewed from his home in Mexico by one of Meghan's most vehement critics, the former tabloid newspaper editor

Piers Morgan.

"They (Harry and Meghan) went way over the top with these stories with Oprah and should have waited, considering the Queen's age and Philip's age," he said of the CBS show broadcast on Sunday.

Harry's grandmother Queen Elizabeth II is 94 and her husband Prince Philip is 99 and currently in hospital recovering from a heart operation.

He played down Meghan and Harry's comments that an unnamed royal family member had asked how dark her baby's skin would be.

"This whole thing about colour and how dark the baby is,

is bullshit," said Markle, who is white while Meghan's mother is black.

"I'm guessing and hoping that it's just a dumb question from somebody. I don't think the British royal family are racist," he said.

At the same time, he said he was upset by his daughter's account of feeling suicidal after joining the royal family in 2018.

"Had I known she had psychological problems, I would have been there for her," he said.

But he claimed that Meghan had 'pretty much ghosted' her family in the US and 'she really had no one to reach out to'.

AFP

Gap in history: Afghans recall Taliban's destruction of famed Buddha statues

Bamiyan, Afghanistan - Afghanistan's giant Buddhas stood watch over the picturesque Bamiyan valley for centuries, surviving Mongol invasions and the harsh environment until the Taliban arrived with an apocalyptic worldview that did not care about one of the great wonders of antiquity.

After years of scorched-earth offensives across Afghanistan, the militants - who saw any representation of the human form as an affront to Islam - turned their attention to the two Buddhas in Bamiyan, peppering the carvings with tank shells and rocket fire before ultimately dynamiting them in March 2001.

To finish the job, the Taliban conscripted locals as porters to lug stacks of explosives to the base of the Buddhas, carved out of the cliff face in the 5th century.

Bamiyan resident Ghulam Sakhi said he is still haunted by the role he was forced to play in the destruction.



A man rides a donkey near the site of the demolished Buddha statues, in Bamiyan province on March 5 (AFP)

"It is not like a memory you could ever forget," he said, adding he was snatched from a market along with dozens of others to help rig the two giant Buddhist statues. "I was only thinking how to stay alive that day."

The destruction of the Buddhas has been considered one of the greatest archaeological crimes on record and put the Taliban's uncompromising beliefs on the world's radar just months before the September 11 attacks that triggered a US-led invasion of the country that ousted the extremists.

First mentioned in the writings of a Chinese pilgrim in 400 AD, the statues served as a testament to what was once a great Buddhist civilisation in the heart of the Hindu Kush that straddled the famed Silk Road.

The statues - one 55m high, the other 38m - were believed to have been carved painstakingly

by hand over lifetimes into the caramel-coloured sandstone cliffs in Bamiyan, alongside a network of ancient caves, monasteries and shrines, some of them still showing remnants of colourful frescos.

For generations Sakhi and his family took great pride in the archaeological treasures that briefly made the area a magnet for tourists flocking along the famed 'Hippy Trail' in the 1960s and 70s.

"Foreign tourists would come in big numbers to visit the statues and many, including my father, would provide them with food and other items in exchange for money," said Sakhi. "Work was good. Everyone - shopkeepers, drivers, landowners and others - would benefit from them."

But the arrival of the Taliban in the valley, with their heavy

weapons and hardline views, forever shattered the landscape of Bamiyan.

"They were a beautiful view, a source of hope for people," said Hamza Yosufi, a resident who witnessed the destruction.

The massive explosion, caught on camera, sent a shockwave through the lush valley, filling it with dust and smoke.

"It was terrifying... I was extremely heartbroken, everybody was," he said.

'They will destroy everything'

Few places in Afghanistan have benefited as much as Bamiyan since the fall of the Taliban regime.

The largely Shiite population has rebuilt schools, welcomed aid, and catered to one of the few international tourism destina-

tions left in the war-torn country thanks to the safety offered by its remote location.

"Had the Buddhas been still standing here, the tourism industry today would have flourished," said Ishaq Mowahed, the director of the culture department in Bamiyan.

But even the empty niches still attract tourists, he insisted.

Bamiyan's revival, however, is being eclipsed by fears the Taliban are on the verge of returning to power after signing a landmark deal with the US that could see foreign troops exit the country in coming months.

Few expect the government's beleaguered security forces to last long against the Taliban's withering onslaught without the protection of US airpower and its special forces.

