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UAE TO GRANT VIRUS EXPERTS 'GOLDEN' 10-YEAR RESIDENCE VISA
GO TO PAGE 16 WORLD

Oman ranked 48th in world in mobile Internet speed

Sultanate ensures better speed than countries like the UK, Spain and Malaysia

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Mobile Internet speed in Oman is better than many developed European and South Asian countries, according to the world's leading Internet speed test provider, Ookla.

The Speedtest Global Index by Ookla compares Internet speed data from around the world on a monthly basis. Data for the index comes from hundreds of millions of tests taken every month and over 10mn unique tests conducted every day using Speedtest.

The index for September



2020 shows that Oman is ranked 48th in the world with mobile Internet download speed of 39.20Mbps and upload speed of 15.29Mbps. Oman is far from being in the top ten but ensures better speed for its

users than countries like Spain (50th), the UK (56th), Japan (58th), Malaysia (81st), Russia (88th), India (131st) and some other countries.

Countries from the GCC are among the best with the UAE

ranked third in the world for mobile Internet speed (109.43Mbps), Qatar fourth (92.85Mbps), Saudi Arabia seventh (76.37Mbps), Kuwait 17th (57.39Mbps), and Bahrain 36th (42.85Mbps).

South Korea (121Mbps) tops the index, followed by China (113.35Mbps) in the second place and the Netherlands ranked fifth (79.70Mbps).

Speedtest estimated the global average download speed in September was 35.96Mbps and upload speed was 11.22Mbps for mobile Internet. For fixed broadband, the global average for download was 85.73Mbps and 45.74Mbps for upload.

In terms of fixed broadband speed, Oman is ranked 72nd (45.65Mbps) in the world, while the UAE is at 28th rank (118.52Mbps) leading in the GCC. The Emirates is followed by Kuwait at 32nd rank (111.03Mbps), Qatar at 44th (89.59Mbps), Saudi Arabia at 49th (73.45Mbps) and Bahrain at 63rd (49.92Mbps).

Will a vaccine end COVID-19 and bring life back to normal?

Shaddad al Musalmay
Muscat

Announcements from pharmaceutical companies claiming being close to a breakthrough to help bring an end to the ongoing global health crisis appears to have given a false sense of safety to some. It has prompted people to think the nightmare of the last nine months is over and throw caution to the wind as they start ignoring social distancing and other precautionary measures.

Last week, Pfizer and BioNTech announced a vaccine jointly developed which they claim is 90 per cent effective in preventing COVID-19 infections in ongoing Phase 3 trials. The companies expect to supply up to 50mn vaccine doses globally in 2020, and up to 1.3bn doses in 2021.

But will a vaccine alone be enough to stop the pandemic and allow life to return to normal any time soon? Only time will tell, according to experts. They believe the worst isn't over and reiterate the need to continue observing social distancing and other precautionary measures.

"While we are optimistic fol-



We all hope that soon we will have a vaccine and herd immunity in the public to stop the transmission of infection and control the disease

DR SULAIMAN
AL SHEREIQI

lowing the recent news about the 90 per cent effectiveness of the vaccine from Pfizer, we should also be realistic in our expectations. The vaccine is still in testing phase and once it is approved, the demand for it and other possible vaccines will be high which will make countries wait for what they need," said Dr Sulaiman al Shereiqli, senior specialist in public health at the Ministry of Health.

"Therefore, until the time health authorities announce that there is no need for public health measures, we should all follow them strictly. We all hope that soon we will have a vaccine and herd immunity in the public to stop the transmission of infection and control the disease. But we must also bear in mind that such type of viruses are known to mutate and re-emerge in new a form that would require a new vaccine," he added.

According to Dr Shereiqli, he can't emphasise enough the need to remember the lessons of the last nine months. "We shouldn't forget them once this pandemic is over, especially the habits of washing hands with soap and water frequently and wearing masks that we have cultivated."

Dr K P Raman, chairman and cardiologist - Al Hayat International Hospital, said, "There are talks about vaccine trials and news about it to be launched soon for the public. This is very positive and a moment to cheer in these dark times that COVID-19 has plunged the world into since March this year."

Continued on Page 05

On the occasion of the glorious **50th** National Day,
we extend our sincere congratulations and best wishes to

His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik
- May Allah Protect Him -

We wish His Majesty good health and long life.
We wish the people of Oman further progress and prosperity.

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Sheikh Khalili appreciates HM's trust in State Council

Muscat - Based on the Royal Order of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the State Council convened its second annual session of the seventh term on Sunday.

The session was chaired by Sheikh Abdul Malik bin Abdullah al Khalili, State Council Chairman, in the presence of the honourable council members, the secretary general of the council and the participation of some of members virtually.

In his opening speech, the council chairman expressed his honour and sincere loyalty to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik for the confidence he has bestowed on the council to advance their responsibility and to ensure the achievement of the objectives set for the council, in accordance with the provisions of the Basic Statute of the State.

On the occasion of the opening of the second annual session of the seventh term, the chairman praised the accomplishments of the council made over the past six terms, recording his appreciation for the efforts made by the previous chairman, members and the general secretariat.

He emphasised that the council will continue to enhance the consultative march and consolidate its practice, in accordance with the lofty vision of the



Sheikh Abdul Malik bin Abdullah al Khalili

founder the Late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said, which culminated in the establishment of the Council of Oman, constituted by the State Council and Majlis A'Shura as per the Basic Law of the State, issued by Royal Decree No 101/96.

The council chairman highlighted the current period of the council's work and said that it represents a new historical shift, parallel in its importance with the founding period, because it is the first period of the council under a new era under the wise leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik.

Further on, he explained that the vision includes improving the economic situation and achieving financial balance and related issues, which will be the council's first and main task during the present and future period.

He referred to the constructive steps taken since January, which aimed to improve the sultanate's economic situation by restructuring the state's administrative apparatus and government companies, with the aim of developing their performance and improving investment capacity. This is in order to achieve financial balance and raise the efficiency of economic performance. He explained that the efforts in this field was crowned with the blessing of His Majesty the Sultan in October, for the Medium-Term Fiscal plan (2020-2024).

He indicated that it is an ambitious plan, and efforts should be combined to support it, because it aims to achieve sustainable economic levels and create financial conditions that support Oman Vision 2040.

At the end of his speech, the chairman of the council, prayed to God Almighty to help the council achieve its goals and contribute to supporting the national development march under the wise leadership of His Majesty the Sultan.

The council approved the minutes of the 11th ordinary session of the first annual session of the seventh period, and reviewed the report of the general secretariat on the council's activities.

Majlis A'Shura elects deputy chairman

Muscat - In response to the Royal Order of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, Majlis A'Shura on Sunday opened its second annual sitting of the ninth term (2019-2023), under the chairmanship of Khalid bin Hilal al Maawali.

During the session, the Majlis

opened nominations for the position of the deputy chairman.

Four members contested the election, including Abdullah bin Khalifa al Majali, Ali bin Ahmed al Maashani, Malik bin Hilal al Yahmadi and Yaqoub bin Mohammed al Harthi. Harthi, was voted as deputy chairman.

The chairman, members and employees of the general secretariat of Majlis A'Shura extended their sincere congratulations to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on the occasion of the 50th National Day, praying for many more such occasions in the future.





Oman celebrates its 50th
National Day of the Renaissance
under the wise leadership of
His Majesty Sultan
Haitham bin Tarik

Our sincere greetings to His Majesty &
the people of Oman on this occasion



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Warm greetings to
His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik
and the people of Oman on
the occasion of the **50th National Day**



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BIG DAY

How will you celebrate the 50th National Day?

Sultan Rawahi
Private sector employee

National Day is a big day. Even though we cannot celebrate in groups, I will be celebrating with my family. I will adorn my house with the national flag and photos of both the Late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said and His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik.



M P Afeefa Fathima
Student

It's our 50th National Day - a very special day. In the morning, I will pray to God, particularly for the Late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said. I will give charity to people who are in need of food, clothes and money. I will go with my family to see the lights and decorations. We will end our celebration with a beautiful dinner.



Marjan Nuha
Student

I will spend the National Day with my family on a road trip in and around Muscat admiring the country's natural beauty, culture and hospitality. We will do a barbecue at home and enjoy the weather in the evening.



Muna Basheer al Zadjali
Private sector employee

The National Day is an important event for all Omanis. But November, this year, has come upon us with the loss of the Late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said, who established Oman as a modern state with great achievements. Out of love for him and for what he did over 50 years, we will show our loyalty and fondly remember the Late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos.



Abdul Wahid Khan Nizami
Engineer

This year's National Day will be celebrated differently. While 2020 has been a challenging year, it should not stop Oman from celebrating the country's birthday. In a way, we are celebrating our resilience and tenacity as a nation. We'll stay at home, but celebrate in style. Now is the best chance to bond with the family. Gather your loved ones together and have a casual meeting with delicious food.



Ali al Sheyadi
Teacher

Every year at this time of the year, we celebrate and this year is not an exception. I will decorate my car and my house with flags. This year will be different without the Late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said, but we pray for him. I will also be hanging photographs of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and the Late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos.



Salim Salih al Bulushi
Insurance company employee

I will post the Late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said and His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik's photographs in WhatsApp and list the reasons why I am so happy to be part of this nation and wish for it to have more of peace and prosperity.



Pearl Dsouza
Music teacher

I will celebrate the day by spending quality and a memorable time with my husband who's always busy with work and our baby. I'll cook something fun, play games at home and watch movies. We'll miss going out. God bless Our Sultan and our homeland Oman.



Dr Zainab Ansari
Investor

I am going to buy a nice cup of coffee or tea and drive around looking at the lights on National Day. I will pray for Baba Qaboos and spend time on the manuscript I'm currently working on.



? NEXT ON YOUR SAY

What impact did the COVID-19 pandemic have on your National Day celebrations?

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

50th National Day Celebrations

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947 new COVID-19 cases, 12 deaths in three days

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Health (MoH) on Sunday confirmed 947 new cases of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) in the last three days, taking the total to 120,389. Twelve deaths and 1,046 recoveries were reported for the same period.

'The number of recoveries has increased to 111,096, while the total number of deaths now stands at 1,338,' an MoH statement said. As of Sunday, a total of 300 patients were admitted in health institutions, including 138 in ICUs.

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

MoH advises all citizens and

CASES FROM NOV 6 TO NOV 15	
Nov 6 to 8 (Average of 324)	973
Nov 9	363
Nov 10	381
Nov 11	302
Nov 12	256
Nov 13 to Nov 15 (Average - 315)	947

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

WORSHIPPERS' CALL ANSWERED



More than 700 mosques reopened after months of closure with worshippers following strict social distancing and precautionary guidelines. Zahir al Hosani, director of Mosques Department in the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs, said registration is open for more mosques to reopen (Syed Fasiuddin)

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Month-long ‘Made in Oman’ campaign kicks off

Muscat - A month-long ‘Made in Oman’ campaign will be launched in stores, supermarkets and malls across the sultanate on Monday.

The campaign is organised by the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion in partnership with Authority of Small & Medium Enterprises Development, Consumer Protection Authority, Ma-dayn and Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, as well as representatives from the business community. It is designed to support local producers and manufacturers to encourage consumers across the sultanate to buy locally produced goods.

Noting the tremendous support received from collaborators and partners in the Made in Oman campaign, H E Qais bin Mohammed bin Moosa al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, said, “We are proud of Omani products and where they have reached in the global market. It is therefore with immense pride that we launch this campaign as part of the ministry’s activities to mark and celebrate the very special occasion of Oman’s 50th National Day. With the ultimate objective of encouraging consumers to buy local, the Made in Oman campaign will showcase and raise the profile of the wide range of items grown and made in the sultanate both by large manufacturers as well as small and medium enterprises along with the incredible services our great local businesses provide. In doing so, the campaign will inform consumers about the impact buying local has on communities across the country and its importance for us as a nation.”

He explained that a key goal of the campaign is to get consumers to see Omani products, produce and services in a new light, and doing more than just talking about the GDP and how trials spent on local products help long-term growth.

It will also be showing real examples of how ‘going local’ is already helping create quality jobs for young people as well as making a difference to everyday life. The success Omani products enjoy in international markets will also be highlighted through the Made in Oman campaign.

ONA

AOU inks deal to build campus in Muscat



Our Correspondent
Muscat

Coinciding with the sultanate’s celebrations of the 50th National Day, Arab Open University (AOU) Oman has signed an agreement with Gulf International Contracting company to construct its building in Muscat.

The agreement was signed by Dr Moosa al Kindi, director of the university, and Sheikh Ahmed Abdullah al Hoqani, CEO of Gulf International Contracting.

Spread over 20,000sqm, the university building construction will cost around RO10mn. The building will be delivered at the end of 2022.

Kindi said that the new university building will have three floors. The ground floor will include departments such as admissions and registration, student affairs, theatre hall with equipment, and a learning resource centre in addition to a prayer room for men and another for women, a clinic, special places for student activities and a coffee shop. The first floor will include classrooms, computer labs and academic offices, while the second floor will include classrooms, meeting rooms, academic offices, and the academic and administrative departments.

“The building will be equipped with advanced information network and computer systems. The university provides high-quality programmes that contribute to the growth of society and will be a beacon of knowledge and support for this country under the leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik,” Kindi said.

Will a vaccine end COVID-19 and bring life back to normal?

Continued from Page 01

But he’s quick to add that we need to be more circumspect. “By the time the vaccine is commercially manufactured and distributed in every nook and corner of the world, it may take as long as one year from now. So we need not go overboard with the news of the vaccine’s arrival. There are still many things not yet clarified about the vaccine.”

Among the questions foremost on Dr Raman’s mind is - what percentage of people will develop immunity? He’s also eager to know how long the immunity lasts. “Can the immunity be measured by some tests? Are there any unknown or immeasurable immune mechanisms playing a role in provision or non-provision of immunity?” he asked.

US biotech firm Moderna, several state-run Chinese labs, and a European project led by the University of Oxford and AstraZeneca are also thought to be closing in on potentially viable vaccines.

Two Russian COVID-19 vaccines have been registered for use even before clinical trials were completed, but have not been widely accepted outside of Russia.

“All these are using different antigenic stimuli to evoke immunity in the recipient. We still do not know comparative merits and demerits of these vaccines. Even the potential side effects are not yet known. Therefore, I have guarded enthusiasm and optimism. With time, the mystery will unfold but ultimately man will beat the virus,” Dr Raman said.

Pfizer said it is gathering two months of safety data following the final dose - a requirement of the US Food and Drug Administration - to qualify for Emergency Use Authorisation, which it expects by the third week in November.

NOTICE

Referring to the announcement of Al-Maha Petroleum Products Marketing company SAOG for offering a tender to construct a fuel station in Quroun area in the Wilayat of Jalan Bani Bu Hassan at South Sharqiyah Governorate, which was published on Sunday (15/11/2020) in Muscat Daily newspaper.

The company explains that the location of the station to be built will be located in **Jalan Bani Bu Hassan** not Jalan Bani Bu Ali .

الأنوار القابضة ش.م.ع.ع AL ANWAR HOLDINGS SAOG

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DIRECTORS’ REPORT

Dear Shareholders,

On behalf of the Board of Directors I am pleased to present the un-audited consolidated results of Al Anwar Holdings SAOG (AAH) for the half year ended 30 September 2020.

Financial Overview of Al Anwar Group

The unaudited consolidated financial statements presented are an outcome of the following:

- The revenues generated and the costs incurred up to 30 June 2020 by its subsidiaries namely:
 - Al Anwar International Investment LLC, 100% subsidiary of AAH,
 - Al Anwar Taleem LLC (Formerly known as Al Anwar Development LLC), 100% subsidiary of AAH,
 - Al Anwar Hospitality SAOC, 100% subsidiary of AAH and
 - Al Anwar Industrial Investments SAOC (under formation), 100% subsidiary of AAH
- The Share of Profit (Loss) achieved by Associate Companies up to 30 June 2020 (Al Ruwad International Education Services SAOC up to 31st July 2020) in which AAH owns between 20% and 50% of their share capital or where AAH has significant influence on the Board of Directors of the company,
- Dividends from investments,
- Realized gains made from divestments,
- Realised and un-realised gains / losses from other listed & unlisted securities.

AAH has maintained a prudent and pro-active approach towards managing its investments. Business clusters of our Group companies are making efforts to have continued stability in the present challenging economic environment. Certain associates have been resilient in this difficult market conditions due to COVID-19 and consequently have maintained their profitability. However, certain other investments have not done well due to the adverse market conditions. Overall, we are confident that our investee companies will sail through these difficult times.

We reported a consolidated net loss of OMR 421,000 for the half year ended on 30 September 2020 as against profit of OMR 112,000 for the half year ended on 30 September 2019. We recorded unrealized losses of OMR 438,000 during this period due to the decrease in market value of some of our investments. The unrecorded interest income from Ominvest Bonds as at 30 September 2020 amounted to OMR 174,000.

The loss per share was 2 Baisa for the period ended on 30 September 2020.

Net asset per share of the Group is 154 Baisas per share on 30 September 2020 as against 163 Baisas per share on 30 September 2019.

Updates on Investments

1. Al Maha Ceramics SAOG

The Company has reported revenue of OMR 4,281,945 for the half year ended on 30 June 2020, as compared with OMR 3,841,018 for previous period, a growth of 11%. Net profit after tax for the period is OMR 695,163 as compared to OMR 547,693 in the previous period, a growth of 27%, which is mainly due to increase in the sales revenue, effective cost control measures.

2. Voltamp Energy SAOG

The Company has reported revenue of OMR 17,475,118 for the half year ended on 30 June 2020, as compared with OMR 18,925,430 for previous period, a decline of 8%. Net loss after tax (Attributable to shareholders of Parent Company) for the period is OMR 28,621 compared to Net Profit of OMR 150,822 in the previous period, a decline of 81%. Due to lockdown related to COVID-19, the Company faced many challenges including availability of workforce, delay in inflow of material, inability of customers to attend final inspection, which resulted in lower revenue during second quarter. The Company has taken many measures to control both direct and indirect costs to reduce the impact of reduction in revenue.

3. Arabia Falcon Insurance Company SAOG

The Company has reported Gross Written Premium of OMR 8,567,009 during the half year ended on 30 June 2020 as compared to OMR 8,968,590 for the previous period, a decline of 4%. The Net profit after tax for the period is OMR 654,518 compared to OMR 554,515 in previous period, an increase of 18%. This was due to better underwriting income combined with increase in investment income. The management is working on other classes of business to mitigate the decline of the premium.

4. Al Ruwad International for Education Services SAOC

The Company has reported decline in revenue and profitability for the year ended on 31 July 2020, primarily due to decline in student enrolment at the beginning of the academic year. Certain student moved to other schools with lower fees.

