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NEW SEASON, NEW CHALLENGE FOR AL FAISAL
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Oman ranks first in GCC for sustainable tourism

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman is ranked first in the GCC and third in the Arab world in the Sustainable Travel Index 2020 released by Euromonitor International on March 12.

According to the index, Scandinavia is leading by example in its engagement and progress towards sustainable travel, with Sweden ranked first, followed by Finland, Austria, Estonia and Norway.

These findings extracted from the new Sustainable Travel Index, developed by Euromonitor International, assesses 99 country destinations through the lens of country risk, environmental, social and economic sustainability, as well as sustainable tourism demand, transport and lodging. Among the GCC countries, Oman is ranked 57th, followed by UAE (58th), Bahrain (70th), Saudi Arabia (72nd), Kuwait (82nd) and Qatar (86th).

In the Arab world, Jordan (43rd) and Israel (45th) are ranked higher than Oman. The sultanate is also listed among the most improved countries for Economic Sustainability in the Index.

According to a report titled



Top Countries for Sustainable Tourism, which is part of the index, '66.4 per cent of consumers globally want to have a positive impact on the environment through their daily actions in 2021'.

"Sweden is a pioneer in lifecycle assessment research which is critical to understand the full impact of consumer behaviour and consumption patterns," said Caroline Bremner, head of travel at Euromonitor International. The country is highly engaged with the Sustainable Development

Goals and preserves the Arctic ice and permafrost to help stop climate change, aiming to achieve net zero emissions by 2045.

Other countries also show good progress in sustainable transport and lodging. Just outside the top 20 - featuring other European countries for the most part, such as Germany and France - New Zealand, Bolivia and Canada make their mark.

"There is globally a clear change in mindset and resistance in returning to a volume-

driven travel and tourism model. Instead, stakeholders are rallying together to 'build back better' through value creation from sustainable tourism. As momentum grows in the run up to COP26, consumers, travel brands, destination marketing organisations and governments continue to align to avert the climate emergency," Caroline concluded.

COP26 - 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties - is scheduled from November 1 to 12, 2021, in Glasgow, Scotland.

Sayyid Badr, Guterres talk on need to end Yemen war

Our Correspondent
Muscat

In Oman's continuing role in bridging the divide and bringing lasting peace to Yemen, H E Sayyid Badr Hamad al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, received a phone call from Antonio Guterres, UN Secretary-General, on Friday to discuss the matter further.

The conversation dealt with developments in the Yemeni crisis and efforts to end the war. Emphasis was laid on the immediate halt of military operations and the realisation of peaceful solutions through direct dialogue among the disputing parties in a manner that allows entry of humanitarian aid and supply of essential goods for the Yemeni people.

The minister and the UN Secretary-General both reiterated their support for the efforts and the significant role of Martin Griffiths, UN Special Envoy to Yemen. They emphasised the need to enhance his efforts, as well as efforts of the US to put an end to the war, resume political negotiations and achieve the aspirations of the Yemeni people for security and stability.

Earlier this month, Oman affirmed its continued support for the Yemeni people by providing humanitarian aid to alleviate the



H E Sayyid Badr Hamad al Busaidi



Antonio Guterres

Emphasis was laid on the immediate halt of military operations and the realisation of peaceful solutions through direct dialogue

crisis in the war-torn country. In a speech delivered at a high-level event in New York on the humanitarian crisis in Yemen, H E Dr Mohammad bin Awadh al Hassan, the sultanate's permanent representative to the UN, called for an end to the war in light of its catastrophic effects and restated Oman's support to UN's call for peace.

"The sultanate backs UN Secretary-General's plea to implement a ceasefire and halt all offensives," H E Hassan said. "Our support for Yemen will continue at various levels," he said.

H E Sayyid Badr has hosted a series of high-level meetings recently in Muscat alongside GCC counterparts as well as a meeting with Tim Lenderking, Special Envoy of the US for Yemen, on February 5.

H E Sayyid Badr and Lenderking discussed the situation and the efforts exerted to end the ongoing war. They also reiterated the importance of addressing the humanitarian crisis and supporting efforts to achieve a political settlement among all Yemeni parties through constructive dialogue and peaceful negotiations.

Economic Stimulus Plan hailed by ministers and citizens

Shaddad al Musalmi
Muscat

The Economic Stimulus Plan (ESP) endorsed by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik last week, which aims to support economic recovery efforts and enhance the national economy, was the need of the hour for citizens as well as small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

Citizens welcomed the plan believing it will ensure a speedy recovery of economic activities and boost growth.

One of the significant incentives announced under the ESP is the provision to postpone loan installments of Al Rafd Fund to SMEs until the end of December 2021 and permission to start businesses, and commercial and investment activities after obtaining an initial licence. Investors are now allowed to conduct business without the final licence, which will be issued later after meeting all requirements.