AFP

FOOD THAT SPEAKS

Comfort food comprises any food that has a sentimental value or that which brings back nostalgic memories, and with it, a sense of wellbeing. Apart from providing nourishment for the body, such food also provides mental satisfaction, a feeling of contentment or solace, as well as works towards quietening any turbulence within the mind. Each one might have his/her own comfort food – for some it could be ice-cream, for some fries or pizza, for yet others, it could comprise their grandmother’s recipes or certain foods typically prepared by their loved ones. They bring back old memories, they help to connect with the past, to build up old bonds or refresh memories about those forgotten. Comfort food, in short, brings comfort by speaking to the heart and mind in a unique way that is understood only by the individual.

In the time of the pandemic, when families are separated from loved ones, typical family recipes comprise comfort food as it helps individuals connect with their loved ones without getting a chance to meet them. While comfort food may not always contribute to one’s good health, it definitely induces mental wellbeing.

Most popular comfort foods

Mac and Cheese



- Ingredients**
- 7tbsp unsalted butter, plus more for the dish
 - Kosher salt – to taste
 - 1 medium head cauliflower, cut into florets (about 4 cups)
 - 400g elbow macaroni
 - 2 stalks celery, finely chopped
 - 1 small onion, finely chopped
 - 2 cloves garlic - minced
 - 3/4 cup hot sauce, plus more for serving
 - 2tbsp all-purpose flour
 - 2tsp dry mustard
 - 2½ cups whole milk
 - 400g yellow Cheddar, cut into cubes
 - 250g pepper jack cheese - shredded
 - 2/3 cup sour cream
 - 1 cup bread crumbs
 - ½ cup crumbled blue cheese

- 2tbsp chopped fresh parsley
- Method**
- Preheat the oven to 180° C and butter a large baking dish. Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil and fill a large bowl with ice water. Cook the cauliflower in the boiling water until just tender, about 5 minutes. Use a slotted spoon to remove the cauliflower and immediately submerge it in the ice water to cool completely, then drain. Bring the salted water back to a boil and cook the pasta until al dente, about 7 minutes. Drain and set aside.
- Meanwhile, melt 3tbsp butter in a large skillet over medium heat. Add the celery and onion and cook until soft, about 5 minutes. Stir in the blanched cauliflower and garlic and cook 2 minutes, then add ½ cup hot sauce and simmer until slightly thick-

- ened, about 1 minute more.
- Melt 2tbsp butter in a medium saucepan over medium heat. Whisk in the flour and mustard until smooth. Whisk in the milk, then add the remaining ¼ cup hot sauce and stir until thick, about 2 minutes. Whisk in the Cheddar and pepper jack cheeses, then whisk in the sour cream until smooth.
- Spread half of the macaroni in the prepared baking dish and pour over about half of the cheese sauce. Top with the cauliflower mixture and the remaining macaroni. Pour the remaining cheese sauce evenly on top. Put the remaining 2tbsp butter in a bowl and microwave until melted. Stir in the breadcrumbs, blue cheese and parsley. Sprinkle over the macaroni and bake until bubbly (30 minutes). Let it cool, then serve with hot sauce.

Dal Khichdi



- Ingredients**
- ½ cup moong dal - soaked for 20 minutes
 - ½ cup rice - soaked for 20 minutes
 - 1tbsp ghee or butter
 - 1tsp cumin
 - A pinch of asafoetida
 - 1tsp ginger garlic paste
 - 1green chilli - slit, 1 bay leaf
 - 2tbsp coriander leaves finely chopped
 - 1 onion - sliced

- ½tsp turmeric
 - 1 tomato - minced
 - 3½ cup water
 - Salt – to taste
- Method**
- Heat 1tbsp ghee in a pressure cooker and add cumin, bay leaf and asafoetida and saute well. Add onion and saute till golden brown. Add ginger garlic paste, green chilli and tomato and saute for 2 minutes. Add

turmeric and salt to taste, followed by rice and dal. Keep the flame on low, and saute for a minute. Pour 3½ cups of water and stir well. If you need a thinner consistency, add an additional cup of water. Cover the lid and pressure cook for 6-8 minutes – lower the flame after the first whistle. Remove and release steam. Serve hot in a bowl, garnished with chopped coriander and any favourite pickle.

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WEEKEND SPECIAL

Finger Licking FARE

The weekend is yours, and you must make the most of it, to unwind as well as recharge your batteries for the next week. And what better way to do it than enjoying a wonderful finger-licking meal at home which transports you straight into another realm where flavours and aromas create a surreal ambience around you. Here's how to churn out a simple, yet delicious and spicy, meal for the weekend - one that will overpower your senses and leave you floored in an instant.

Let's make this weekend special with a memorable, spicy, Indian meal - Chicken Karhai accompanied by steamed rice and cucumber raita. Chicken Karhai is available in many avatars in different restaurants with different names (Chicken Handi, Chicken Masala, Chicken Do Pyaaza, Chicken Korma, you can add many more), but it all boils down to a spicy chicken curry that delivers a punch with every mouthful. So, if you are ready for some dynamite on your plate, this page is for you!