5. National Biscuits Industries Ltd. SAOG

The Company has reported revenue of OMR 12,694,553 for the half year ended on 30 June 2020, compared with OMR 12,551,496 for previous period, a growth of 1%. Net profit after tax for the period is OMR 875,419 as compared to OMR

770,297 in the previous period, a growth of 14%, which is primarily due to better product mix and cost control.

6. National Detergent Co. SAOG

The Company reported revenues of OMR 10,816,020 for the half year ended on 30 June 2020, as compared with OMR 10,740,646 for the previous period, a growth of 1%. Net profit for the period is OMR 715,657 as compared to OMR 364,706 in the previous period, a growth of 96%. Net profit increased significantly due to cost savings programs and effective pricing practices.

7. Oman Chlorine SAOG

The Oman Chlorine Group has reported revenue of OMR 7,963,000 for the half year ended on 30 June 2020 as compared with OMR 7,460,000 in the previous period, a growth of 7%. The net profit (Attributable to Parent Company Shareholders) for the period is OMR 48,000 as compared to profit of OMR 433,000 in the previous period, a decline of 89%. This significant decline is mainly on account of losses reported by the subsidiaries located in UAE and Qatar. The Oman operation reported a net profit of OMR 695,000 compared to previous period of OMR 949,000 a decline of 27%.

The expansion of its current plant in Sohar from 45 to 75 tons per day is scheduled to come in to production by June 2021.

Union Chlorine LLC, UAE, a subsidiary, has declared net loss of OMR 350,000 during the half year ended on 30 June 2020. The parent company’s share of loss is OMR 210,000. Despite the plant operating at capacity utilization of 102%, the revenue was lower due to lower international price of caustic flakes and consequently the subsidiary incurred losses.

Gulf Chlorine WLL, Qatar, a subsidiary, has declared a loss of OMR 854,000 during the half year ended 30 June 2020 and share of parent company is OMR 436,000. The current capacity utilization of the main plant is still low at 42% and this is the major reason for the losses. The calcium chloride plant was expected to be fully operational by end third quarter 2020, but has been further delayed.

Outlook

We foresee a challenging year ahead due to temporary suspension of public activities to contain the COVID-19 pandemic in Oman and around the world, and the significant drop in oil prices due to a number of political and economic factors.

In the current capital market, AAH sees opportunity to make further investment and we are exploring opportunities in our strategic sectors, which will diversify our investment portfolio.

We are confident that AAH and its Group companies will continue to play a pivotal role in Oman’s economic growth, create job opportunities for Omani nationals, and attract foreign investments in the Sultanate of Oman.

Thanks, and Appreciation

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I would like to take this opportunity to express our greetings and good wishes to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, and pray to Allah to grant him and his Government success to lead the country and the people to greater prosperity and progress. I would also like to convey our loyalty, gratitude and extreme thanks to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and to His Majesty’s Government for all round sustainable development in the Sultanate.

As you all are aware that HE Qais bin Mohamed Al Yousef has been appointed as the Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, by Royal Decree 111/2020, and consequently he had to relinquish the Directorship of Al Anwar Holdings SAOG with effect from 19 August 2020. We acknowledge his significant contributions to the sustainable growth of our Company and the Group over the last 20 years. His contributions were very valuable in providing the strategic directions to our Group which has enabled us to achieve tremendous growth in our shareholders’ value. We wish him great success in his new responsibilities and pray for his continued success.

The Board records its sincere appreciation to Ministry of Commerce and Industry and Investment Promotion, Capital Market Authority, Muscat Securities Market, Bankers, Auditors, and Shareholders for their continued support to AAH and the group companies.

I would also like to express my sincere appreciation to the Board of Directors of all Al Anwar Group companies for direction given to the managements of the respective companies. I place on record my sincere thanks and appreciation for the dedicated efforts of the management team and all employees of the group companies.

I would also like to convey my sincere thanks to the Shareholders of AAH for the confidence they have reposed in the company and its Board.

For & on behalf of the Board of Directors of
Al Anwar Holdings SAOG

Masoud Humaid Al Harthy
Chairman

November 11, 2020

UNAUDITED INTERIM CONSOLIDATED STATEMENTS OF FINANCIAL POSITION for six month ended 30th September 2020

	30 Sept 2020 OMR’000	30 Sept 2019 OMR’000	Audited 31 March 2020 OMR’000
ASSETS			
Investment in associates	31,484	31,287	31,109
Investments at fair value	15,242	16,302	15,743
Property and other assets	2,210	2,134	2,189
Receivables	233	202	864
Cash and bank balances	140	564	1,182
TOTAL ASSETS	49,309	50,489	51,087
Equity			
Share capital	20,000	20,000	20,000
Legal reserve	4,568	4,550	4,568
Fair value reserve	(502)	(208)	(294)
Retained earnings	6,728	8,302	8,349
Equity attributable to shareholders of Parent Company	30,794	32,644	32,623
Liabilities:			
Bank borrowings	18,388	17,746	18,350
Payables	127	99	114
TOTAL LIABILITIES	18,515	17,845	18,464
TOTAL EQUITY AND LIABILITIES	49,309	50,489	51,087
Net assets per share attributable to shareholders of the Parent Company (in Baisas)	154	163	163

UNAUDITED INTERIM CONSOLIDATED STATEMENTS OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE SIX MONTH PERIOD ENDED 30th September 2020

	30 Sept 2020 OMR’000	30 Sept 2019 OMR’000
Share of results of associates	597	525
Interest income	317	574
Realised (loss) profit on sale of investment	(139)	12
Net decrease in value of investment	(438)	(227)
Other income	16	13
Net income	353	897
Administrative expenses	(176)	(218)
Financing charges	(547)	(530)
Corporate social responsibility	(23)	(5)
Director fees	(28)	(32)
Total expenses	(774)	(785)
(Loss) Profit for the period attributable to Equity holders of Parent Company	(421)	112
Other comprehensive income (expense):		
Share of other comprehensive loss of associates	(179)	(53)
Net decrease in value of investment	(29)	(19)
Other comprehensive loss for the period	(208)	(72)
Total comprehensive (loss) income for the period attributable to Equity holders of Parent Company	(629)	40
Earnings (loss) profit per share attributable to shareholders of Parent Company (in Baisas)	(2)	1

Note: The complete accounts will be sent by mail to any shareholder who requests them in Arabic or English as requested, within 7 days of receipt of the request.

Ahlibank to celebrate 50th National Day with 50 winners

Celebrating the landmark occasion of the sultanate’s 50th National Day, ahlibank promises big wins to its accountholders, as 50 of them stand a chance to win RO1,000 each. Ahlibank’s special draw worth RO50,000 for National Day holds up the bank’s commitment to promote a savings culture amongst the citizens of the country.

To be eligible for the special draw, a customer must have maintained an average monthly balance of RO100, and have a minimum amount of RO100 available in the account on draw day. The draw will take place at ahlibank’s Mussannah branch end of November

Expressing his best wishes on the occasion of the National Day, Muneer al Balushi – AGM, head of Retail Distribution, ahlibank, said, “The 50th National Day is a milestone in the history of our beloved nation. It marks a new era, a new renaissance and we, at ahlibank, are excited for a promising future for the people of Oman. As a trusted financial partner for several individuals, ahlibank aims to play a significant role in Oman’s growth journey, by promoting responsible banking, financial inclusivity and most importantly encourage a culture of savings. On behalf of the ahlibank family, I would like to congratulate His Majesty



Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, and the Omani people, on the continuation of Oman’s upward trajectory.”

Ahli Bank’s wide-ranging products and services are designed to provide a hassle-free banking experience to its customers. The bank’s Wafra Prize scheme provides an opportunity for accountholders to win big through a wide range of prize-draws all through the year.

Speaking about the bank’s prize schemes and a customer-first approach, Balushi further

stated, “At ahlibank, we are proud of our Wafra prize scheme which has lived up to its objective of promoting a savings culture among the people of Oman. Ahlibank’s annual National Day prize draw is not only big on the prize money but is also curated to award as many people as possible. We believe this motivates more people to participate and maintain a fair balance in their bank accounts. Ever since its inception, ahlibank has exhibited key strengths in customer experience and ease of banking, as it

has remained committed to providing the best offers, and introducing banking solutions that meet the needs of the customers’ lifestyle. The bank has laid down a strong foundation for an unmatched banking practice and continues to adopt advanced technologies to support this line of thought.”

It is worth mentioning here that the 2020 Wafra prize scheme awards total prizes worth over RO1.8mn to more than 1,300 customers across ahlibank’s branches in the sul-

tanate. These are given away across Weekly, Monthly, Salary Transfer, Children’s, Youth, as well as other ‘Premium and Exclusive’ prize-draws.

Wafra’s weekly Prize Scheme rewards one customer from each branch with RO500, and the bank will draw a grand prize ‘Salary for Life’ at the end of the fourth quarter of this year, where one winner will be rewarded with a huge prize of RO250,000. All details of the various draws are announced on the bank’s social media platforms.



Grand Millennium’s Kids Virtual Cooking Class on Nov 18

With the success of the kids virtual cooking classes, Grand Millennium Muscat and Millennium Executive Apartments announced the next special event in connection with the celebration of Oman 50th National Day.

On November 18, children are invited to join a fun, interactive and engaging Kids Virtual Cooking Class where they will decorate a National Day themed cake. Half of the fees for the participation in this event will go to Children First Association, a local charity working to support childhood across Oman.

Young chefs will get a chance to unleash their creativity by decorating a colourful, delicious Vanilla Fruit cake. With interac-

tive instructions from Executive Sous Chef Rafael, kids will learn new culinary skills, boost their confidence in cooking at the same time enjoy fun hands-on learning, and get the tasty cake to share with the family at home.

Luca Medda, cluster general manager of Grand Millennium Muscat and Millennium Executive Apartments, said, “Though we are currently facing a tough time during the pandemic, we are immensely proud to celebrate the 50th National Day. We are looking forward to hosting Oman’s largest Kids Virtual Cooking Class.”

Contact 96402525, banquets.gmm@millenniumhotels.com.



Entrepreneurship Award ceremony on Nov 23

The main committee of the Entrepreneurship Award announced recently that a ceremony announcing winners of the fourth edition of the award will be hosted on Monday, November 23. The event will take place under the auspices of H H Sayyid Taimur bin Asaad bin Tariq al Said. The award is organised by the Public Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development in partnership with Oman Telecommunications Company (Omantel) for the second consecutive edition.

This year’s theme of the award is ‘Competition and Innovation’ as these attributes reflect the award’s goals of instilling a culture of entrepreneurship within the community. It also aims to promote excellence and innovation as well as strengthen the capacities of SMEs to further compete in the market. Furthermore, the initiative seeks to reinforce In-Country Value (ICV) by allying with local businesses and driving the Sultanate’s efforts of economic diversification based on knowledge and technological advancements.

Previously, the award’s assessment team concluded the

assessment phase for all categories. This phase included visiting participants and interviewing them based on a set of criteria approved by the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM), which is a non-profit organisation established to support sustainable economic development.

Succeeding the assessments, participants moved to the judging phase, which was conducted by 11 jurors selected locally and internationally. The jurors are well-known for their extensive experience in the field of entrepreneurship and were chosen as per specific criteria and fields in line with the award’s categories.

This year’s edition consists of two main categories. The first one is the ‘Entrepreneur Award’, which comprises the Best Entrepreneur Award, Best Home Project, Best Small Enterprise Award, Best Micro Enterprise Award and Best Medium Enterprise Award. The second category is the ‘Entrepreneurship Supporters Award’, consisting of Best Finance Award, Best Corporate Support Award, Government Best Supporting Agency, Best Educational Initiative Award, Best Media Initia-

tive Award and Best Development Initiative Award.

The fourth edition of the award also witnesses an increase in the amounts dedicated to the sub-categories under Entrepreneurship Award to RO180,000. The total is divided into RO87,000 as cash prizes and RO93,000 for support programmes aimed at developing skills and knowledge of the winners.

The support programmes provided by the award will be open to all participants who qualified for the judging phase to help them further enhance their capabilities and encourage them to innovate. This, ultimately, will accomplish the award’s objectives of developing the national SMEs and uplifting this vital sector in the sultanate.

The fourth edition has outdone previous awards in terms of participation as it witnessed the highest number of contenders.

Around 691 people entered for various categories. Muscat saw the largest number with 302 participants, followed by the Governorate of Dakhliyah with 77 entries and North Batinah with 75.

Omren introduces IPv6 to its members

Due to the continuous rapid growth in the number of devices connected to the Internet, and the shortage of IPv4 addressing protocol, universities and colleges will face challenges in providing their services to students and researchers over the Internet using IPv4 addressing. The World Telecommunication Standardisation Assembly (WTSA) and the World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC) have recently issued decisions related to addressing the issue of the IP protocol, stressing the need to build local capacities related to publishing IPv6 addresses. Consequently, institutions started the transformation from IPv4 to IPv6, as an international response to those challenges.

Coping with these international efforts, Oman Research and Education Network (Omren), which is a national nonprofit project initiated by the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation launched the IPv6 service and urged its affiliated institutions to activate this service.

Omren, along with is the regional Internet registry (RIR) for Europe, West Asia, and the former USSR (RIPE NCC) and the



Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) will align their efforts and arrange multiple online workshops for the technical staff and specialists to support and encourage them in activating the IPv6 for Omren community from now onward.

Many of Omren members who are 50 universities and colleges, agreed to take immediate actions towards this critical move. The Middle East College is the first Omren member to achieve the target and activate this service at their network, thanks to their IT team for always trying to be ahead and leading in progress. The college implemented the IPv6 in contin-

uation of its ongoing efforts to enhance the students’ educational experience and empower the teaching and learning process. IPv6 will allow the college to secure an unlimited number of devices over the internet, which will enhance the students’ online learning experience.

“We are extremely proud to be the first Omren member to have successfully implemented IPV6 on our network infrastructure. I’d like to thank Omren and Omantel for their support and assistance in making this possible. This is an important step ahead for us in enhancing the support offered to our students and staff in their activities of teaching, learning, research

and innovation. We’d also upgraded our core technology infrastructure recently, doubling the server and storage capacity to facilitate virtual teaching and learning and encourage online collaboration,” dean of the Middle East College said.

It is worth mentioning that Omren is an Initiative by Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation to connect and support the research and education community in the sultanate. It also seeks to provide this community with a collaboration infrastructure adapted to their needs, through the collaborations with the international research and education communities.

Ooredoo issues National Day recharge cards

In celebration of the sultanate’s 50th National Day, Ooredoo has launched a set of vibrant, limited-edition recharge cards. Getting in on the festive mood, the card features the official 50th National Day logo and thanks to the new multi-charge recharge format, its more environmentally friendly too! Coming in two denominations – RO1 and RO2, the cards are available for all mobile and fixed prepaid customers, and can be purchased at over 400 locations across Oman.

Raed Mohammed Dawood, director of Branding, Communications and Corporate Affairs at



Ooredoo, said, “National Day is very special to us and we want to share the occasion with our cus-

tomers – and what better way to mark the sultanate’s Golden Jubilee. Our special collector’s edi-

tion recharge cards, which are available in limited quantities, have been given a new look, just a little something for our customers to enjoy the Ooredoo experience and add to their celebrations.”

Quick and easy to top up and use, Ooredoo’s recharge cards remain one of its most popular products. What’s more, there is no limit to how many times customers can recharge. The cards are the perfect accompaniment to Ooredoo’s popular prepaid plans, for mobile and home, providing more ways to stay connected.



Infiniti Reference Program opens

Infiniti Oman, from the house of Suhail Bahwan Automobiles, has launched Infiniti Reference Program as per which on successful conversion the referee will be incentivised with an RO100 gift voucher.

A senior spokesperson at Infiniti Oman said, "The aim of the reference programme is to generate reference for further conversion to a sale and of course brand building. A reference can be given by any resident of Oman who is an existing Infiniti customer. The referee should own an Infiniti vehicle that was originally sold by Suhail Bahwan Automobiles (Oman) as a new vehicle."

Referrals can be made by logging on to the website <http://referinfiniti.com>.

While a reference provided

cannot be for self, a referee can submit multiple references. The referee will be eligible for RO100 gift voucher if the reference buys a new Infiniti vehicle from any Suhail Bahwan Automobiles in Oman. A pre-owned Infiniti car purchase/Infiniti purchase from any other outlet will not qualify under the Reference Program.

In case the reference purchases more than one Infiniti vehicle, the referee will be entitled for RO100 gift voucher for every successful reference. The new vehicle purchase needs to be made by a resident individual in order to be considered as a successful reference. Company, ministry, rent-a-car or other commercial purchases are excluded from the programme. The mobile number of the referenced person will be taken as the

unique ID. A referee will not be able to register the same person or another person using the same mobile number. In case the same person is referred by two or more individuals, using different mobile numbers, the referee who had provided the reference first will be eligible for RO100 gift voucher benefit.

The gift voucher can be redeemed at any SBA facility and can be used for vehicle service, purchase of consumables, parts, and accessories. The gift voucher of the successful referee is non-transferable and cannot be redeemed for cash or exchanged for credit. The gift voucher will be valid for six months from the date of issue of same.

For any clarifications please email customerfirst@sbigh.com

To ensure safety of its customers and employees, Infiniti

Oman is following a thorough safety precaution protocol at its service centre. The standard operating procedure it follows involves the execution of strict safety, sanitization, and physical distancing rules. Implemented in line with Oman's Supreme Committee advisories on COVID-19, Infiniti Oman's precaution protocol aims to guarantee the safety and wellbeing of its customers and employees as priority.

Among the important safety precautions and protocol being followed at the Infiniti Oman service centre include sanitisation of touch points and fumigation of facilities. While hand sanitisers are kept at customer receptions, thermal checks are done before employees and customers enter the service centre.

Charitable Endowment Foundation, tibiaan properties sign contract

Charitable Endowment Foundation, a trust set up by the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs, has tapped leading Omani real estate firm tibiaan properties to manage a sizeable portfolio of endowment properties distributed across Muscat governorate.

On this occasion, Sheikh Rashid bin Saif al Saadi, chairman of the Board of Directors of the Charitable Endowment Foundation, said, "It is a pleasure to sign this contract marking the start of good relations with tibiaan properties, a company known for its efficiency, good management and reliance on a specialised Omani cadre that qualified it to outperform the rest of the companies that submitted the tender. The work will include the management of approximately 300 commercial and residential real estate units distributed in different areas within the Governorate of Muscat."

Fahad bin Sultan al Ismaili, CEO of tibiaan properties, said, "The agreement with the Charitable Endowment Foundation is a positive addition to the company's business portfolio that includes marketing services, leasing, contract renewal, complaints management and debt



collection in addition to other services. The fact that we offer a dedicated team to handle the complete range of services, is what makes the real estate owners place their trust in us."

The signing of an agreement of this magnitude at this particular period, is an indication that the Oman economy is on the path to recovery and that companies are making all the efforts to overcome this ordeal at the earliest.