Yousef al Jahwari, CEO and owner of SME Al Madar, told Muscat Daily that the ESP will boost the economy and reduce pressure on many in the country. "We thank His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik for the plan. It will surely help put pressure off many organisations in a big way," Jahwari said.

"The directives are very well planned and beneficial in many ways. The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the world and Oman; such support will help minimise the damage. It will help us get back to the market."

According to Qais al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, the stimulus programme will make doing business in Oman easier for both local and foreign investors.



"We have been tracking the procedures one has to go through for approvals to start any business. All these will be eliminated for businesses that are not of high risk. The plan is to have approvals automatically as soon as commercial registration is done online," the minister said.

He added that the ESP has come at the right time when Oman and the world are facing

We thank His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik for the plan. It will surely help put pressure off many organisations in a big way

YOUSSEF AL JAHWARI

several challenges, including a pandemic. "The stimulus plan is in line with the Medium-Term Fiscal Plan announced earlier."

Additionally, he informed, the government will start allowing foreign companies to own land unlike earlier. "Despite the pandemic and its impact, this is an opportunity to start businesses."

Dr Said bin Mohammed al Sagri, Minister of Economy, said the ESP will restore the confi-

dence of foreign investors.

"We expect these measures will contribute to reviving the local market, stimulating SMEs, strengthening efforts to improve the business environment, attracting more investments, stimulating institutions operating in economic diversification sectors identified in the current Five-year Plan, and protecting many institutions from suffering due to the current temporary economic and financial situation," Dr Sagri said.

For citizens, the incentives will complement the measures aimed at improving the social protection system for individuals, especially those who have been laid off or had pay cuts despite outstanding bank loans.

As part of the incentives, Central Bank of Oman urges banks to entertain requests for repayment of loans taken by Omanis - who have been laid off and those whose wages were reduced - to be further postponed until the end of September of this year.

"It is not enough to just thank His Majesty the Sultan for considering the well being of his people. Instructing banks to revise installments by waiving them or rescheduling them for many of us whose salaries have been reduced will help us get back on our feet again.

Continued on Page 04

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Waiting for the end of coronavirus crisis

The COVID-19 pandemic and expat exodus impact businesses that await better times

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The double whammy of the COVID-19 pandemic and mass exodus of expatriates in the last one year has put considerable strain on the economy in Oman. Although reeling under stress, businesses are adapting to change and are hopeful of a rebound based on sound government policies to tackle the impact of the pandemic on the country.

More than a quarter of a million expatriates left Oman during the first 11 months of 2020, according to figures released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI). Between January and November 2020, 272,126 expatriates exited the country.

The exodus has impacted certain sectors more than others, including the insurance, hospitality, retail and real estate. The effect on the last category was amply evident in e-Census 2020 – a total of 237,452 residential units (18.1 per cent) were vacant, including 77,233 flats in Muscat and 73,948 in the ten other governorates.

According to Santosh Unni



(Muscat Daily)

Nair, architect and owner of Tashan Restaurant in Al Khuwayr, the business sector had been on a downward trend but the COVID-19 pandemic worsened the situation. "The exodus of expats has affected all the major industries starting from real estate to restaurant business. I've been in Oman for the last 18 years and have seen

business boom in 2004, and the economic slump since 2016."

Nair's business is currently just 20 per cent of pre-COVID-19 volumes. He attributes the drop in business to the exodus of expats who contribute a major part to real estate and restaurant revenues. "Oman has taken the right step by allowing 100 per cent foreign investment compa-

nies which might again see more investments from other countries and bring in a change, and provide more opportunities to citizens as well as expats." Nair, however, cautioned that all this depends on how soon the coronavirus threat is contained and the situation returns to normal.

Among the different ways businesses are adopting to tide

over the current situation is reducing prices and rents. And while apartments in many buildings remain unoccupied, property owners are optimistic and hopeful owing to the new generation of Omanis who are expected to be on the lookout for homes soon.

Said Nasser al Rashidi, chairman of Al Nasr Investment and Development Company, said, "Many flats are empty due to so many expatriates leaving the

Mohammed Adil, country manager of UAE-based Afnan Perfumes, observed that the pandemic has affected both the expat population as well as citizens. "Expats also play a part in nation-building. But many left unwillingly which slowed down the flow of capital in the market. We are all interconnected in business. When one makes losses, we all make losses. Our business is in the luxury segment. The pandemic has dented

revenue that businesses generate from expatriates contributes to their profits. Internal spending helps the economy. Less expats means less internal spending."

Joy informed that her salary was cut owing to poor business.