Chicken Karhai is traditionally a spicy, tomato-based gravy prepared with no water at all. Onion is usually not a part of this recipe, though some versions use onions to add volume to the gravy and to tone down the heat. However, with the right amount of tomatoes, you don't have to worry about letting the steam out of your ears. And with aromatic steamed rice and a cool cucumber raita on the side, this dish will descend with ease. So lets, get started!

Chicken Karhai

Ingredients

- 3tbsp oil or ghee
- 2 onions - sliced (optional)
- 8 cloves of garlic
- 2tsp ginger paste
- 2tsp julienned ginger
- 3-4 green chillies - slit
- 1tbsp cumin seeds
- 1tsp turmeric powder
- 2tsp red chilli powder or
- 1tbsp red chilli paste
- 2tsp coriander powder
- 1tsp cumin powder
- 1tsp garam masala
- Salt - to taste
- 5 medium sized tomatoes - chopped
- 1 chicken - chopped to large chunks
- ½ cup yoghurt - whipped
- juice of half lemon
- 2tbsp chopped coriander

Method

Heat the oil and fry onions till golden brown (or skip using onions). Crush the garlic with a stone and add it to the oil along with the ginger paste and 2 slit green chillies. Saute for 2-3 minutes. Add cumin seeds and saute for 1 minute. Then, add turmeric, chilli powder, coriander powder, cumin powder, and salt and saute for 2 minutes. Add the chopped tomatoes, mix well and cook on low flame for 15-20 minutes, covered, until the oil separates. Add chicken and continue to cook on low flame for 6-8 minutes, covered. Now, add the yoghurt, garam masala powder, and lemon juice, and mix well. Cover and cook on low flame for 10 minutes, until chicken is nice and tender. Garnish with julienned ginger, 2 slit green chillies, and chopped coriander leaves.



RICE TIP
Adding a few drops of lemon juice to the cooking water helps prevent the rice from sticking together

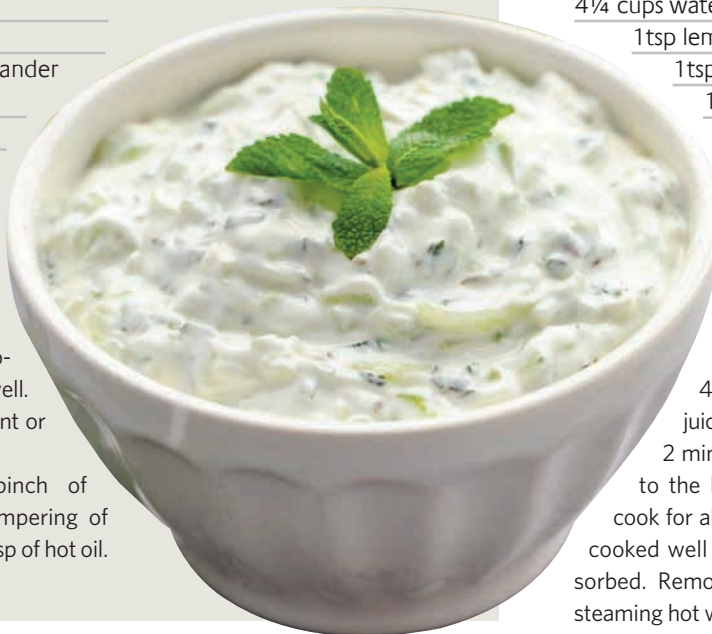
Cucumber Raita

Ingredients

- 1 medium cucumber
- 2 cups thick yoghurt
- 1 sprig of mint or coriander leaves
- A pinch of salt

Method

Peel and chop the cucumber to thin, small bits. Whip up the yoghurt in a large bowl. Add a pinch of salt and the chopped cucumber, and mix well. Garnish with chopped mint or coriander leaves. Optionally, add a pinch of paprika powder or a tempering of ½tsp of cumin seeds in 1tsp of hot oil.



Steamed Rice

Ingredients

- 2 cups basmati rice
- (or any long grain rice)
- 4¼ cups water
- 1tsp lemon juice
- 1tsp ghee
- 1 bay leaf

Method

Soak the rice in warm water for 30 minutes

Heat oil in a large pan and add the bay leaf. After 10 seconds, add the soaked rice, 4¼ cups water, and lemon juice. Cook on medium flame for 2 minutes, then reduce the flame to the lowest possible. Cover and cook for about 15 minutes, until rice is cooked well and all water has been absorbed. Remove and set aside to serve steaming hot with the Chicken Karhai.



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