The Charitable Endowment Foundation was established by the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs to manage their properties and charitable endowment real estate based on a

modern and advanced management model to achieve profitability while following the legal determinants at the same time. This was taken into consideration while selecting the board of directors who are prominent people in various investment fields. The establishment has been registered with the Trade Registry Secretariat in the Governorate of Muscat for it to have the greatest possible freedom to perform its duties.

Established in 2003, tibiaan properties is a company that specialises in real estate affairs. The experiences it has accumulated over the years has propelled it to a leadership position.



Dhofar International Development And Investment Holding Company (SAOG)

P.O.Box 2163, Salalah, Postal Code 211, Sultanate of Oman, Tel: 23295400, Fax: 23291500, Email: didico@omantel.net.om, Website: www.didic.com

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT FOR THE NINE MONTHS ENDED 30 SEPTEMBER 2020

Dear Shareholders,

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I am pleased to present the Unaudited Financial Results of Dhofar International Development & Investment Holding Company SAOG ("DIDIC") for the period ending 30 September 2020. As you will note, our decision earlier in the year to cease reporting our financial results and position under the "Investment Entity" approach as per IFRS-10 has resulted in a change in our financial reporting, with the results of our subsidiaries and associates now consolidated with the Parent's standalone results. As this change is prospective, the comparative figures provided for 2019 are not comparable.

In this regard, the Company has performed the purchase price allocation exercise along with an independent professional firm to assess goodwill or gain from bargain purchase for its subsidiaries and associates. The Company has adjusted the values of its subsidiaries and associates accordingly.

During the third quarter of 2020, all the securities markets in the region, including Muscat Securities Market (MSM) saw a further recovery in their respective indices, though it was marginal for MSM. However, overall, for the first nine months, all the indices are still lower by 2%-18% then their 2019 closing values, mainly on account of a decline in the oil prices as well as continuing impact of COVID-19 health crisis on their respective economies. MSM improved by 99 points and closed at 3615 points as on September 29, 2020 which is a slight improvement of 3% over the quarter. Other indices of GCC region witnessed a similar improvement for the quarter ranging from 6% to 15%. During the first nine months, the Company's investments in equities recorded a decline of RO 1.26 million, on account of the drop in the MSM.

Group Consolidated Performance
During the nine months period ending 30

September 2020, net profit was RO 46.65 million and the total comprehensive income attributable to our shareholders amounted to RO 44.25 million, after considering one-time impact on account of the purchase price allocation exercise.

Performance of Key Subsidiaries & Associates

Bank Dhofar, our banking associate, reported net profit of RO 26.635 million for the nine months period ended 30 September 2020 as compared to RO 25.921 million for the same period in 2019, representing an increase of 3%. This marginal increase in profits is mainly on account of continued pressure on the interest income due to the overall decline in economic activity due to the COVID-19 crisis. Despite this, the bank continues to build on a strong foundation for future growth, where the total assets of the bank were at RO 4.12 billion in September 2020 as compared to RO 4.01 billion at end of 30 September 2019, an increase of 2.8%. The Net Loans, Advances and Financing to customers stood at RO 3.28 billion as at 30 September 2020, showing a growth of 7.7% from RO 3.04 billion as at 30 September 2019. Total customer deposits, however, decreased marginally by 3.01% year-on-year from RO 2.73 billion as of 30 September 2019 to RO 2.64 billion as of 30 September 2020. Total shareholders' equity in the bank registered an increase of 1.9%, growing to RO 540.812 million from RO 530.655 million a year prior.

Dhofar Insurance, our insurance associate, continues to report remarkable improvements in its operating performance, with gross premium written increasing by 5.9% to RO 38.24 million from RO 36.12 million a year earlier for the nine months period. This growth also translated in commensurate improvements in both net underwriting results, that increased by 12.5% from RO 5.68 million in the first nine months of 2019 to RO 6.39 million a year later, and net profit for the nine months period that

increased by 39.9% from RO 2.25 million to RO 3.15 million. The above has resulted in an increase in shareholders' equity by 15.23%, from RO 21.92 million as at 30 September 2019 to RO 24.78 million as at 30 September 2020.

Oman Investment & Finance Company

, our billing and collection associate that has also ventured into money exchange and horizontal drilling operations through two specialized subsidiaries, has recorded noteworthy improvements in its core operations in the first nine months of 2020, with operating profits increasing to RO 746,047 from a profit of RO 298,577 a year earlier for parent while the operating profit at Group level too improved to RO 255,519 from RO 133,541 a year earlier. Unsurprisingly, the large decline in OIFC's share of profits in its associates, mainly for Bank Sohar, by 32% has resulted in a decline of 52% in the company's net profits that have declined from RO 2,356,114 in 2019 to RO 1,139,647 for the period ended 30 September 2020. The Shareholder's equity has increased by 1.45%, from RO 29.47 million as at 30 September 2019 to RO 29.89 million as at 30 September 2020.

Acknowledgements

On behalf of the board of directors, I would like to extend our gratitude to the leadership of the CMA, CBO and MOC for their continued support. I would also like to thank the management teams of DIDIC, our subsidiaries and associate companies for all their hard work and dedication.

Finally, we wish our country continued safety and stability under the wise leadership and guidance of His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik, may God protect him and prolong his life.

Khalid Bin Mustahail Ahmed Al Mashani
Chairman

UNAUDITED INTERIM STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITIONAS AT 30 SEPTEMBER 2020

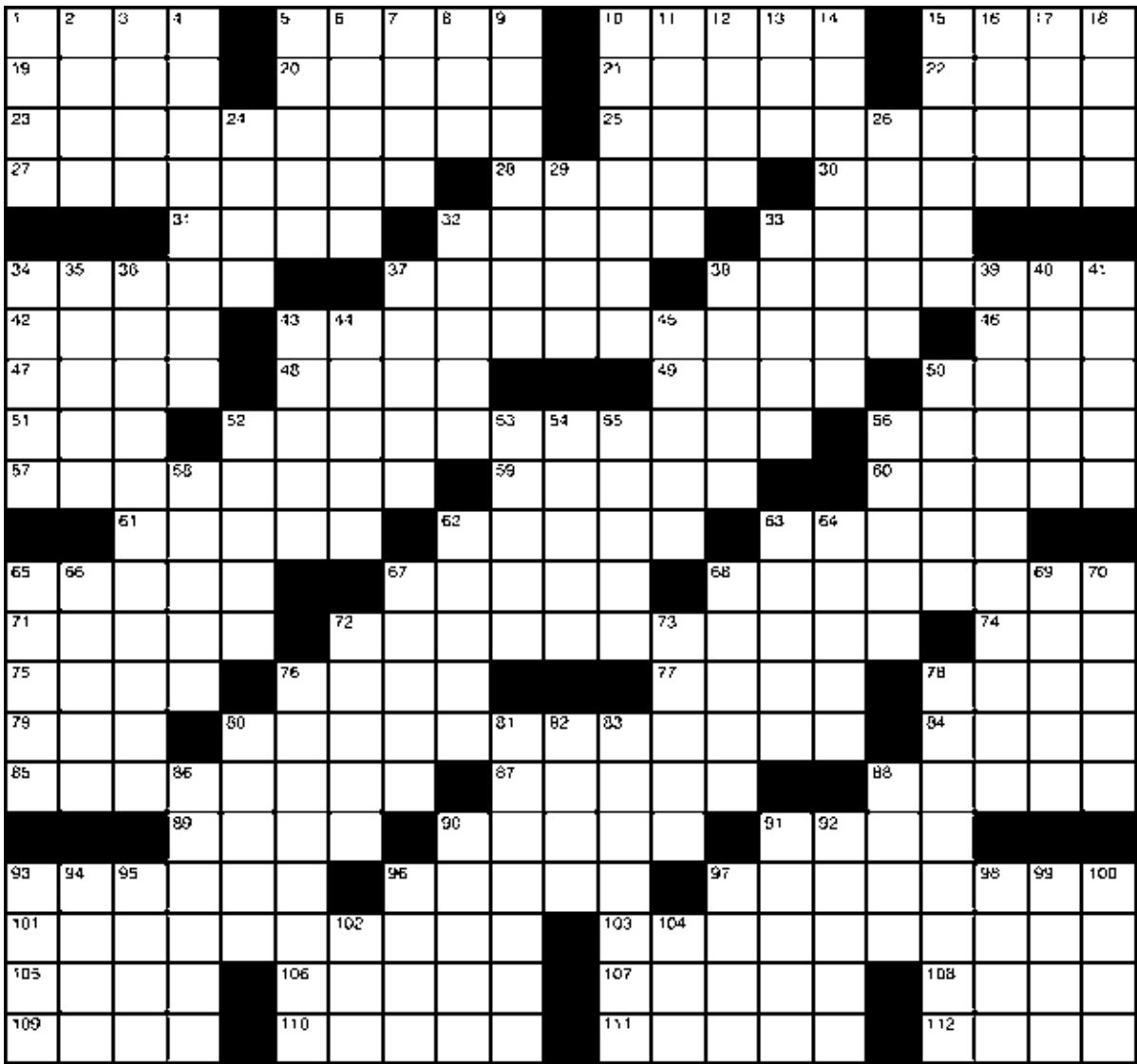
	Parent Equity accounting 2020 RO	Investment Entity 2019 RO	Group 2019 RO
ASSETS			
Cash and bank balances	724,051	1,455,374	1,230,264
Receivables and prepayments	1,282,825	729,701	765,096
Inventories	-	-	22,314
Financial assets at fair value through profit or loss			
-Investment in equities	24,878,652	26,704,508	38,147,701
-Investment in subsidiaries	-	9,189,035	-
-Investment in associates	-	125,645,200	-
-Investment in term deposits	11,180,000	10,930,000	11,180,000
Financial assets at fair value through other comprehensive income			
-Investment in subsidiaries	12,594,516	-	10,372,300
-Investment in associates	161,748,994	-	161,748,994
Loan to subsidiary	4,950,000	5,000,000	-
Investment property	247,212	247,212	247,212
Property and equipment	661,083	738,713	5,507,207
Total assets	218,267,333	180,639,743	229,221,098
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES			
LIABILITIES			
Other liabilities	5,430,975	252,554	5,575,347
Income tax payable	-	133,774	9,383
Loans and borrowings -net	90,388,653	115,093,580	101,188,653
Subordinated bonds	24,785,568	-	24,785,568
Total liabilities	120,605,196	115,479,908	131,558,951
Equity attributable to owners of the parent			
Share capital	25,872,000	25,872,000	25,872,000
Legal reserve	8,624,000	8,213,333	8,624,000
General reserve	7,070,404	7,070,404	7,070,404
Investment revaluation reserve	(2,396,284)	-	(2,396,284)
Retained earnings	58,492,017	24,004,098	58,492,017
	97,662,137	65,159,835	97,662,137
Non-controlling interests			
Total equity	97,662,137	65,159,835	97,662,137
Total equity and liabilities	218,267,333	180,639,743	229,221,098
Net assets per share	0.377	0.252	0.377

UNAUDITED INTERIM STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE NINE MONTHS ENDED 30 SEPTEMBER 2020

	Parent Equity accounting 2020 RO	Investment Entity 2019 RO	Group 2019 RO
Income			
Dividend income	1,360,890	8,523,477	1,782,736
Net revenue of a subsidiary	-	-	205,173
Realised profit on sale of financial assets at fair value through profit or loss	-	-	9,991
Changes in fair value of financial assets at fair value through profit or loss	(1,261,305)	(10,147,723)	(1,376,474)
Finance income	734,471	715,027	601,095
Other income	107,874	104,070	127,969
Total net (loss) / income	941,930	(805,149)	1,350,490
Expenses			
Administrative and general expenses	(911,351)	(887,604)	(1,277,944)
Depreciation	(63,601)	(64,621)	(142,691)
Total expenses	(974,952)	(952,225)	(1,420,635)
Operating profit / (loss)	(33,022)	(1,757,374)	(70,145)
Finance costs	(6,711,355)	(5,584,612)	(7,217,777)
Amortization of deferred finance cost	(249,362)	(221,050)	(249,362)
Share of profit / (loss) from subsidiaries	(543,545)	-	-
Deemed acquisition gain of subsidiaries	772,128	-	772,128
Share of profit from associates	8,472,245	-	8,472,245
Deemed acquisition gain of associates	44,945,654	-	44,945,654
Profit / (loss) for the year before tax	46,652,743	(7,543,036)	46,652,743
Income tax	-	-	-
Profit / (loss) for the year	46,652,743	(7,543,036)	46,652,743
Other comprehensive income / (loss)			
Items that will not be subsequently reclassified to profit or loss			
Changes in fair value of financial assets through other comprehensive income	-	-	(200,016)
Share of other comprehensive gain/(loss) of subsidiaries	(200,016)	-	-
Share of other comprehensive gain/(loss) of associates	(2,196,268)	-	(2,196,268)
Other comprehensive loss for the period	(2,396,284)	-	(2,396,284)
Total comprehensive income / (loss) for the period	44,256,459	(7,543,036)	44,256,459
Profit / (loss) attributable to:			
Owners of the parent	46,652,743	(7,543,036)	46,652,743
Non-controlling interests	46,652,743	(7,543,036)	46,652,743
Total comprehensive income / (loss) attributable to:			
Owners of the parent	44,256,459	(7,543,036)	44,256,459
Non-controlling interest	44,256,459	(7,543,036)	44,256,459
Basic and diluted earnings per share on profit attributable to the owners of the parent	0.180	(0.029)	0.180

Note: The complete accounts will be sent by mail to any shareholder who request the company in either Arabic or English as requested within 7 days of receipt of the request.

DAILY CROSSWORD



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- ACROSS**

1 Paint poorly

5 Gathering of bees

10 Mitchell mansion owner

15 ER order

19 First brother?

20 Chocolate bean

21 Picture puzzle

22 Impish one

23 Renowned American composer/songwriter

25 Horror tale author

27 Unsavory sights

28 Gives off

30 Martial art of Japan

31 Pastry purchase

32 Butterfingers

33 Imitate

34 Monastery superior

37 "The Most Happy ____": Loesser

38 Sweet, juicy orange

42 Songbird

43 "Harlow" star

46 Plus

47 Vote count

48 Bank holding

49 Secondhand

50 Lhasa ____

51 French word?

52 CORE cofounder

56 ____ ego

57 Lasted longer

59 Axel and Lutz

60 Proclaim

61 ____ up: crammed for an exam

62 Like an old joke

63 Kenyan tribe

65 Soprano Alma

67 Plover

68 Italy, poetically

71 Small amounts

72 Noted anchor

74 Dernier ____: latest fashion

75 Bagel or bialy

76 Santa Fe's arty neighbor

77 Raisin cake

78 Very young horse

79 Poet's monogram

80 Pulitizer composer for "Vanessa"

84 A way to learn

85 Man of great strength

87 Plains tribe

88 Wiscracked

89 Luau wear

90 Beat it!

91 ____ and polish

93 Cools one's heels

96 Vertical on a mountain

97 TV, sl.

101 "Lolita" star

103 Former manager in Baltimore

105 Yemen port

106 Farewell, to Fidel

107 Wide-eyed

108 Apparatus

109 Lease

110 Great Dame

111 Blacksmith, at times

112 Spread
- DOWN**

1 Minnow

2 "Cash's" "____ Named Sue"

3 Ubangi tributary

4 S. African antelopes

5 Look down on

6 Stock

7 Senate output

8 Actress Charlotte

9 Sour cherry

10 Like Sputnik's path

11 Mega follower

12 Arab garments

13 Sugar cane-based concoction

14 Lit into

15 Uttered

16 Polynesian image

17 Cut spending

18 Amateur

24 Be sullen

26 Track official

29 Ponder

32 Composer Jerome, et al.

33 Craftsman

34 Where Crockett last stood

35 Marshy place

36 "Grace Under Fire" star

37 Let go

38 Bud holders

39 English explorer

40 Map within a map

41 Idolize

43 Percussionist's stick

44 Drew a bead on

45 Far from smooth

50 Rite site

52 High ____: prankishness

53 Escaped

54 Eagle nest

55 Asserts wildly

56 Ancient war god

58 Nearby

62 Discontinue

63 Possibly

64 Go on ____: rampage

65 Waistline

66 Immoral

67 Reverent

68 Mops decks

69 Steaming

70 Felt poorly

72 Lords' ladies

73 Genesis name

76 Good luck charm

78 Artistic rubbing

80 Birds' feed

81 Freedom

82 Adriatic wind

83 Comes to

86 Patron

88 Agree

90 Wildlife trail

91 Decipher

92 Greatness

93 Unshut

94 Baseball's Boggs

95 Sunday sign-off?

96 ____ were: supposedly

97 Vivacity

98 Peeper part

99 Tuckered out

100 Slips up

102 Fooaraw

104 Exclamation of delight

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19
You yearn for adventure. Monday's skies encourage you to follow this natural desire and expand your horizons in uncharted territory, as the moon roams through Sagittarius. Luna spends the morning romping about with Mars, priming your self-expression for charismatic engagements. By afternoon, the moon's square to spacey Neptune stirs up unarticulated feelings from the deep.

LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22
As a Leo, you don't typically hide away from the eyes of the world for very long. Yet, this time of year, it's imperative that you sink into your feelings and address any nagging issues on the home and family front. Today's skies work to brighten things up, as the moon gallivants through playful Sagittarius—helping you prioritise fun, creativity, and romance.

SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21
This year hasn't been easy on you. You've been encouraged to completely redefine yourself—especially regarding your resources and talents. Today's skies offer a sweet relief to this tiresome process as Venus tangoes with your ruling planet, Jupiter. Opportunities are likely to arise around your goals and workflow. Be mindful of taking on more than you can handle.

TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20
Opportunities for expansion are likely on the work front. Your ruling planet, Venus, tangoes with Jupiter, making it easy to tap into an unbridled sense of optimism. Just be sure you don't bite off more than you can chew when it comes to educational plans or accomplishing workloads. The Sagittarius moon calls out for intimacy and meaningful exchanges on the romantic front.

VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22
You're on the brink of some critical revelations around your identity. The pieces of the puzzle will fall into better place over the coming days, but only if you devote time to the outlines of insights that are beginning to reveal themselves to you. The moon spends the day roaming through Sagittarius, channeling your energy towards your home front.

CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19
You're equipped with a hard work ethic—one that tends to tire you out. Today's skies encourage you to carve out time for rest, relaxation, and release, as the moon travels through Sagittarius. It might be hard to fully surrender to quiet downtime though, as attractor Venus and dream-big Jupiter tango. This brings potential opportunities for self-expansion on the work front.

GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21
You can feel a change brewing in the air. Though you're not quite sure how it takes form yet, pay close attention to the subtle messages beginning to stir, as they'll be made clearer in coming days. The moon treks through Sagittarius, linking up with hyper Mars followed by sleepy Neptune. This directs the bulk of your emotional energy towards partnerships and community efforts.

LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22
Monday's skies are working to make more space in your heart. Opportunities for learning lessons and absorbing wisdom make themselves known through your relationship dynamics, as your ruler, Venus, reaches out to Jupiter. Even when these two planets disagree, it's hard not to feel the optimism they imbue. Be on the lookout for chances to take your connections to a new level.

AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18
It's been no easy feat to be an Aquarius. You've done so much work on yourself behind the scenes, and you're beginning to see the light at the end of the tunnel. Monday's skies work to activate your voice and encourage your involvement in community, as the moon treks through excitable Sagittarius. Reconnecting with friends and telling your story is sure to lighten your load.

CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22
You're not likely to be plagued by the usual doldrums associated with Mondays. The Sagittarius moon has you ready to check things off your to-do list. Luna spends the afternoon in talks with Mars, helping you devote energy towards your craft and maintain solid stamina. The moon's square to Neptune slows things down, as it conjures up visions of escape and day dreaminess.

SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21
You're just beginning to find your footing again. Your ruling planet, Mars, recently finished its tiresome retrograde dance—helping you review your current connection to your job, your craft, and your health. Mars' forward direction helps you clear new paths to pursue and devote energy to getting back on track. That movement is helpfully assisted by the Sagittarius moon.

PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20
You're a natural born shapeshifter. This year has seen you changing form again and again, as you've had to explore your place in your community and revisit the goals you hold. Today's skies work to uplift you and straighten out any of the kinks in that ongoing process, as Venus aligns with your ruling planet, Jupiter. Look to your intimate relationships.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

- 1. Karl Marx's ideology advocated**

a. a classed unique society

b. a united society

c. a classed society

d. None of the above
- 2. Lhasa airport in Tibet is the World's**

a. largest airport

b. highest airport

c. lowest airport

d. busiest airport
- 3. Of the various agencies related to the United Nations, the one that has the longest period is**

a. International Labour Organisation

b. Universal Postal Union

c. World Health Organisation

d. World Meteorological Organisation

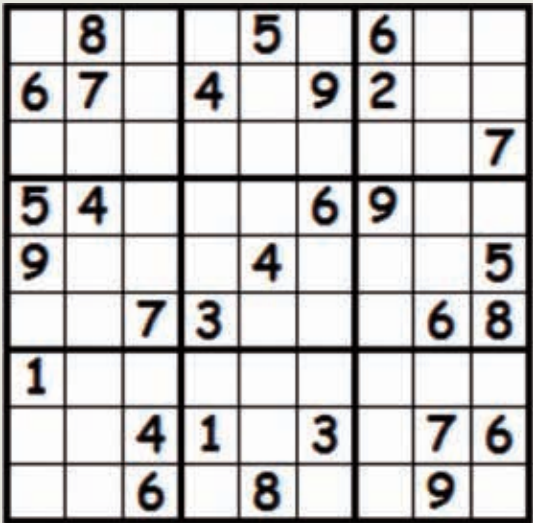
Answers: 1: c 2: b 3: b

KIDS COLOURING



DO YOU SUDOKU?

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



BOGGLER



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

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER



DAILY CROSSWORD ANSWERS (NOVEMBER 15)



WORD BUILDER

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

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



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JOHNSON SEIZES LEAD

AUGUSTA MASTERS

Augusta, US - Top-ranked Dustin Johnson seized command of the Masters on Saturday, matching the 54-hole record at Augusta National to grab a four-stroke lead in quest of a second major title.

Pulling away from an elite field at Augusta National, the 36 year old American, who grew up only an hour's drive from the course, fired a seven-under-par 65 to stand on 16-under-par 200 after three rounds.

"I've got a lot of confidence in everything I'm doing," Johnson said. "Tomorrow, I'm going to have to go out and do the same kind of thing."

"I've got a lot of great players around me. I'm going to have to play a really good round if I want to put on that green jacket."

Johnson went a career major best four-under in the first four holes, making a tap-in eagle at the par-five second, curling in a six-footer for birdie at the third and sinking a long birdie putt at the fourth. He added tap-in birdies at the par-four seventh, par-five 13th and par-five 15th to equal the 54-hole mark set in 2015 by Jordan Spieth.

"It's really tough to read these greens," Johnson said. "You get a lot of putts that break a lot. We're reading them really well. Definitely pleased with the putting through three rounds."

Johnson is the first player to shoot 65 or better twice in the same Masters after a first-round 65.

Four-way chase

Im Sung-jae, a 22 year old South Korean who could become the first debut Masters winner since 1979, closed with a birdie to shoot 68 and share second on 204 with Mexico's Abraham Ancer, another Augusta new-



Dustin Johnson putts during the third round of the Masters at Augusta National Golf Club on Saturday

comer, and Australia's Cameron Smith.

"I played my first practice round Monday. I felt immediately the course suits my game and I thought I would do a good job," Im said through a translator.

"I really feel I will stay composed. My putting has been really good the past three days and I will just keep doing what I've been doing."

Im could become only the second Asian man to win a major after South Korean Yang Yong-eun at the 2009 PGA Championship. Johnson, the 2016 US Open champion, is trying to become the first top-ranked golfer to win the Masters since Tiger Woods in 2002.

Defending champion Woods, who began four strokes off the pace, battled through back pain

to shoot 72 and stand on 211, answering bogeys at the par-five eighth and par-four 11th with birdies at the par-three 12th and par-five 15th.

"Long days like this, I'm going to get a little bit sore," Woods said. "I can walk all day. The hard part is bending and twisting."

Woods, a 15-time major winner who turns 45 next month, seeks a sixth green jacket and an

83rd career PGA Tour victory to break the record he shares with Sam Snead.

Nine golfers shared the lead at one stage as Augusta National's notorious undulating greens dried and quickened.

Smith, who closed with an eagle and three birdies to grab a share of the 36-hole lead, birdied 13, 14 and 15 to share second with Im and Ancer, who birdied 15 and 16 in a late charge.

South Africa's 100th-ranked Dylan Frittelli shot a bogey-free 67 with birdies on all four par-five holes to stand fifth on 205.

Another stroke adrift was third-ranked American Justin Thomas, who settled for 71 after

I've got a lot of great players around me. I'm going to have to play a really good round if I want to put on that green jacket

DUSTIN JOHNSON

a closing bogey. Second-ranked Jon Rahm shared seventh on 207 with Colombia's Sebastian Munoz and 2018 Masters winner Patrick Reed.

Fifth-ranked Rory McIlroy, needing only a green jacket to complete a career Grand Slam, shot 67 to stand on 208.

US Open winner Bryson DeChambeau, who many feared would overwhelm Augusta National with his power-driving game, tested negative for COVID-19 on Friday after feeling dizzy on the course. He shot 69 on Saturday to stand on 213.

AFP



England's hooker Jamie George (centre) kicks ahead during the Autumn Nations Cup rugby match against Georgia in London, on Saturday

Hat-trick hero George shines as England trounce Georgia 40-0

AUTUMN NATIONS CUP

Twickenham, UK - Jamie George became the first England hooker to score a hat-trick of tries in a Test as they opened their Autumn Nations Cup campaign with a comfortable 40-0 win over Georgia at Twickenham on Saturday.

Six Nations champions England were out of sight at half-time, leading 26-0 after scoring four of their six tries.

Jack Willis marked his Test debut with the opening try before George crossed twice and full-back Elliot Daly went over.

The second half saw George complete his hat-trick before replacement scrum-half Dan Robson snuck over.

England captain Owen Farrell kicked five conversions. "It was a great team performance," George told *Amazon Prime*.

"We are fully aware of their ability up front, how much pride they take in their set-piece and how physical they would be," he added.

"We wanted to prove a point that they wouldn't be able to out-scrum us," England coach Eddie Jones told the BBC.

But he added: "We would

have liked to have executed a bit better because we maybe left 20 points out there."

The teams had only met twice before, with England easing to 84-6 and 41-10 wins at the 2003 and 2011 World Cups.

England continue their Pool A campaign at home to Ireland, 32-9 winners over Wales on Friday, a week on Saturday when the Welsh look to end a run of six straight defeats against all opponents with victory over Georgia in Llanelli.

Four-try Scotland take bonus point win

In Florence, Italy, Scotland made it five wins in succession with a hard-fought 28-17 bonus-point victory over Italy on Saturday.

The Scots played on the back foot for most of a first half which saw tries for Italy fullback Matteo Minozzi and Scotland wing Duhan van der Merwe.

But after slipping 14-7 down early in the second half, Gregor Townsend's side hit back with tries from prop Zander Fagerson, lock Scott Cummings and replacement hooker George Turner to complete the win.

AFP



Awtad, ARTT record big wins

LOCAL CRICKET

Arun Pushpan hammered a match-winning 91 to power Awtad International to a five-wicket victory over EY in an Oman Cricket A Division 50-over-a-side game at Al Amerat on Saturday.

A solid 136-run partnership between Pushpan and Nidhin Mohan (70) laid the foundation as Awtad chased down EY target of 255 in the 48th over. For EY, the main contributors with the bat were Shrey Wilson, who hit an unbeaten 76, and Issa Abdul Rahim, who struck a half-century.

Earlier on Friday, in another A Division match, Zeeshan Siddiqui (98) and left-arm spinner Aqil Khan (four for 19) led Arabian Region Travel and Tourism (ARTT) to a massive 278-run win over OCT Muscat.

Besides Siddiqui, the other notable scorers in ARTT's mammoth score of 362 for eight were Syed Amir Ali (65), Pranav Mehta (56) and Adeel Abbas (42). Mohsin Qureshi blasted 24 off just five balls to give a final



L-R: Pranav Mehta, Zeeshan Siddiqui, Aqil Khan of ARTT. Photo right: Arun Pushpan (left) and Nidhin Mohan of Awtad

flourish to ARTT total. OCT Muscat was then bowled out for paltry 84.

Meanwhile, a C Division T20 game between Ideal International and Douglas OHI was reduced to 18-overs-a-side due to a delayed start.

BRIEF SCORES

A Division (50 overs): EY 255-8 (Shrey Wilson 76 n.o., Issa Abdul Rahim 52, Mohammed Attique 35; Pradeep Kumar 3-41, Shankar Parameswaran 2-39) lost to

Awtad International 257-5 in 47.3 overs (Pushpan 91, Mohan 70; Farhan Afzal 4-46).

A Division: ARTT 362-8 (Siddiqui 98, Amir Ali 65, Mehta 56, Abbas 42; Rashad Mohammed 3-59, Mohamed Aslam 2-57) beat OCT Muscat 84 all out in 24.3 overs (Shiralkal Muzaffar 28; Khan 4-19, Nazir Ahmed 3-16, Abbas 2-17).

B Division (30 overs): OCT Seeb 140 all out in 29.1 overs (Sudan



Mohammed 37; Ali Abid 2-20, Rafique al Balushi 2-23, Arif Hussain 2-26) lost to Orient Travels 143-3 in 22.3 overs (Arif Hussain 90, Sudan 2-28).

C Division (18 overs): Douglas OHI 124-6 (Jagannath Kauthankar Waman 27, Chintan Kamlesh 24; Sheik Sameer 2-27, Salman Khan 2-29) lost to Ideal International 128-5 in 15.4 overs (Deepak Bhandari 39, Khan Tosim 33; Mohsin Alimamad 2-14).

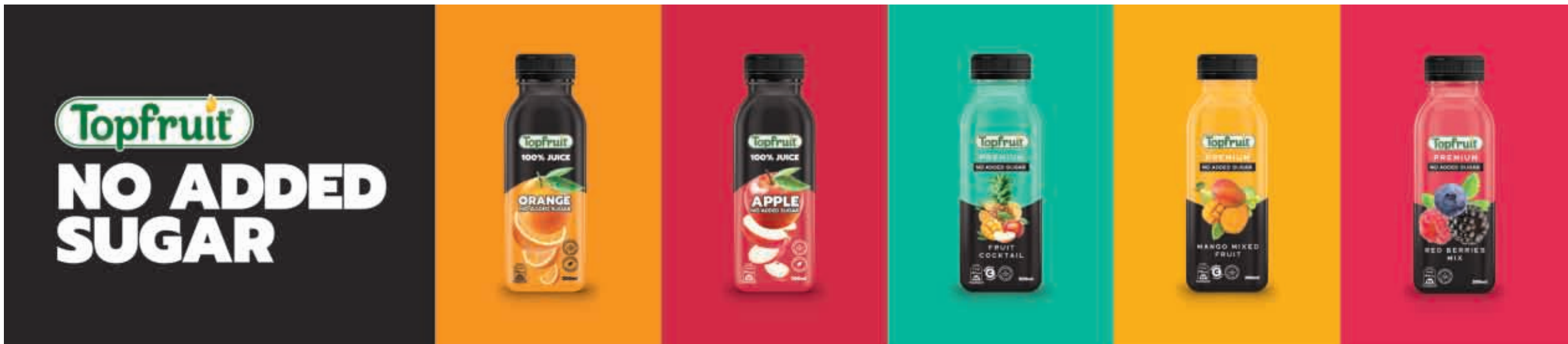
Mir lifts maiden MotoGP world championship

Valencia, Spain - Suzuki's Joan Mir won the MotoGP world title on Sunday a week after finally securing his maiden Grand Prix triumph at the same Valencia circuit. The 23 year old inherited the crown left vacant by the injured six-time champion Marc Marquez when finishing seventh in the Valencia GP won by Italy's Franco Morbidelli.

This was the first MotoGP title won by a Suzuki rider since 2000. After a season of solid consistency, Mir held a 37-point lead meaning he only needed to finish on the podium in the penultimate race to secure the title, while fourth would have been enough if neither Alex Rins nor Fabio Quartararo won.

Frenchman Quartararo ruined any chance he had of prolonging the title race with a fall that put him out of the race. Morbidelli won the penultimate race of the season, leading from pole until the very last lap when he came under intense pressure from Australian Jack Miller.

AFP



SEVENTH HEAVEN

Hamilton ties Schumacher’s record as he claims seventh F1 world title

FORMULA ONE

TURKISH GRAND PRIX

Istanbul, Turkey - Lewis Hamilton secured a record-equalling seventh Formula One world title on Sunday after winning the Turkish Grand Prix and then warned pretenders to his crown 'I'm only just getting started!'

After a momentous drive from sixth on the grid in wet and treacherous conditions, the Briton matched Michael Schumacher's haul of drivers' crowns with three races of the season remaining.

The 35 year old sealed his latest title 12 years after his first with a typically measured masterclass, handling the slippery early conditions to claim his 94th career win.

It was widely declared as one of his finest triumphs and entirely appropriate on the day he drew alongside the German in the record books.

"That's for all the kids out there that believe in the impossible," said an emotional Hamilton on Mercedes' team radio. "You can do it."

Later he claimed he still had the hunger for more titles and fans after a season in which he led his sport in supporting the Black Lives Matter movement.

"I feel like I'm only just getting started. Physically, I'm in great shape. And mentally this year has been really hard for millions of people and it's no different for us athletes," he said.

"This has been a challenge that I didn't know how to get through, but with the help of Team LH I managed to get through."

Hamilton, who sealed his first title in 2008, added to his unprecedented roster of records - most wins with 94, most pole positions (97), most podium finishes (163) and most consecutive points finishes (47).

He added: "We dreamed of this when I was young."

"I remember watching Michael win those world championships. To get one or two or even three is so hard. Seven is unimaginable. There is no end to what we can do together, me and this team."

Blew away rivals

He lapped his teammate and only remaining title rival Valtteri



Mercedes' driver Lewis Hamilton celebrates on the podium after the Turkish Grand Prix in Istanbul on Sunday

I remember watching Michael win those world championships. To get one or two or even three is so hard. Seven is unimaginable.

LEWIS HAMILTON

Bottas, who finished 14th after a desultory outing, to claim his tenth victory in 14 races of a season delayed by the coronavirus pandemic.

Hamilton came home over half a minute clear of Racing Point's Sergio Perez.

Both chose to make only one

pit-stop and spent most of the race on a single set of intermediate tyres as their rivals pitted several times to cope with the slippery conditions.

Hamilton's old rival, four-time former champion Sebastian Vettel, finished third ahead of his Ferrari teammate Charles

Leclerc, Carlos Sainz of McLaren and, after a wild and impulsive afternoon, Max Verstappen in the leading Red Bull.

Alex Albon came home seventh in the second Red Bull ahead of Lando Norris in the second McLaren, Lance Stroll, who had started from his maiden pole position for Racing Point, and Daniel Ricciardo of Renault.

This latest triumph gave Hamilton an unassailable lead over 31 year old Bottas, with two races in Bahrain and the season-closing Abu Dhabi

Grand Prix to come. Vettel, who grabbed a podium finish on the final lap, was the first man to congratulate Hamilton in the pits, leaning into the Englishman's cockpit to tell him he had made history.

Bottas said, "He deserves it fully - he is the best of all of us this year and he really deserves it so it's great for him."

"So I will have to try to beat him next year."

Tributes flooded in from his fellow drivers and motorsport's president Jean Todt, and from beyond the F1 family.

"Game recognises game. From all of the Barça family, congratulations @LewisHamilton on your 7th @F1 World Championship!" tweeted La Liga giants Barcelona.

Kenya's world marathon record holder Eliud Kipchoge added his congratulations, telling Hamilton, 'Longevity is equal to experience, this is what inspires the world!'

Mercedes boss Toto Wolff said that the team's success had been even more significant coming in a time of the global coronavirus health emergency.

"This year has been very, very special, in difficult circumstances for everyone around the world."

"I hope that we've entertained and that's why coming on top after such a year in such a tough race, it's exceptional."