"Because of the economic situation brought about by the pandemic, we've decided to go back home for good. I thank Oman for the years I've been here. At some point, we all have to return home, after all."

Deepak Nair, CEO of Interactive Digital Media Technologies, attributed the exodus of expatriates largely to the COVID-19 and resultant job losses. "It is primarily because of the protracted longevity of this crisis, and the continued and baffling failure of scientists from around the world to find a durable and viable solution to terminate this scourge once and for all."

Deepak described the losses his company made as 'incalculable', but considers himself lucky. "Due to our professional reputation, goodwill and the trust reposed in us by our customers in the market, we have managed to stay afloat, even in the face of such adversity."

Oman has taken the right step by allowing 100% foreign investment companies which might again see more investments from other countries and bring in a change

SANTOSH UNNI NAIR

country. Though my buildings are fine, I know many that are almost empty. We have been monitoring the situation and reduced rents."

Rashidi also noted that there are 40,000 to 50,000 new graduates every year who are at the threshold of family life. "I am sure that we can cater to them as well in the near future."

our business. We want the situation to normalise soon."

After losing jobs and livelihoods, many expats tried for months to sustain on limited means and savings, but finally left the country when push came to shove. Joy Antonete Jose Clark, a graphic designer, said, "The pandemic has affected most businesses in Oman. The

Home delivery, tyre shops exempted from suspension of nighttime activities

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Supreme Committee tasked with tackling the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has exempted home delivery services - foodstuff and restaurants - and tyre shops located in fuel filling stations from nighttime suspension of activities.

On Friday, the Supreme Committee announced the exclusion of the two categories from the earlier decision of closing all commercial activities in the sultanate between 8pm and 5am, which



ends on Saturday morning, March 20. The committee also announced on March 10 an extension, the suspension of incoming flights from ten countries, namely Brazil, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, Lebanon, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Sudan and

Tanzania. The suspension includes individuals who have travelled to any of those countries within 14 days of entry in Oman.

An exemption is granted to Omani citizens, diplomats and health workers and their families who have to undergo the approved health procedures governing entry into the sultanate.

The Supreme Committee also decided to extend online learning in government schools for two more weeks ending on March 25, with the exception of Grade 12 students, who will continue studying via blended learning.

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Invitation for Extraordinary General Meeting and Annual General Meeting

The First Mazoon Fund takes the pleasure in inviting all the unitholders to attend the Extraordinary General Meeting and Annual General Meeting to be held at 2 pm on Tuesday March 23, 2021 via the electronic platform to hold general meeting which can be accessed through the website of Muscat Clearing & Depository Company (www.mcd.gov.om). If the quorum to convene the annual General Meeting is not complete the second general meeting will be convened at 2 pm on 30 March 2021, to decide on the following:

Agenda of the Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM):

Review and approval to amend the Article of association.

Agenda of Annual General Meeting (AGM):

- 1) Review and approval of the Fund Management's Report for the year ended 31st December 2020.
- 2) Review and approval of the Auditors Report and the audited Balance Sheet and Profit and Loss Statement for the year ended 31st December 2020.
- 3) Unit holders' consideration and approval for directors sitting fees for the financial year ended 31 December 2020 and fix the sitting fees for the year 2021.
- 4) Unit holders' consideration and approval for director's remuneration OMR 20,000 for the financial year ended 31 December 2020.
- 5) Unit holders' consideration and approval for cash dividend of 2% (0.020 Baisa Per unit).
- 6) Unit holders' consideration and approval for bonus units of 3% Per 100 unit for the year ended on 31 December 2020. The approval of the distribution will result in the increase of the unit capital of the fund from (7,326,859) unit to (7,546,664) unit.
- 7) Unit holders' consideration for the related party transactions during the year ended 31 December 2020.
- 8) To elect the Board members – Nominations forms should be submitted 2 days prior to the AGM date to the Company and any Nomination forms submitted after Thursday, 18th of March 2021 shall not be accepted.
- 9) To appoint auditors for the financial year 2020 and fix their fees.

According to the Fund Article of Association, and the controls for holding General Meetings using modern technology issued by Capital Market Authority, we would like to draw your attention to the following:

a. A legal person, exclusively, has the right to delegate a natural person to attend the general meeting and vote on its behalf through technical means, provided that this natural person has an investor number in MCD.

b. Voting on any of the agenda items begins no more than 3 days before the date of the general meeting until the voting process ends on the day of the General Meetings. If the shareholder's shares are increased or decreased, the voting process will be cancelled, and the shareholder will have to vote again on the day of the general meeting.