TURKISH GP RESULTS

TOP TEN

- 1 Lewis Hamilton (1hr 42mins 19.313sec),
- 2 Sergio Perez (+31.633s),
- 3 Sebastian Vettel (+31.960s),
- 4 Charles Leclerc (+33.858s),
- 5 Carlos Sainz Jr (+34.363s),
- 6 Max Verstappen (+44.873s)
- 7 Alexander Albon (+46.484s)
- 8 Lando Norris (+1min 01.259s)
- 9 Lance Stroll (+1:12.353s),
- 10 Daniel Ricciardo (+1:35.460)

DRIVERS' STANDINGS

TOP TEN

- 1 Hamilton (307 pts, champion)
- 2 Bottas (197)
- 3 Verstappen (170)
- 4 Perez (100)
- 5 Charles Leclerc (97)
- 6 Ricciardo (96)
- 7 Sainz (75)
- 8 Norris (74)
- 9 Albon (70)
- 10 Pierre Gasly (63)

AFF



LEWIS HAMILTON

Date of birth: January 7, 1985
Place of birth: Stevenage, England
Nationality: British
Height: 1.74m
Weight: 66kg
Team: Mercedes-AMG
Car number: 44
F1 CAREER:
Races: 264
Teams: McLaren (2007-2012), Mercedes (since 2013)

7
WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS
2008, 2014, 2015, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020

Debut: Australia 2007 (third)
First win: Canada 2007
Last win: Turkey 2020
Victories: 94

Podiums: 163
Pole positions: 97
Fastest laps: 53
Points scored: 3,738
F1 Championship history:
1st (2008, 2014, 2015, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020),
2nd (2007, 2016)
4th (2010, 2012, 2013),
5th (2009, 2011)



Leading world title winners

7 **Michael Schumacher** (Germany) 1994 (Benetton-Ford), 1995 (Benetton-Renault), 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004 (Ferrari)

7 **Lewis Hamilton** (Great Britain) 2008 (McLaren-Mercedes), 2014, 2015, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020 (Mercedes)

5 **Juan Manuel Fangio** (Argentina, 1911-1995) 1951 (Alfa Romeo), 1954 (Maserati/Mercedes-Benz), 1955 (Mercedes-Benz), 1956 (Ferrari), 1957 (Maserati)

4 **Sebastian Vettel** (Germany) 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013 (Red Bull-Renault)

4 **Alain Prost** (France) 1985, 1986 (McLaren-Tag Porsche), 1989

(McLaren-Honda), 1993 (Williams-Renault)

3 **Ayrton Senna** (Brazil, 1960-1994) 1988, 1990, 1991 (McLaren-Honda)

3 **Nelson Piquet** (Brazil) 1981 (Brabham-Ford), 1983 (Brabham-BMW), 1987 (Williams-Honda)

3 **Niki Lauda** (Austria, 1949-2019) 1975, 1977 (Ferrari), 1984 (McLaren-Tag Porsche)

3 **Jackie Stewart** (Great Britain) 1969 (Matra-Ford), 1971, 1973 (Tyrrell-Ford)

3 **Jack Brabham** (Australia, 1926-2014) 1959, 1960 (Cooper-Climax), 1966 (Brabham)

Liverpool great Clemence dies aged 72

London, UK - Former Liverpool and England goalkeeper Ray Clemence has died aged 72, his family said on Sunday.

Clemence, who been living with advanced prostate cancer since 2005, was one of the finest keepers of his generation, winning three European Cups and five First Division titles during 14 years at Liverpool.

An US\$23,750 signing from Scunthorpe in 1967, Clemence was a key member of the Liverpool team which won the club's first ever European Cup in 1977. He also played in their 1978 and 1981 European Cup final triumphs and won the UEFA Cup in 1973 and 1976.

The 1974 FA Cup and the 1981 League Cup were also won by Clemence during his time playing for Liverpool boss Bill Shankly and his successor Bob Paisley.

Clemence left for Tottenham in 1981, aged 32, for a fee of US\$395,850 and won another UEFA Cup and the FA Cup in his seven-year stay in north London.

He is survived by his wife Veronica, son Stephen - a former



We're deeply saddened by the passing of one of the greatest-ever goalkeepers, Ray Clemence. The thoughts of everyone at Liverpool Football Club are with Ray's family and many friends. Rest in peace, Ray Clemence

LIVERPOOL FOOTBALL CLUB

player himself and now a coach - and daughters Sarah and Julie.

"With great sadness, we write to let you know that Ray

Clemence passed away peacefully today, surrounded by his loving family," a statement from the Clemence family said.

Liverpool paid tribute to Clemence on their Twitter account. "We're deeply saddened by the passing of one of the greatest-ever goalkeepers, Ray Clemence."

"The thoughts of everyone at Liverpool Football Club are with Ray's family and many friends. Rest in peace, Ray Clemence," a statement said.

Clemence won 61 England caps, but would had many more had he not been competing with Peter Shilton, who accumulated 125, for the No 1 shirt.

After retiring in 1988, Clemence served on the Tottenham coaching staff, managed Barnet and then worked as England's goalkeeping coach.

"We are extremely saddened to learn that former Three Lions goalkeeper and coach Ray Clemence has passed away at the age of 72," a Football Association statement said.

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FOOTBALL ROUND-UP

France edge Portugal; Germany shine

Sergio Ramos endures miserable landmark on his 177th appearance for Spain as the defender misses two penalties



France's N'Golo Kante (centre) vies with Portugal's Diogo Jota during the UEFA Nations League game on Saturday

UEFA NATIONS LEAGUE

Paris, France - World champions France and Germany rode on the influence of their Chelsea stars to rack up Nations League wins on Saturday while Spain's Sergio Ramos missed two penalties on the night he celebrated a record-setting 177th international appearance.

Chelsea midfielder N'Golo Kante scored just his second international goal as France defeated European champions Portugal 1-0 in Lisbon to secure a place in next year's finals.

Kante was quickest to react to a rebound as he netted the winner on 53 minutes that clinched France top spot in their group.

France lead Cristiano Ronaldo's Portugal by three

points ahead of Tuesday's clash with Sweden in Paris but are guaranteed first place by virtue of their superior head-to-head record.

"It's very nice to see them snatch the win. It's deserved. We've fulfilled our objective of finishing first," France coach Didier Deschamps said after the win over a Portuguese side, which had won the inaugural Nations League title on home soil in 2019.

Kante's teammate in the English Premier League Timo Werner scored twice on his return to Leipzig as Germany enjoyed a 3-1 win over Ukraine.

Werner spent four years at Leipzig before moving to London and he flourished in familiar sur-

roundings at the Red Bull Arena despite the absence of fans.

The win leaves Germany undefeated in their last 12 games and top of their group, a point ahead of second-placed Spain with the sides due to meet in Sevilla on Tuesday.

Ukraine took an early lead when Roman Yaremchuk caught the German defence napping.

The hosts roared back with three unanswered goals by Leroy Sane and Werner, who scored either side of half-time, to seal a deserved win.

In Basel, Ramos missed two penalties as Spain needed a late equaliser from Gerard Moreno to draw 1-1 with Switzerland.

Ramos was making his 177th appearance to break the international appearances record for a European player, pulling clear of Italy's Gianluigi Buffon, who has 176. But it was a night to forget for the defender, who saw one spot-kick saved by Swiss goalkeeper Yann Sommer but backed himself to score a second, only to miss again with a dreadful attempted 'Panenka'.

Ramos had previously scored 25 penalties in a row and his inaccuracy from the spot cost Spain, who will now have to beat Germany to reach the final stage.

"Sergio's numbers for penal-

ties are out of this world," said Spain coach Luis Enrique.

"If there had been a third penalty, he would have taken that one as well."

Remo Freuler gave the Swiss a 26th-minute lead but they had Nico Elvedi sent off for conceding the second penalty with 11 minutes left.

Spain finally found an equaliser in the 89th minute as Moreno capitalised on a tiring Swiss defence by converting Sergio Reguilon's cross.

After losing all four of their opening games in the Nations League, Sweden finally found some form in Solna, beating World Cup runners-up Croatia 2-1.

The coronavirus pandemic also saw UEFA cancel Sunday's match between Romania and Norway after Norwegian authorities banned the squad from travelling to Bucharest due to a COVID-19 case.

OTHER RESULTS

League C: Group 1:
Cyprus 2 Luxembourg 1,
Azerbaijan 0 Montenegro 0.

League D: Group 1:
Malta 3 Andorra 1,
Latvia 1 Faroe Islands 1;

Group 2:
San Marino 0 Gibraltar 0.

AFP



Ukraine's goalkeeper Andriy Pyatov fails to save a shot from Germany's Timo Werner (hidden) during the UEFA Nations League game

Salah-less Egypt beat Togo in Cairo

AFRICA CUP OF NATIONS

Johannesburg, South Africa - Mohamed Salah-less Egypt scored through defender Mahmoud el Wensh to edge Togo 1-0 in Cairo on Saturday and kick-start a 2021 Africa Cup of Nations qualifying campaign.

Prolific Liverpool scorer Salah tested positive for COVID-19 after arriving in Cairo for international duty and a subsequent test produced a similar result.

Apart from missing back-to-back matches against Togo, he could also be ruled out of the next two matches for his club, against leaders Leicester City in the Premier League and Atalanta in the Champions League.

El Wensh - also known as Mahmoud Hamdy and Mahmoud Attia - beat goalkeeper Malcolm Barcola on 54 minutes with a header from point-blank range after Togo failed to clear a softly-awarded free-kick.

It sufficed to give record seven-time African champions Egypt a first win in Group G after draws with Kenya and the

Comoros. The Pharaohs will face Togo again in Lome on Tuesday before visiting Kenya and hosting the Comoros next March, and the group winners and runners-up qualify for the 24-nation tournament in Cameroon.

Comoros and Egypt have five points each, Kenya three and Togo one after three rounds in a section where all the contenders will believe they still have a chance of making the finals.

Togo, who are guided by legendary French coach Claude le Roy, can draw encouragement from having most of the possession after falling behind in Cairo.

Meanwhile, Benin closed the gap behind Group L leaders Nigeria to one point after defeating Lesotho 1-0 in Porto-Novo through a first half goal from Jodel Dossou.

In Group D, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Angola remained third and fourth behind Gabon and the Gambia after a drab 0-0 draw in Kinshasa.

AFP



Action from the match between Egypt and Togo in Cairo on Saturday

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TIKTOK GETS US EXTENSION
US authorities have given the Chinese owner of TikTok two additional weeks to divest its US assets in order to resolve national security concerns voiced by the Trump administration

BUSINESS

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 2020 **MUSCAT DAILY** 13



OMINVEST
Investing in a Shared Future

Unaudited results of the Group and Parent Company For the nine-month period ended 30 September 2020

DIRECTORS REPORT For the nine-month period ended 30 September 2020

Dear Shareholders:

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I am pleased to present the Unaudited Financial Results of Oman International Investment and Development Company SAOG (OMINVEST) Group for the nine-month period ended 30 September 2020. Despite a protracted economic weakness and a broad slowdown witnessed by the local and regional businesses, OMINVEST achieved healthy performance both at the Group and the Parent level. Below, I would like to apprise you of the important transactions completed during the period and major areas of focus within our future Strategic Direction.

Macroeconomic Outlook

The decline in oil prices, now hovering around \$38 per barrel, and the resurgent second wave of Novel Corona Virus (COVID-19) globally have further clouded the near-term economic outlook of GCC economies. Consequently, budget deficits and government debt levels continue to rise while liquidity conditions remain tight. Omani and regional businesses across all key sectors continue to operate under extremely challenging circumstances. We do not foresee any meaningful reprieve in the near term and expect that the adverse impact of low oil prices and rise in COVID-19 cases will linger well into 2021. Therefore, OMINVEST and our Group Companies are taking pro-active measures to minimize the negative impact of such difficult operating conditions on our future performance.

Current Focus and Future Direction

After the successful completion of the merger between Oman Arab Bank (OAB) and Alizz Islamic Bank (AIB), we are now focusing on enhancing operational efficiencies and realizing synergies between the platforms. In addition, OMINVEST Group and our subsidiaries and associate companies are working tirelessly and utilizing technologies to serve the needs of their customers with greater efficiencies, while ensuring safety of their staff. OMINVEST's liquidity position remains very strong. We are pursuing investment opportunities to further enhance our growth prospects and diversification profile. We are also placing great importance on becoming an impactful player on the ESG level and contributing more to our communities and the society.

Below, I would like to present the financial performance of OMINVEST Group and our major portfolio companies for nine months ending 30 September 2020:

Group Consolidated Performance

During the period ended 30 September 2020, total Group revenues reduced by 9% to RO 205.7m and the net profit attributable to OMINVEST's shareholders increased by 30% to RO 28.7m from RO 22.1m, over the same period in 2019. The Group revenues declined during the period as Oman Arab Bank (OAB) was converted to an associate and the Group discontinued the consolidation of OAB's financials and commenced equity accounting for OAB's results in accordance with the requirements of International Financial Reporting Standards from 1st July 2020. The increase in profits is due to profit on partial disposal of Oman Arab Bank and strong performance of our key subsidiaries: National Life & General Insurance Company (NLGIC), Jabreen International Development Company SAOG (Jabreen Capital), and National Finance Company (NFC).

Parent Company Performance

During the period ended 30 September 2020, total revenues rose by 23% to RO 48.9m and net profit increased by 25% to RO 32.5m, over the same period in 2019. The increase in profits is due to profit on partial disposal of Oman Arab Bank and increase in

our share of P&L of the subsidiary's income. As at 30 September 2020, total assets of the Parent Company stood at RO 631m compared to RO 601m as at 31 December 2019. Increase in total assets was due to growth in the portfolios and business activities of our key subsidiaries.

Performance of Key Subsidiaries & Associates:

National Life & General Insurance Company (NLGIC), our subsidiary in the insurance sector, reported exceptional profit of RO 14.0m for the period ended 30 September 2020 compared to RO 7.4m for the same period in 2019, a growth of 91%. The growth is due to optimized re-insurance strategy, higher investment income and lower claims reported during COVID-19 related lockdown. NLGIC reported Gross Written Premium (GWP) of RO 113m, of which Oman contributed 48%, UAE 50%, and, Kuwait 2%. NLGIC achieved a net insurance premium of RO 86.8m compared to RO 78.1m for the same period in 2019; an impressive growth of 11%. NLGIC continues to maintain a leadership position in Oman in terms of assets, gross written premiums, investment income, and net profits. We believe that NLGIC's growth prospects continues to remain strong and its recurring revenues from insurance business are stable.

Jabreen International Development Company SAOG (Jabreen Capital), our subsidiary, is focused on making private equity investments in diverse sectors and expanding into new growth markets in Asia. Jabreen Capital reported a net profit of RO 17.9m for the period ended 30 September 2020 compared to RO 17.8m for the same period in 2019, a growth of 1%. The profit growth was mainly attributable to the gain on disposal of partial stake in International General Insurance and dividend income received from Jabreen Capital's public and private equity portfolios. During this period, Jabreen Capital sold 6.74% of treasury shares at a premium of 11% to market price and made new investments in its school platform. At 30 September 2020, Jabreen Capital's total assets stood at RO 333m compared to RO 331m at 31 December 2019. We expect Jabreen Capital to further enhance and diversify its investment income in the years ahead. International General Insurance (IGI), an associate of Jabreen Capital in the insurance sector, got listed on Nasdaq in March 2020.

Oman Arab Bank (OAB), our associate in the banking sector, reported a profit of RO 13.7m for the period ended 30 September 2020 compared to RO 20.2m for the same period in 2019, a decline of 32%. The decline is due to higher ECL provisions being created as a precautionary measure, given the stress in the economic and business conditions on account of COVID-19 and lower oil prices. Post-acquisition of AIB, Loans & Customers' deposits rose by 29.4% to RO 2.60bn compared to RO 2.00bn, as at 31 December 2019. The Shareholders' funds were RO 361m compared to RO 296m, as at 31 December 2019.

Oman Real Estate Investment and Services Corporation (ORIS), our subsidiary in the real estate sector, invests in iconic real estate projects and acts as lead Developer and Promoter of such projects. ORIS also provides real estate management services to our affiliates within OMINVEST Group and to large institutional clients outside the Group to generate fee income. ORIS is now in advance stages of initiating new large-scale commercial & residential projects at attractive locations in Muscat.

National Finance Company (NFC), our associate in the leasing sector, reported net profit of RO 5.6m for the period ended 30 September 2020 compared to a net profit of RO 5.0m for the same period in 2019 – an increase of 11.4%. NFC's revenues grew by 1.5% to RO 33.2m in this period compared with RO 32.7m in corresponding period in 2019. NFC continues to adopt a conservative approach to credit approvals keeping in view the overall macroeconomic scenario and perceived increase in credit risk. The projected

lower levels of credit offtake combined with increased interest costs will make it challenging to sustain current profitability levels. NFC will continue to focus on strengthening its efficiencies, customer experience, product offerings and quality of service delivery. We expect NFC to further consolidate its position as the leading finance company in Oman.

Company Contributions for Addressing COVID-19 Related Health Challenges

I am pleased to update you that in the first half of the year, OMINVEST contributed RO 500,000 to "The Endowment Fund to Support Health Services" to address the challenges caused by the Novel Corona Virus (COVID-19) pandemic outbreak. In addition, our Subsidiaries and Associate companies combinedly contributed another RO 1.85 million towards this national noble cause. Accordingly, OMINVEST's share of contribution at the Group Level amounted to RO 1.1 million.

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq for his great leadership, wisdom, and guidance as he leads our country towards continued growth, stability, and prosperity. We also extend our sincere congratulations to His Majesty and the people of Oman on the occasion of the 50th National Day of the Renaissance.

On behalf of the Board, I would like to thank the Capital Market Authority, Muscat Securities Market, Central Bank of Oman and Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion for their continued support and guidance. I also take this opportunity to thank the management teams and employees at OMINVEST and across our Group companies for their dedication and hard work.

Khalid Muhammad AlZubair
Chairman

UNAUDITED INTERIM CONDENSED CONSOLIDATED AND PARENT COMPANY STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AT 30 SEPTEMBER 2020					
	Consolidated		Parent Company		
	(Unaudited) 30-Sep-20 (RO'000)	(Audited) 31-Dec-19 (RO'000)	(Unaudited) 30-Sep-20 (RO'000)	(Audited) 31-Dec-19 (RO'000)	
Assets					
Balances with banks and money at call	53,314	191,505	40,329	4,549	
Deposits with banks	71,658	80,916	30,032	-	
Premium and insurance balance receivable	57,289	62,642	-	-	
Re-insurance share in insurance funds	19,834	19,565	-	-	
Investment securities	119,488	242,197	5,483	3,215	
Investment in associates	337,901	239,635	147,456	38,937	
Investment in subsidiaries	-	-	285,422	432,664	
Loans and advances to customers	-	2,006,330	-	-	
Due from subsidiaries	-	-	116,503	115,876	
Other assets	25,437	69,296	3,016	2,322	
Investment properties	10,812	10,776	2,100	2,100	
Property and equipment	11,532	30,904	995	1,102	
Intangible assets	25,008	18,377	-	-	
Total assets	732,273	2,992,143	631,336	600,765	
Equity and liabilities					
Equity					
Share capital	80,777	80,777	80,777	80,777	
Share premium	43,838	43,838	43,838	43,838	
Treasury shares	(58,580)	(81,464)	-	-	
Legal reserve	16,054	38,871	16,054	38,871	
General reserve	-	13,033	-	13,033	
Other non-distributable reserves	5,328	41,350	5,328	19,618	
Cumulative changes in fair value reserve	(15,412)	(8,384)	(25,685)	(21,891)	
Retained earnings	140,445	64,268	138,725	84,461	
Equity attributable to equity holders of the Parent Company	212,450	192,289	259,037	258,707	
Perpetual Tier 1 capital bonds	46,510	116,762	60,638	60,638	
	258,960	309,051	319,675	319,345	
	22,523	162,522	-	-	
Non-controlling interests	281,483	471,573	319,675	319,345	
Total equity					
Liabilities					
Due to banks	306,169	310,016	305,608	276,551	
Deposits from customers	-	1,978,832	-	-	
Insurance funds	92,342	80,108	-	-	
Subordinated debt	-	20,000	-	-	
Other liabilities	48,605	122,467	5,414	4,730	
Taxation	3,674	9,147	639	139	
Total liabilities	450,790	2,520,570	311,661	281,420	
Total equity and liabilities	732,273	2,992,143	631,336	600,765	
Net assets per share (Rial Omani)	0.318	0.313	0.321	0.320	

Note:

The unaudited condensed interim financial statements of the Company would be made available to any Shareholder or interested Party on request in Arabic or in English within 7 days from the date of request.
PO Box 3886, PC 112, Ruwi, Sultanate of Oman, Tel : +968 24769500, Fax : +968 24951620

UNAUDITED INTERIM CONDENSED CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE NINE MONTH PERIOD ENDED 30 SEPTEMBER 2020				
	Consolidated (Unaudited)			
	9 months ended 30-Sep-20 (RO'000)	9 months ended 30-Sep-19 (RO'000)	3 months ended 30-Sep-20 (RO'000)	3 months ended 30-Sep-19 (RO'000)
Gross premium earned	107,537	106,253	35,003	34,899
Interest income	62,612	86,479	1,400	29,971
Investment income	13,379	2,738	359	347
Fee and commission income - net	3,002	4,498	(1,419)	422
Other operating income	2,894	7,225	782	2,444
Share of results from associates	16,345	18,500	6,521	5,567
Total revenue	205,769	225,693	42,646	73,650
Premium ceded to re-insurers	(20,755)	(28,133)	(6,425)	(8,214)
Net claims	(57,717)	(58,005)	(20,770)	(20,289)
Interest expense	(32,753)	(39,338)	(3,815)	(13,687)
Operating expenses	(41,943)	(53,137)	(5,644)	(17,319)
COVID-19 contribution	(1,175)	-	-	-
Allowance for loan impairment, net of recoveries	(9,237)	(8,139)	-	(3,460)
Total expenses	(163,580)	(186,752)	(36,654)	(62,969)
Profit before tax	42,189	38,941	5,992	10,681
Income tax expense	(5,201)	(5,444)	(630)	(1,502)
Profit for the period	36,988	33,497	5,362	9,179
Profit for the period attributable to:				
Equity holders of the Parent Company	28,654	22,108	4,536	6,032
Non-controlling interests	8,334	11,389	826	3,147
	36,988	33,497	5,362	9,179
Basic earnings per share attributable to the equity holders of the Parent Company (RO)	0.039	0.030	0.007	0.010
Other comprehensive (expense) / income:				
Items that may be reclassified subsequently to profit or loss:				
Movement in cash flow hedge	(524)	-	37	-
Foreign currency translation reserve	(2)	(14)	9	(13)
Items not to be reclassified subsequently to profit or loss:				
Fair value changes of financial assets fair value	(8,888)	(1,664)	2,596	1,987
Through other comprehensive income, net of tax	(9,414)	(1,678)	2,642	1,974
Other comprehensive expense for the period	(9,414)	(1,678)	2,642	1,974
Total comprehensive income for the period	27,574	31,819	8,004	11,153
Total comprehensive income for the period attributable to:				
Equity holders of the Parent Company	19,702	20,300	7,160	7,931
Non-controlling interests	7,872	11,519	844	3,222
	27,574	31,819	8,004	11,153

UNAUDITED INTERIM CONDENSED CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE NINE MONTH PERIOD ENDED 30 SEPTEMBER 2020				
	Parent Company (Unaudited)			
	9 months ended 30-Sep-20 (RO'000)	9 months ended 30-Sep-19 (RO'000)	3 months ended 30-Sep-20 (RO'000)	3 months ended 30-Sep-19 (RO'000)
Interest income	5,047	8,048	1,941	2,771
Investment income	6,521	10	107	(24)
Other income	438	165	63	(10)
Share of results from subsidiaries	33,989	29,803	5,771	7,024
Share of results from associates	2,975	1,695	1,600	316
Total revenue	48,970	39,721	9,482	10,077
Interest expense	(11,001)	(8,973)	(3,800)	(3,189)
Operating expenses	(4,510)	(4,626)	(1,278)	(951)
COVID-19 contribution	(500)	-	-	-
Total expenses	(16,011)	(13,599)	(5,078)	(4,140)
Profit before tax	32,959	26,122	4,404	5,937
Income tax expense	(500)	(250)	-	-
Profit for the period	32,459	25,872	4,404	5,937
Basic earnings per share attributable to the equity holders of the Parent Company (RO)	0.036	0.027	0.006	0.007
Other comprehensive (expense) / income:				
Items that may be reclassified subsequently to profit or loss:				
Movement in cash flow hedge	(524)	-	37	-
Foreign currency translation reserve	(2)	(14)	9	(13)
Items not to be reclassified subsequently to profit or loss:				
Fair value changes of financial assets fair value	(9,503)	(2,311)	1,307	2,916
Through other comprehensive income, net of tax	(10,029)	(2,325)	1,353	2,903
Other comprehensive (expense) / income for the period	(10,029)	(2,325)	1,353	2,903
Total comprehensive income for the period	22,430	23,547	5,757	8,840

JABREEN CAPITAL



MSM rises 0.4% on improved activity

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The benchmark index of the Muscat Securities Market (MSM) rose 0.37 per cent to close at 3,641.48 points on Sunday.

The gains in the main market index were supported by all the sectors. Financial index rose 0.37 per cent while Industrial index closed 0.29 per cent higher on Sunday. Services index also increased by 0.12 per cent. MSM Sharia index, however, remained almost flat for the day.

The market breadth was positive as 12 traded stocks closed up and only two closed down. As many as 17 traded stocks closed flat for the day.

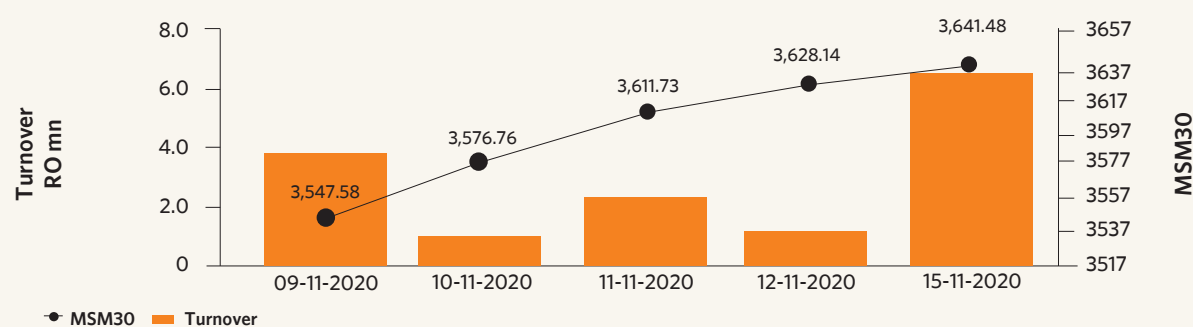
The market on Sunday witnessed a jump in trading activity. Total turnover surged by 477 per cent to RO6.7mn compared to RO1.16mn turnover recorded in



the previous trading session. Trading volume, however, decreased by 9 per cent at 4.9mn shares. Among top gainers on Sunday were Sohar International Bank (3.1 per cent), Oman Investment & Finance Company (2.2 per cent), National

Aluminum Products (1.1 per cent) and Muscat City Desalination (1.03 per cent). Two losers were Galfar Engineering and Contracting Co (-2.33 per cent) and Al Sharqia Investment Holding (-1.4 per cent).

MSM INDEX AND TURNOVER OF FIVE TRADING DAYS



Galfar reports RO21mn losses for nine months

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Galfar Engineering and Contracting Co has reported total losses of more than RO21mn for the nine months period ended September 30, 2020.

'The group incurred losses of RO21.467mn during January - September period of 2020 due to operational losses on account of time and cost overruns in major projects,' Galfar said in its financial report submitted to the Muscat Securities Market.

The sultanate's largest construction and contracting firm said its revenues dropped by approximately 18 per cent in 2020 compared to the same period in 2019 as projects progress was also impacted by COVID-19 situation and measures taken to control the pandemic.

Galfar said it continues to sustain heavy interest costs due to delayed payment of receivables. 'The delay in receiving the overdue receivables has caused a strain on the company's cash-flows, which resulted in suboptimal execution of some projects and delay in completion of oth-



ers.' As per Galfar's report, the parent company has certified overdue receivables of more than RO61mn as of the date from the government and its related entities.

The company said it maintains, on a conservative and prudent measure, a provision of RO36.73mn against billed and unbilled receivables. 'The management is in close dialogue with the clients to certify and collect these outstanding receivables. On realisation of these receivables, the company expects some of the provisions maintained will be reversed in

the books.'

Galfar said its board and management are working very closely on various measures to restructure the organization, to reduce operating cost and to collect overdue receivables in order to reduce the accumulated losses and improve the financial position of the company.

Galfar said, during the first nine months of 2020, the parent company has been awarded new contracts worth approximately RO251mn. The company's order-book stands at approximately RO409mn as of September 2020.

US airlines cut 90,000 jobs in 2020

New York, US - Hit with a collapse of demand, US airlines will end the year with the lowest number of workers since at least 1987, 90,000 fewer than when COVID-19 hit, an industry federation said Thursday.

Airlines for America said the number of full-time equivalent positions will drop to 370,000 at the end of December from 460,000 in March, a drop of

nearly 20 per cent.

As coronavirus cases explode, approaching the worst days of the pandemic, authorities have stepped up restrictions.

The number of passengers carried in the United States in recent weeks has remained 65 per cent lower than the same period last year, the organization said.

Airlines initially cut staff through early retirement and vol-

untary furloughs.

The companies pledged to hold off on any layoffs until September 30, in exchange for aid of US\$25bn. In addition, four smaller US carriers shut down, Airlines for America said in its study of the pandemic impact on the industry, which also showed that a quarter of aircraft have been grounded.

AFP

UAE government discusses vision for economy for next 50 years

Dubai, UAE - More than 1,000 ministers and senior federal and local government officials held 11 consultative meetings to discuss the UAE's path for the economic environment and economic models and sectors for the next 50 years.

The meetings were in implementation of directives given by Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid al Maktoum, Vice President, Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai, to strengthen the government integration to chart the future and lay down axes and components of the comprehensive development plan for the next 50 years.

They were held within the efforts of the 50-year Development Plan Committee, under the chairmanship of H H Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed al Nahyan, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Presidential Affairs, to envisage features of vital sectors and conceptualise development plans and strategic directions for the next 50 years to ensure the UAE's leading stature regionally and globally.

The consultative meetings focused on several axes, the most important of which are the business environment and stimulating entrepreneurship, foreign trade and partnerships, attract-



Sheikh Mohammed al Maktoum

ing investments, talents and skills, and building the capabilities of national cadres to lead the future economy.

Suhail bin Mohammed al Mazrouei, Minister of Energy and Infrastructure, affirmed that his ministry is working to develop sectors related to the energy, infrastructure, housing and transport system, to meet the requirements of the next stage in the country's development process.

Dr Sultan bin Ahmed al Jaber, Cabinet Member and Minister of Industry and Advanced Technology, said, "The Ministry of Industry and Advanced Technology will work to establish a regulatory infrastructure capable of enabling and stimulating the utilisation of innovations and technologies of the fourth indus-

trial age to drive the growth of the sector, enhance the competitiveness of our national industries and increase their contribution to the GDP."

Nasser bin Thani al Hamli, Minister of Human Resources and Emiratisation, said his ministry has identified four main paths that will be focused on over the next 50 years, to achieve the goal of attracting global skills and competencies. These four paths, he explained, will create a workforce that matches the requirements of the labour market in the future; concentrate on a knowledge-driven economy; sustain the economic sectors and finally provide central statistical and analytical systems for high-quality labour market data through integrated records systems and programmes for anticipating future work.

Abdullah bin Touq al Marri, Cabinet Member and Minister of Economy, said, "The preparations for the next-50-years plan reflect the importance of constant work to enhance the state's readiness and move towards creating a better future for the next generations."

Sarah bint Yousif al Amiri, Minister of State for Advanced

Sciences, who chairs the UAE Space Agency, said, "The space sector is possible as the head of the future economy and we will work with an integrated vision to achieve the aspirations of the wise leadership. The next stage will witness doubling the work to achieve the UAE's vision of pioneering the space sector by qualifying a specialised generation capable of contributing to the growth of the space sector."

Saeed Alahmadi, Governor of the Central Bank of the UAE, said the central bank's plan for the next 50 years is based on several major axes, which include adopting AI, analysing big data, using digital identity and dealing with the repercussions of climate change on the banking and insurance sector. These axes represent the most prominent topics on the agendas of global central banks, he noted.

Omar bin Sultan al Olama, Minister of State for Artificial Intelligence, Digital Economy and Teleworking Applications, said the digital economy represents a fundamental driver for the implementation of the future strategies of the UAE government, and a key pillar of the preparations for the next 50 years.

WAM

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UBGCCF Inception Date*	17-Nov-09
NAV Date	Nov 12, 2020
NAV (OMR)	1.017
Adjusted NAV** (OMR)	1.340
Cash Dividend paid since inception (OMR)	0.03
Unit Dividend paid since inception	28%
YTD Performance	0.26%
Performance since inception	39.67%

* First NAV was issued on 4th March 2010
** Adjusted for cash and bonus dividends

For more information please contact:
Tel: 00968 24 949 031/030, Email: ubhargocfund@u-capital.net

Nissan trims losses in Q2

Tokyo, Japan - Crisis-hit Japanese automaker Nissan said it trimmed net loss in the second quarter, though it remained in the red, and upgraded its full-year forecasts as the global auto industry showed signs of recovery from the coronavirus pandemic.

Nissan, which was already

struggling before the crisis hit, suffered a massive loss in the previous fiscal year, but it said quarterly net loss shrank to 44.4bn yen (US\$422mn) for the three months to September, from 285.6bn in the previous quarter. It revised upward its full-year forecast.

AFP

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Asia-Pacific countries sign world's largest trade pact

Hanoi, Vietnam – Fifteen Asia-Pacific countries on Sunday signed the world's biggest free trade deal, seen as a huge coup for China in extending its influence.

The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) includes 10 Southeast Asian economies along with China, Japan, South Korea, New Zealand and Australia, with members accounting for around 30 per cent of global GDP.

First proposed in 2012, the deal was finally sealed at the end of a Southeast Asian summit as leaders push to get their pandemic-hit economies back on track.

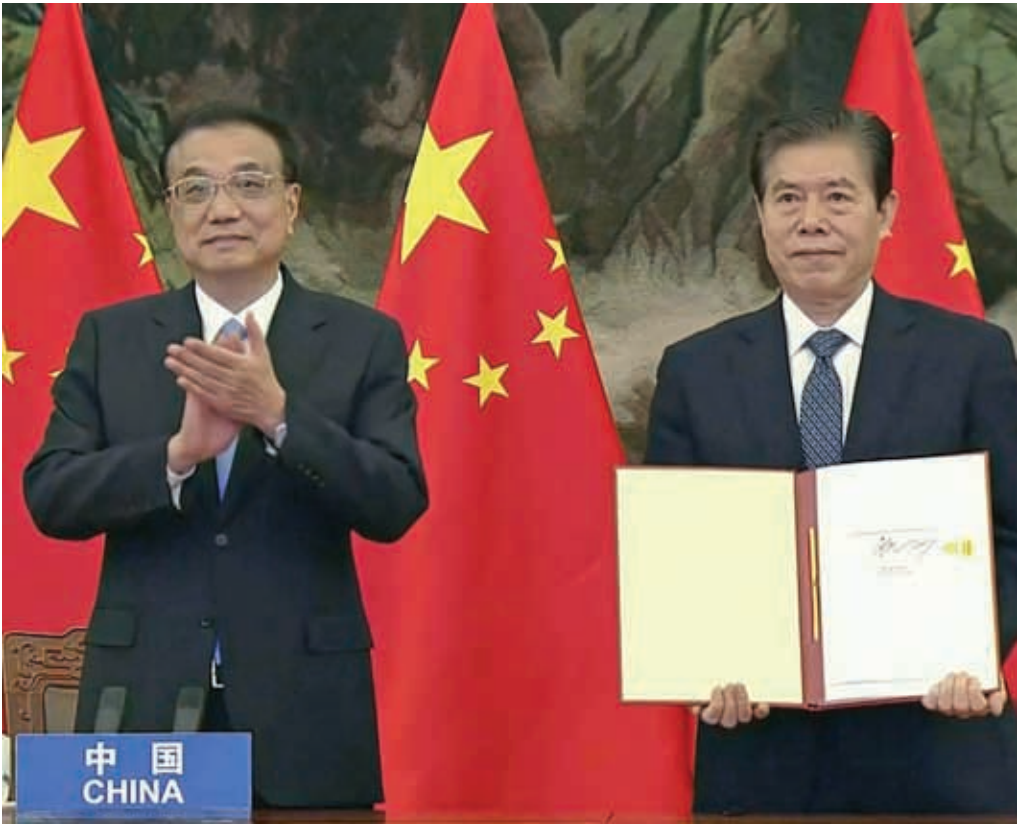
"Under the current global circumstances, the fact the RCEP has been signed after eight years of negotiations brings a ray of light and hope amid the clouds," said Chinese Premier Li Keqiang after the virtual signing.

"It clearly shows that multilateralism is the right way, and represents the right direction of the global economy and humanity's progress."

The agreement to lower tariffs and open up the services trade within the bloc does not include the United States and is viewed as a Chinese-led alternative to a now-defunct Washington trade initiative.

"The RCEP solidifies China's broader regional geopolitical ambitions around the Belt and Road initiative", said Alexander Capri, a trade expert at the National University of Singapore Business School, referring to Beijing's signature investment project that envisions Chinese infrastructure and influence spanning the globe. "It's sort of a complementary element."

But many of the signatories are battling severe coronavirus



China's Premier Li Keqiang (L) is clapping as Chinese Minister of Commerce Zhong Shan (R) holds up the agreement during the signing ceremony for the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership at the ASEAN summit held online in Hanoi on Sunday (AFP)

outbreaks and they are also hoping the RCEP will help mitigate the crippling economic cost of the illness.

Indonesia recently tumbled into its first recession for two decades while the Philippine economy shrunk by 11.5 per cent on-year in the latest quarter.

"COVID-19 has reminded the region of why trade matters and governments are more eager than ever to have positive economic growth," said Deborah Elms, executive director of the Asian Trade Centre, a Singapore-based consultancy.

India pulled out of the agreement last year over concerns about cheap Chinese goods entering the country and was a notable absentee during Sunday's virtual signing. It can join at a

later date if it chooses.

Even without India, the deal covers more than two billion people. Crucially, it should help shrink costs and make life easier for companies by letting them export products anywhere within the bloc without meeting separate requirements for each country. The agreement touches on intellectual property, but environmental protections and labour rights are not part of the pact.

The deal is also seen as a way for China to draft the rules of trade in the region, after years of US retreat under President Donald Trump which have seen Washington pull out of a trade pact of its own, the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP).

Though US multinationals will

be able to benefit from RCEP through subsidiaries within member countries, analysts said the deal may cause President-elect Joe Biden to rethink Washington's engagement in the region. This could see the US eye the potential benefits of joining the TPP's successor deal, the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), said Rajiv Biswas, APAC chief economist at IHS Markit.

"However, this is not expected to be an immediate priority issue... given the considerable negative response to the TPP negotiations from many segments of the US electorate due to concerns about US job losses to Asian countries," he added.

AFP

What is the RCEP trade deal?

Hanoi, Vietnam – Launched in 2012, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) is a trade pact between the 10-member ASEAN bloc, along with China, Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand. India had been due to sign but pulled out last year.

The deal includes 2.1bn people, with RCEP's members accounting for around 30 per cent of global GDP. Its aim is to lower tariffs, open up trade in services and promote investment to help emerging economies catch up with the rest of the world.

Specifically, RCEP is expected to help reduce costs and time for companies by allowing them to export a product anywhere within the bloc without meeting separate requirements for each country. It also touches on intellectual property, but will not cover environmental protections and labour rights.

It is unclear when the pact will be ratified but it could come into force next year.

Why does it matter?

It mainly matters because it sets new trade rules for the region – and has China's backing but does not include the United States. Observers say it solidifies China's broader geopolitical ambitions in the region, where it has faced little competition from the US since President Donald Trump pulled out of a trade pact of its own.

That deal, called the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), was on track to be the world's



Vietnam's Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc waves during the 4th RCEP summit being held online in Hanoi on Sunday (AFP)

biggest trade pact, until Washington pulled the plug, saying it funnelled off US jobs.

However, observers say the RCEP is not as extensive as the TPP, or the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), as its successor is known.

It "is not a fully completed, fully rationalised agreement," said Alexander Capri, a trade expert at the National University of Singapore Business School.

"The problem with RCEP is that you have 15 incredibly diverse countries at different stages of development and with completely internal priorities," he added.

Why no India?

India withdrew last year over concerns about cheap Chinese goods entering the country, though it can join at a later date if it chooses.

It raised alarm about market access issues, fearing its domestic producers could be hard hit if the country was flooded with cheap Chinese goods.

Textiles, dairy, and agriculture were flagged as three vulnerable industries.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi faced mounting pressures at home to take a tougher stance on the terms, and proved unbending as the RCEP negotiations came to a close.

What does it mean for the US?

It is likely that a new US administration under President-elect Joe Biden will focus more on Southeast Asia, analysts say, although it remains unclear whether he would want to rejoin the CPTPP. The topic remains a politically sensitive issue in the US. "The administration will be looking at this very closely," said Capri.

AFP

Rising coronavirus cases in US jeopardize economic growth

Washington, US – COVID-19 has come roaring back and is likely to inflict further damage on the American economy, which will take years to recover to its robust pre-pandemic status.

And even with promising news on a successful vaccine candidate, that is unlikely to be widely distributed for many months.

US coronavirus infections have hit new record levels of more than 150,000 a day, causing authorities in many areas to impose new restrictions.

"COVID still determines the course of the economy," economist Diane Swonk of Grant Thornton, said in an analysis.

"The current surge in cases is much more worrisome... (and) it is expected to be more disruptive to economic activity," she said.

Authorities say an increasing number of cases have been traced back to relatively small private gatherings. "Buy a small turkey," Swonk urged for the coming Thanksgiving holiday, when Americans traditionally gather with extended family.

"Delay celebrations and demand our elected officials do more for those suffering through no fault of their own. Masks are disposable; people are not."

Chicago, the nation's third most populous city, has called on



People line up outside a COVID-19 testing site in New York on Thursday (AFP)

its residents to stay at home, while in New York and Minnesota, establishments selling alcohol must close at 10:00 pm.

The world's largest economy over the summer showed promising signs of recovering from the worst recession since the Great Depression, but now risks another reversal especially in the absence of a new stimulus package from Congress.

"We are starting to hear from economists that they are thinking about lowering their GDP

projections because of Covid," said Maris Ogg of Tower Bridge Advisors.

While booming home and auto sales have been a bright spot in the economy, along with a rebound in manufacturing, consumers are worried about the upsurge in cases. One measure of consumer sentiment plunged in November for the first time since July.

The new wave of infections comes in the midst of a combative political transition: Joe Biden

won the November 3 election, blocking President Donald Trump's bid for a second term, though Trump continues to dispute the results.

Democrats retained their majority in the House of Representatives, but whether the party can wrest control of the Senate from Republicans will not be known until early January.

That uncertainty has scuppered hopes for rapid approval of a massive new aid package to support suffering families and

businesses, as well as budget-constrained state and local governments.

Congress in March approved multiple spending bills to respond to the pandemic, which were credited with boosting the economy, but many of the provisions of the US\$2.2tn CARES Act have expired.

With at least 11mn US workers still unemployed, Republicans and Democrats remain divided on the structure and size of the next package.

Federal Reserve vice chair Randal Quarles said Tuesday he does not expect the economy to recover until 2022 or early in the year 2023.

Many observers fear the economic recovery will not follow the usual pattern, with a quick V-shaped rebound, or even a slower U-shape. Instead it could see a two-speed K-shaped recovery that leaves many people behind.

The US unemployment rate fell to 6.9 per cent in October, down from the peak of 14.7 per cent. But a third of the jobless have now been out of work for more than six months.

This worries economists, because the longer people remain on the sidelines, the harder it is to find a job.

AFP

VW to invest \$85bn in future tech by 2025

Frankfurt, Germany – German auto giant Volkswagen said it would increase investment in smarter and greener technology as it ramps up efforts to capture a market rapidly shifting to electric vehicles.

Europe's largest car manufacturer plans to spend 73bn (US\$85.1bn) by 2025 on "electrification, hybrid powertrains and digital technology", around half its total expenditure for the period, as part of a "transformation into a digital mobility company", the company said in a statement.

It comes as part of a five-year funding allocation that the board of VW presents each year, and marks a rise in research and development from 60bn committed for 2020-2024.

VW, like other car makers, is racing to meet EU emissions targets, as it tries to shake off the long-running "dieselgate" scandal involving cheating software it illegally installed in 11mn cars.

The company's investments in digitalisation, which includes self-driving technology, apps and over-the-air software updates were significantly boosted, doubling to 27bn by the middle of the decade.

"Only as a digital mobility group can we meet people's needs for individual, sustainable and fully networked mobility in the future," chief executive Herbert Diess said, adding that it will



be "crucial" for VW to reach a leading position in car software.

Around 35bn euros will be spent on developing battery-electric cars and 11bn earmarked for hybrid vehicles of existing models, VW said.

"We will go fully on the offensive in the coming years", said Bernd Osterloh, chairman of the VW works council, who accused political officials of paralysis on "topics such as charging infrastructure and high-speed internet".

"Volkswagen is fully committed to climate-friendly, highly networked mobility," he said, "but for this, we and our customers need a reliable environment."

VW said it assumes "moderate growth" in the global economy over the next five years and anticipates a 30 per cent improvement in productivity amid savings in administration.

AFP

UAE to grant virus experts ten year residence visa



Dubai's Crown Prince Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohamed al Maktoum inspects a field hospital at the World Trade Center in Dubai

Dubai, UAE - The United Arab Emirates said on Sunday it will grant all doctors and infectious disease experts living in the country a ten-year visa, who are helping to combat the coronavirus pandemic.

Foreigners in the UAE, like most Gulf countries, are generally only given limited residence visas tied to their current employment, and long-term residency is difficult to obtain.

But to attract wealthy businesspeople and highly skilled workers, the UAE last year launched the 'Golden' ten-year visa programme, which is now being expanded.

Those eligible include holders of doctorate degrees, medical doctors, and computer, electronics, programming, electrical and biotechnology engineers, tweeted Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid al Maktoum.

'We are keen to embrace talent that drives future development and this is only the beginning', said Sheikh Mohammed, who is also the ruler of Dubai, which has the most diversified economy in the Gulf.

Students from accredited universities who are getting top grades could also qualify, he said, along with those holding specialised degrees in artificial intelligence, big data and epidemiology.

The scheme last year drew in some 6,800 investors, in a windfall worth US\$27bn for the economy.

We are keen to embrace talent that drives future development and this is only the beginning

SHEIKH MOHAMMED BIN RASHID AL MAKTOUNI

Foreigners account for 90 per cent of the population of some 10mn in the oil-rich UAE, the Arab world's second-largest economy. The country has so far recorded more than 150,000 cases of the coronavirus, including 530 deaths.

A months-long lockdown and the impact on tourism and business has done serious damage to the economy, which was already slumping in recent years due to low oil prices. The 'Golden Visa' was the first such scheme in the Gulf, which keeps tight control on residency.

Similar programmes have been launched in other countries that seek to diversify their economies such as Saudi Arabia and Qatar.

Riyadh said in June 2019 that it will offer permanent residency for 800,000 riyals (US\$213,000) and a one-year renewable residency costing 100,000 riyals (\$27,000), allowing expats to do business and buy property without a Saudi sponsor.

AFP



Russian peacekeepers check their equipment in their Armoured Personnel carrier (APC) stationed outside the town of Kalbajar on Sunday (AFP)

Armenian pullout deadline extended, says Azerbaijan

Kalbajar, Azerbaijan - Azerbaijan said on Sunday it had agreed to extend a deadline for Armenia to withdraw from a disputed district as part of a peace accord that ended six weeks of fierce fighting over the Nagorno-Karabakh region.

Residents of the Kalbajar district in Azerbaijan, which has been controlled by Armenian separatists since a 1990s post-Soviet war, began a mass exodus in the days leading up to the initial withdrawal deadline on Sunday.

But a foreign policy advisor to Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev said his country had extended the deadline over humanitarian considerations.

Hikmet Hajiyev said the withdrawal of 'Armenian forces and of illegal Armenian settlers' was delayed until November 25 following an appeal from Armenia and mediation with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

"Kalbajar's settlement by Armenians was illegal. The people who were resettled there have no property rights," Hajiyev told a news conference.

Kalbajar was almost exclusively populated by ethnic Azerbaijanis before they were expelled by Armenians in the 1990s war between the two countries over Nagorno-Karabakh, and a majority of the homes being abandoned previously belonged to Azerbaijanis.

AFP journalists saw fleeing residents pile furniture and kitchenware into vehicles before leaving for Armenia on the weekend. Thick plumes of smoke rose over the valley near the village of Charektar after residents set their homes on fire, preferring to leave devastation in their wake and homes that would be uninhabitable by Azerbaijanis.

"We also moved our parents' graves, the Azerbaijanis will take great pleasure in desecrating our graves. It's unbearable," one Charektar resident said.

Russian forces for peacekeeping

A Russian peacekeeping contingent deployed this week to Nagorno-Karabakh set up checkpoints and positions in the re-

gion's administrative centre Stepanakert.

The deployment was part of the peace deal, which sees Armenia cede swathes of territory that Azerbaijan's forces gained in the weeks of fighting.

Moscow's peacekeeping mission, which the military said included soldiers that previously

and the US to get a ceasefire fell through during the nearly two months of clashes.

A key part of the peace deal includes Armenia's return of Kalbajar, as well as the Aghdam district by November 20 and the Lachin district by December 1, which have been held by Armenians since the devastating

its military casualties, but Putin said the number of deaths on both sides surpassed 4,000 and that tens of thousands of people had been forced to flee their homes.

Outrage over deal

Before departing en masse, Armenians flocked to the Dadivank monastery nestled in a Kalbajar gorge for a final visit before it was ceded to Azerbaijan.

In a phone call with Aliyev on Saturday, Putin has urged Azerbaijan to protect 'normal church life' at religious sites and monasteries in the ceded territory.

The peace accord with Azerbaijan has sparked a week of protests in Armenia, where demonstrations and opposition parties are calling for Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan to resign over the lost areas.

The former head of Armenia's national security service Artur Vanetsyan and several other suspects were arrested on Saturday on charges of plotting to kill Pashinyan and seize power.

AFP

The withdrawal of Armenian forces and of illegal Armenian settlers was delayed until November 25 following an appeal from Armenia and mediation with Russia

HIKMET HAJIYEV

were stationed in Syria, comprises some 2,000 troops for a renewable five-year mission.

The Defence Ministry said on Sunday that over two days it had escorted more than 700 people returning to Stepanakert, which was shelled heavily during the fighting.

The ex-Soviet rivals agreed to end hostilities earlier this week after efforts by Russia, France

1990s war left 30,000 people dead.

Hajiyev said on Sunday the timetable for the Armenian withdrawal of the remaining districts was unchanged.

Armenia has said 2,317 of its fighters were killed in clashes in which both sides accused the other of targeting civilian infrastructure.

Azerbaijan has not revealed

Erdogan says Cyprus made up of 'two separate states'

Nicosia, Cyprus - Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said on a controversial visit to the Turkish-occupied north of Cyprus on Sunday that talks about the divided island should aim for a settlement between 'two separate states'.

Talks in the past have aimed for a reunification of the Mediterranean island, which is split between the Greek-speaking Republic of Cyprus, an EU member with effective control over the island's southern two thirds, and the breakaway north occupied by Turkey since 1974.

"There are two peoples and two separate states in Cyprus," said Erdogan. "There must be talks for a solution on the basis of two separate states."

Erdogan's visit to the breakaway north, recognised only by Ankara, comes at a time of heightened tensions on the island and in the Eastern Mediterranean and was condemned as a 'provocation without precedent' by the Republic of Cyprus.

The Turkish President was later to attend a 'picnic' in the disputed beachfront area of Varosha along the UN buffer



Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan (front left) and Turkish Cypriot leader Ersin Tatar (right) at the Ercan Airport in Nicosia on Sunday (AFP)

zone that has divided the island since Turkey's invasion.

Erdogan's visit comes as regional power Turkey has openly sparred with neighbours Greece and Cyprus over maritime territories believed to hold vast gas deposits. An eventual reunification of Cyprus has looked more remote since an Erdogan-backed Turkish nationalist, Ersin Tatar, was elected leader of the north last month.

The last UN-sponsored peace talks, based on a reunification of the island, failed in 2017.

Erdogan visited on Sunday to mark the anniversary of the self-proclaimed Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), and was to visit Varosha, a long-abandoned beach resort that was once the playground of celebrities and dubbed a 'Jewel of the Mediterranean'. The Turkish invasion - launched in response to an Athens-engineered coup in Nicosia designed to unify Cyprus with Greece - was followed on November 15, 1983 by the declaration of the TRNC.

AFP

Egypt's Siwa fortress boasts renovation

Siwa, Egypt - Tucked away in Egypt's Western Desert, the Shali fortress once protected inhabitants against the incursions of wandering tribes, but now there are hopes its renovation will attract ecotourists.

The 13th-century edifice, called 'Shali' or 'home' in the local Siwi language, was built by Berber populations atop a hill in the pristine Siwa oasis, some 600km southwest of Cairo.

The towering structure is made of kershef - a mixture of clay, salt and rock which acts as a natural insulator in an area where the summer heat can be scorching.

After it was worn away by erosion, and then torrential rains almost 100 years ago, the European Union and Egyptian company Environmental Quality International (EQI) began to restore the fortress in 2018, at a cost of over US\$600,000.

'Teach your children, and mine, about what ancient Shali means,' sang a choir of young girls in brightly coloured robes at the renovated fortress' inauguration ceremony last week.

Dotted by thick palm groves, freshwater springs and salt lakes, the Siwa oasis' geographic and



This file photo shows the recently restored fortress of Shali and its surroundings, in the Egyptian desert oasis of Siwa, some 600km southwest of the capital Cairo, on November 6 (AFP)

cultural isolation offers a rare eco-friendly getaway, far from Egypt's bustling urban communities. The region's tourism model contrasts with Egypt's mass approach in other areas, such as its Red Sea resorts in the east or along the Nile valley, especially in Luxor and Aswan in the south.

Tourists began gravitating to Siwa from the 1980s, after the government built roads linking it with the northwestern city of Marsa Matrouh, the provincial capital on the Mediterranean.

The Marsa Matrouh governor

has called the oasis, registered as a natural reserve since 2002, a 'therapeutic and environmental tourism destination'.

Eco-lodges offer lush vegetable gardens and kershef facades. Restoration works at the Shali fortress were carried out under the aegis of the Egyptian government, which has been pushing to make Siwa a global 'ecotourism destination'.

The project also includes setting up a traditional market and a museum on local architecture.

"The project will certainly

benefit us and bring tourists. Today, I can offer my palm frond products inside Shali," said Adam Aboukassam, who sells handicrafts in the fortress.

EQI project manager Ines al-Moudariss said the materials used in the restoration work were sourced from the fortress site itself.

She said the project was about 'bringing the inhabitants of Siwa back to their origins and offering them employment opportunities' and services.

AFP

Trump accepts Biden victory in criticism

He won because the Election was Rigged. NO VOTE WATCHERS OR OBSERVERS allowed, Trump tweeted

Washington, US - US President Donald Trump appeared to edge closer towards acknowledging his election defeat in a tweet on Sunday morning, as he again railed against supposed mass fraud in the vote won by challenger Joe Biden.

'He won because the Election was Rigged. NO VOTE WATCHERS OR OBSERVERS allowed, vote tabulated by a Radical Left privately owned company,' Trump tweeted in his clearest yet admission of defeat.

Trump has refused to concede the election, and repeatedly said he intended to overturn the result through legal cases - though no evidence of mass fraud in the November 3 election has been found.

But the first two words of his Sunday tweet - two days after a slip in which he said 'time will tell' if he remains president - seemed to bring him another step closer to admitting defeat.

Thousands of Trump supporters rallied in Washington on Saturday, backing his claims of fraud, with clashes erupting in the evening with rival protesters.

At least 20 people were arrested, reports said, including four for firearm violations and one for assault on a police officer.

Trump himself made a drive-past of the rally in his armored motorcade, on his way to play golf, smiling through his limousine window to wild cheers and signs saying 'Best prez ever' and 'Trump 2020: Keep America Great'.

"We wanted to show our support, we're feeling they are trying to steal the election," said Pam Ross, who drove eight hours from Ohio to join the rally, referring to the president's political opponents.

The Republican incumbent is sticking to discredited claims of mass fraud and claiming he defeated President-elect Joe Biden in the November 3 vote, marking



A girl (right) cries after her family was harassed by anti-Trump protesters as supporters of US President Donald Trump rallied in Washington, DC, on Saturday (AFP)

another unprecedented challenge to US democratic norms as his time in office runs down.

Later on Saturday, he took to Twitter with a series of tweets and retweets that included claims of voting machines potentially being hacked and complaints about news networks' coverage of the rally.

Twitter slapped labels on at least eight of the posts as containing 'disputed' information.

At least 10,000 people - few wearing masks - massed on the city's Freedom Plaza before marching to the Supreme Court in a raucous atmosphere reminiscent

cent of a Trump campaign rally. "President Trump deserves to see who's behind him," Kris Napolitana, from Baltimore, told AFP. "I believe that he's going to win when all the fraud and cheating is found out."

Tight security

With right-wing militia group the Proud Boys among those attending, a large security presence was deployed to prevent clashes with anti-Trump events outside the Supreme Court.

As night fell, police formed lines on either side of a street

President Trump deserves to see who's behind him... I believe that he's going to win when all the fraud and cheating is found out

KRIS NAPOLITANA

leading to the White House, separating hundreds of rival protesters.

"We're just holding back people who want to fight," one officer told AFP.

After dark, groups of Trump supporters and counter-protesters clashed on the streets, scuffling and throwing punches, video posted by the Washington Post showed.

At least 20 people were arrested during the day, reports said, including four for firearm violations and one for assault on a police officer.

Trump seemed to be following the evening's events, taking to Twitter to accuse the city's mayor of 'not doing her job' and

calling on the police to 'get going - do your job and don't hold back'.

The latest vote tallies gave the Democrat Biden a clear win in the state-by-state Electoral College that decides the presidency, with 306 votes against Trump's 232. Two hundred and seventy votes are required for election.

But Margarita Urtubey (49), a horse breeder from Miami, said the election was 'so corrupt', adding, "Trump won by a landslide. We are here to march for the 'stop the steal' of this election, to make our voice heard."

Trump tweeted that 'hundreds

of thousands' had turned out - while his spokeswoman Kayleigh McEnany made the greatly exaggerated claim that more than a million people were present.

But the turnout was undoubtedly high for a strongly Democratic city, boosted by protesters from around the country, from Florida to Pennsylvania to Colorado.

Darion Schaublin, who drove from Columbus, Ohio, said 'the whole system's rigged... in the way that the information is getting to the people'. AFP



Residents carry a piece of blown-off roof after Typhoon Vamco made landfall in Thua Thien Hue province (AFP)

Damage, injuries as Vamco hits Vietnam

Hanoi, Vietnam - Storm Vamco barreled into Vietnam on Sunday, damaging buildings and injuring at least five people after wreaking devastation in the Philippines.

The storm made landfall on Sunday morning with winds of up to 90km per hour, according to media reports, uprooting trees and blowing the roofs off houses and schools.

Vamco is the latest in a series of storms that have pummeled Vietnam over the past six weeks causing flooding and landslides that have killed at least 159 people and left 70 others missing.

Initial reports from the Disaster

Management Authority on Sunday said that five people were injured while they were trying to secure their houses.

Vamco has weakened since hitting the Philippines as a typhoon with winds of up to 155km per hour, but state media said it had still caused significant damage, though details were not immediately available.

Authorities evacuated nearly 650,000 people from seven coastal provinces to higher and safer ground before the storm hit to try to reduce casualties.

Agriculture and Rural Development Minister Nguyen Xuan

Cuong told the VNExpress news website he hoped the precautions would minimise the storm's impact.

Vamco caused severe damage in the Philippines, causing flooding that affected more than 340,000 people.

Philippine authorities said Sunday the death toll had risen to 67, though floodwaters are now receding, giving hope that the worst could be over.

In Vietnam, weeks of severe weather have damaged or destroyed over 400,000 homes, according to the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

AFP

India's capital awakes to 'severe' smog after the festival of lights

New Delhi, India - Toxic smog blanketed India's capital early on Sunday as though low key firecrackers were set off throughout the night to mark the country's biggest annual festival Diwali despite a ban, worsening the city's air quality levels.

India's environmental court had imposed a ban to stop millions of the explosives being lighted up to mark the Festival of Light, stressing that residents were already reeling from the impact of the coronavirus pandemic and the pollution crisis that arises every winter.

But the sound of firecrackers regularly was heard in the city of 20mn people late on Saturday, and sporadically on Sunday.

"The overall air quality of Delhi is in the Severe category as of today morning," the state-run System of Air Quality Weather Forecasting and Research (SAFAR) said on Sunday.

"Significant local additional emissions (probably firecracker related) during yesterday night... build up stubble fire-related pollutant concentrations."

But the meteorological body added that wind speeds in the capital were picking up on Sunday, helping to clear the choking air, while 'isolated scattered rainfall' later in the day was also expected.

Delhi is infamous as having some of the world's dirtiest air, with cracker smoke mingling with car exhaust, factory emis-



People cross a street as motorists drive past amid smoggy conditions, in New Delhi on Sunday (AFP)

The overall air quality of Delhi is in the severe category. Significant local additional emissions during yesterday night... build up stubble fire-related pollutions

STATE-RUN AIR QUALITY MONITOR

sions, construction dust and crop stubble burning from nearby states turning the winter air into a putrid grey-yellow.

Scientists have also been

warning that this year's Diwali celebrations have increased health risks amid crowding at markets ahead of the festival, the cold and the air pollution, which

studies have linked to increased coronavirus deaths.

The metropolis has been recording higher-than-usual daily rises in new cases, and reported 7,340 fresh infections late Saturday.

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal is expected to meet with national Home Minister Amit Shah later Sunday to ask for more beds to cope with the spike, local media reported.

AFP

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Curbs tighten in Europe; global deaths top 1.3mn

Vienna, Austria - A swathe of new restrictions to curtail a second wave of coronavirus infections were announced or came into force from Austria to Greece, Italy to Portugal, as the global death toll climbed above 1.3mn.

More than 53mn have been infected worldwide by COVID-19, which is running rampant throughout America and Europe, forcing governments to take more drastic action despite the potential economic devastation.

Austria joined a growing trend announcing schools and non-essential shops would close from Tuesday, having imposed a partial lockdown two weeks ago.

"There are still many who say that infections don't happen at school, in shops or services," said Chancellor Sebastian Kurtz.

"But the truth is the authorities can no longer trace 77 per cent of new infections, which means they no longer know where contamination is happening."

In Italy, the regions of Tuscany and Campania - of which Florence and Naples are the respective capitals - plunged into 'red zones' of tough restrictions, which now cover 26mn of the 60mn population.

"There is no other way if we want to reduce the numbers of dead," Health Minister Roberto Speranza said, as the country's death toll rose by 544 to 44,683, one of Europe's worst.

New anti-virus curbs also came into force in Ukraine.

Beyond Europe, Lebanon entered a new two-week lockdown, with hospitals in the crises-wracked country almost at capacity.

Bars in New York, the epicentre of the US's spring outbreak, were ordered to close at 10.00pm from Friday. Schools could move to online only teaching as early as Monday.

The United States, the country hardest hit by COVID-19, saw 188,858 more cases and 1,596 more deaths on Friday, according to Johns Hopkins University.

'Don't kill the economy'

Several Germans cities saw protests against enforced mask-



A woman walks through a 'disinfection tunnel' pushing a shopping trolley to enter the Leclerc Baleone supermarket in Ajaccio on the French Mediterranean island of Corsica on November 9 (AFP)

The truth is the authorities can no longer trace 77 per cent of new infections, which means they no longer know where contamination is happening

SEBASTIEN KURTZ

wearing, with police using water cannon to disperse nearly 1,000 people in Frankfurt.

France's Riviera resort of Nice saw 1,500 take to the streets to demand more coherent restrictions to fight the disease.

Hundreds of demonstrators also turned out in Portugal, defying a weekend curfew imposed on seven out of every ten of the population of 10mn.

The curfew bans driving on public roads after 1.00pm on

Saturdays and Sundays.

"The pandemic is on and we have to be protected, but without killing the economy," said 33 year old Carla Torres, who works in Lisbon's hospitality industry.

Poland became the latest country to report record figures with 548 coronavirus deaths over 24 hours, just days after the government decided against introducing a nationwide quarantine.

Lifting the gloom, the Euro-

pean Medicines Agency added to growing hopes that an effective vaccine could be available soon.

The EU body said it expected to give a favourable opinion on a vaccine by year end if test results proved positive.

But even if the hurdles of testing and distribution are overcome, another challenge awaits: will people take a vaccine?

"My fear is that not enough French people will get vaccinated," French Prime Minister Jean Castex told *Le Monde* newspaper.

French restaurant and bar owners announced legal action against government measures which closed them from the end of October.

AFP

German Minister sees more months of curbs

Berlin, Germany - Germany may see four to five more months of coronavirus restrictions, Economy Minister Peter Altmaier said on Sunday, dashing hopes of a quick end to a partial lockdown introduced two weeks ago.

"The infection numbers are still far too high - much higher even than a fortnight ago," Altmaier told the *Bild am Sonntag* newspaper ahead of a government meeting on Monday to assess the progress of the restrictions.

Germany went into partial lockdown in early November, closing bars, restaurants, gyms and other recreational facilities but keeping schools and shops open.

The number of new infections per day has since slowed but remains high, with a record of more than 23,000 reported on Friday.

"We will have to live with considerable precautions and restrictions for at least the next four to five months," Altmaier said.

"Many people are now understandably hoping for a loosening (of restrictions), that restaurants or cinemas will re-



A notice on a store window reads 'Dear guests, due to the pandemic our shop will be closed. Stay healthy and see you soon', in Weimar, Germany, on Saturday (AFP)

open. But in view of the still far too high infection rates, we have little room for manoeuvre."

The restrictions agreed by Chancellor Angela Merkel and the leaders of Germany's 16 states are provisionally in place until the end of November.

But the leaders will meet again on Monday to decide whether to extend them or to introduce sharper restrictions.

With more than 300,000 schoolchildren in quarantine, calls have been growing for schools to shut or at least move more of their lessons online.

"We are entering a situation

where school operation is becoming a high risk for children, teachers, parents and grandparents," MP and epidemiologist Karl Lauterbach said.

Several demonstrations against the restrictions were held on Saturday across Germany, including one in Frankfurt where water cannons were used against counter-demonstrators.

Germany has registered a total of 790,503 coronavirus cases and 12,485 deaths, according to the Robert Koch Institute disease control centre.

AFP

Greece bans gatherings ahead of uprising anniversary



People wait for rapid COVID-19 tests outside a hospital, in Thessaloniki on Friday (AFP)

Athens, Greece - Greek police on Sunday announced a ban on public gatherings of four or more people as hospitals were overwhelmed with coronavirus cases, ahead of the annual anniversary of a 1973 anti-junta uprising.

Greece on Saturday said it would shut primary schools, kindergartens and daycare centres as coronavirus deaths crossed a thousand.

The anti-junta demonstration is a treasured anniversary for many Greeks, and more than 30,000 people demonstrated in Athens and other major cities last year under a heavy police presence.

At least 24 people were killed in the 1973 crackdown, an event generally considered to have broken the junta's grip on power and helped the restoration of democracy.

This year, however, all public gatherings of four or more people would be banned from 6 am on Sunday to 9 pm on Wednesday to stem the spread of coronavirus, police said.

Fines of €5,000 will be issued to legal entities like political parties and €3,000 for individuals who organise gatherings, while those participating will be fined €300.

AFP



Members of the emergency services at the scene of a hospital fire, in Piatra Neamt city, on Saturday (AFP)

Ten virus patients die in Romania hospital fire

Bucharest, Romania - Ten COVID-19 patients were killed and others were in critical condition after fire broke out in an intensive care unit in Romania on Saturday, a hospital spokesperson said.

The fire occurred in the early evening in the intensive care of the hospital in the town of Piatra Neamt. It was under control an hour later by the emergency services.

"Ten people have been declared dead and seven people are in critical condition," including a doctor, said hospital spokeswoman Irina Popa.

Eight of the victims died in the flames and two others were pronounced dead following their evacuation. The doctor on duty suffered second and third degree burns to 80 per cent of his body.

AFP

French authors to pay fines of bookshops

Paris, France - One of France's best-known authors, Alexandre Jardin, vowed on Sunday that writers would bail out rebel bookshop owners fined for opening in defiance of a nationwide coronavirus lockdown.

Literature lovers are fuming over the government's shutting of bookstores, along with all other outlets selling 'non-essential' goods or services, for the second time this year.

A handful of bookshops have openly flouted the shutdown, backed by writers, literary critics and tens of thousands of bookworms who argue that books are essential to well-being.

Jardin, who penned best-selling romance novels *Le Zebre* and *Fanfan*, has rallied in their defence.

He said on Sunday that authors would pay the fines incurred by rogue booksellers.

Jardin told Europe 1 radio that Didier van Cauwelaert, winner



A French book seller in her bookstore in Cannes (AFP)

of the Prix Goncourt, France's top literary prize for his 1994 novel *Un Aller Simple*, had offered to cover any penalty imposed on a bookshop in the city of Cannes, leading the revolt.

"The next bookshop will be me, and the next somebody else," he said, declaring that 'no state has the moral right to close bookshops'.

'Freedom of speech'

France has some of the highest book readership figures in the world, studies show, and one of the largest networks of independent bookstores.

While hairdressers, toy stores, perfumeries, florists, cinemas and malls have all been shut since October 30, the plight of bookshops has

A handful of bookshops in France have openly flouted the shutdown, backed by writers, literary critics and bookworms who argue that books are essential to well-being

sparked the greatest public indignation.

In an open letter to President Emmanuel Macron, van Cauwelaert warned that restricting access to culture posed a threat to France's 'precious freedom of speech'.

Jardin pointed out that other European countries, such as Belgium, had allowed book-

shops to remain open.

The head of Grasset publishing house, Olivier Nora, complained booksellers were missing out on crucial November-December sales accounting for 25 per cent of annual revenues.

The French government has so far resisted pressure to ease a month-long partial lockdown imposed to curb a second wave of COVID-19 infections.

Prime Minister Jean Castex on Thursday did however raise the possibility that some shops might be allowed to reopen in December if current trends showing a decline in new infections continue.

The virus has killed over 44,000 people in France.

On Saturday, Macron tweeted that 'the next few days will be decisive' and urged people to continue taking precautions.

AFP



Photos: Syed Fasiuddin

WELCOME SHOWERS

Saham records 68mm rainfall in one day

Welcome showers were witnessed in different parts of the capital as well as elsewhere in the sultanate on Saturday while overcast skies prevailed for the better part of the day.

Heavy rain lashed Musandam, South al Batinah, Muscat, Buraimi, Dhahirah, Dakhliyah, North Sharqiyah, and South Sharqiyah, according to

the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) which also confirmed that many wadis overflowed due to rain.

The National Multi-Hazard Early Warning Centre has indicated that a trough of low pressure (named Al Tayibat) has affected northern parts of the sultanate on November 14 and 15.

Data collected from the rain monitoring stations

of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, shows that the highest rainfall was recorded in the wilayat of Saham, in North Batinah (68mm), followed by Khasab (16mm), Bukha (10mm), Rustaq (10mm), Suwaiq (6mm) and Sohar (4mm). The ROP has urged people to be vigilant and avoid venturing into wadis.





Steel rungs fixed to the rock enables easy climbing in a via ferrata

What's a via ferrata?

A via ferrata is a climbing route that employs steel cables, rungs or ladders, fixed to the rock to which the climbers affix a harness with two leashes which them to secure themselves to the metal fixture and limit any fall. The cable and other fixtures, such as iron rungs, pegs, carved steps, and ladders and bridges, provide both footings and handholds. This facilitates climbing on dangerous routes without risks and expands the opportunities for accessing difficult peaks as an alternative to mountaineering or rock climbing.



Scary but safe with Suleiman (seen behind), says Robert MacLean

JEBEL AKHDAR VIA FERRATA

GO, TELL IT ON THE MOUNTAINS

Doing a via ferrata is something that calls for great presence of mind and an acquired ability to keep your feet firmly rooted on whatever you step on

When Robert MacLean, principal, National Hospitality Institute decided to take up a via ferrata climb of Jebel Akhdar three weeks ago, he did not know what to expect. However, once done, he came back not just with renewed vigour of having accomplished something he hadn't tried before but also with an enthusiastic spirit that seemed to scream for an encore.

Doing a via ferrata is something that calls for great attention and an acquired skill to keep your feet firmly rooted to whatever you step on. Though the task ahead might seem Herculean, the will to focus on the steps in front of you and enjoy every moment is what will ultimately make one shout for joy from the mountain top. After all, more than anyone else, you need to tell yourself in no meagre terms, about the achievement which strengthened your nerves.

"When I first agreed to do it, I was a bit hesitant as to how difficult it was going to be. The pictures look a bit scary. However my climbing guide Suleiman was fantastic," said Maclean, adding that one doesn't need a great level of fitness to take up such a climb, though one must be a good listener. "I learnt to listen carefully to instructions. When your guide is the person who is going to keep you safe, you listen to what he tells you," he added.

Jebel Akhdar, also known as 'Green Mountain', is the most popular peak for climbing expeditions in the Western Hajar Mountains, located around 150km from Muscat. It rises to a height of 2,980m and encompasses the Saiq Plateau at 2,000 m above sea level. Jebel Akhdar is famous for its labyrinth of wadis and terraced orchards, where pomegranates, apricots and roses grow in abundance due to its mild Mediterranean climate.

Apart from summer months, climbing expeditions are common here. Given below is a frank account of how Robert MacLean, principal, NHI, recently took up a via ferrata climbing expedition here.

Why did you take up climbing Jebel Akhdar?

I have made a few climbs in the past in the but would not consider myself a real climber. However, I was motivated to carry out this climb at Anantara on Jebel Akhdar as I love the place. It's got a great feel about it in terms of peace and tranquility. I think, it's great that the hotels are adding to their guests experience by making these events available. It allows the guest to get a real feel of the place.

Was it as you imagined or were there hurdles?

Well, when I first agreed to do it, I was a bit hesitant as to how difficult it was going to be. The pictures look a bit scary. However my climbing guide Suleiman was fantastic. He explained the whole route very carefully and described what we were going to do. There were parts which were a bit tough in terms of grips and footwork. The zip wires were a bit scary, too, but they are very well managed and I felt very safe.

Has this been your first experience?

I had done a small amount of

climbing but this was my first via ferrata and zip wire experience. It is very structured and ideal for those who love to climb but don't have the skills to work on open ropes.

What lesson did you learn and are you fit enough to go for more?

I learnt to listen carefully to instructions. When your guide is the person who is going to keep you safe, you listen to what he tells you. I don't think you have to be very fit to do this and the guides will advise you if they think you are okay to carry out the different parts of the climb.

Was there anything lacking at the site? Do you have any suggestions?

I think, the site was great and well organised. The only point I would like to note here is that this climb can be booked through the hotels even though you are non-resident. You don't have to be staying at the hotels to do this. I recommend people to try it. Jebel Akhdar is a beautiful place and its a great opportunity to get out of the city and see the mountains.

Where to stay at Jebel Akhdar

The central Hajar where Jebel Akhdar is located is a tourist favourite because of its breathtaking terrain. This area has many hotels and campsites where visitors can stay overnight. For a luxurious stay, the Anantara Al Jabal Al Akhdar Resort is the best bet but there are more affordable options nearby. One can also choose to stay in Nizwa, a 45-minute drive away, which has a good selection of hotels and guest houses to suit all budgets.