For any inquiries please contact Iman Nasser Al Wahaibi 24949030

Chairman	Auditors	Legal Advisor
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Team to identify tourism projects in Muscat

Our Correspondent
Muscat

In efforts to increase national income, revitalise domestic tourism and attract foreign tourists, the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism held a meeting recently with H E Sayyid Saud bin Hilal bin Hamad al Busaidi, Minister of State and Governor of Muscat, Issam bin Saud al Zadjali, chairman of Muscat Municipality, and walis of the governorate.

With the aim of setting up a plan to manage tourism development in the Governorate of Muscat, it was agreed to form a joint team and identify tourism projects and facilities to be implemented.

The meeting evoked reactions from citizens on social media.

Al Sami, a citizen, tweeted, "I hope that the Governorate of



Muscat draws a list of tourist sites and provides the basic needs for tourism, such as toilets, and sets a symbolic fee for their use. I also wish for the reactivation of activities in Qurum Park, such as boating, fountains in the

lake, more eateries, horse riding, and a miniature park with birds and animals."

In his tweet, Al Sami also suggested a bridge be built to link Riyam Park and Kalboo Park, setting up restaurants and more

games for children in Riyam Park.

Another citizen, Sana al Maashari tweeted, "The tourism sector is considered vital, and activities that need investments include hiking."

According to Ali Salem's

I also wish for the reactivation of activities in Qurum Park, such as boating, fountains in the lake, more eateries, horse riding, and a miniature park with birds and animals

AL SAMI

tweet, the meeting is any indication of the joint efforts towards the country's needs for infrastructure to support tourism while taking advantage of its natural landscape and climate.

"The wilayat of Amerat has

nature reserves and areas where infrastructure for sports, tourism and adventure can be set up."

Another Twitterati, Youssef Khalifa al Yarubi, posted, "We hope the wilayat of Ibri is included in the plans for tourism development because it lacks the simplest of facilities despite the presence of tourist attractions."

"Muscat needs waterfront attractions in northern Al Hail, and Qurum Park must be transformed with open fields and walkways," Sam tweeted.

Another citizen, Abu al Julanda al Nasiri, proposed the establishment of a mobile forum for the officials of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism to move from one governorate to another, meeting the youth to take their ideas and learning about the requirements to help achieve economic return for the country.

Customer service suspended in Bausher

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The office of Muscat Municipality in the wilayat of Bausher has suspended customer services on its premises and cancelled all appointments starting March 14 to March 27.

It said, "We wish to draw your attention that Muscat Municipality in Bausher will suspend customer service halls and cancel appointments in all sectors. Work will resume on March 28. Customers can continue to use online services offered on our website and through apps."

Meet discusses helping local products reach big stores

Our Correspondent
Muscat

As part of its ongoing efforts to support local products and owners of small and medium enterprises, the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) held a meeting with officials from commercial centres and hypermarkets on Tuesday.

The meeting was held in the presence of H E Dr Saleh bin Said Masan, Undersecretary for Commerce and Industry in the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, Eng Redha bin Juma al Saleh, chairman of the Board of Directors of OCCI, and Halima bint Rashid al Zaria, chairperson of Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (SMEDA).

The meeting aimed at promoting and encouraging Omani products so they reach all segments of society, and creating new outlets and markets for these.



H E Dr Saleh bin Said Masan

Eng Saleh described supporting Omani products and owners of SMEs as a social issue. "Everyone should be a partner in making these successful."

He informed that OCCI is keen to bring all parties together under one umbrella and give them an opportunity to hear their views. "This will facilitate coordination for a unified goal and set a clear mechanism to achieve the growth and development of Omani products."

H E Dr Masan noted that many SMEs suffer due to lack of

access to the shelves of big commercial stores and hypermarkets. "This has become a subject that disturbs the parties involved in the development of SMEs," he said.

"The government seeks the welfare of all parties, including commercial complexes and retail stores, for which we aim to find a solution that serves everyone."

H E Dr Masan informed that the procedures followed before Omani products get shelf space in commercial complexes and hypermarkets are tedious and expensive.

"We hope owners of commercial outlets allow the entry of products of SMEs. This will serve all sides," H E Dr Masan said.

Halima informed that SMEDA works with all parties to promote SMEs and make them competitive locally as well internationally. Certain malls and retail stores have initiatives to support SMEs and deliver their products to consumers at lower costs.

Over 11,000 in institutional quarantine; 33 private institutions approved

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The number of people in institutional isolation centres has reached more than 11,000, according to the Ministry of Social Development.

Of the total, ten per cent are Omanis. Institutional health isolation was made compulsory for incoming passengers from February 10.

H E Sheikh Rashid bin Ahmed

al Shamsi, Undersecretary in the Ministry of Social Development and head of the Relief and Shelter Sector, said, "The number of hotels registered within the scope of relief and shelter is 482 across the sultanate. The Governorate of Muscat has the maximum number of hotels - 200."

On the requests of private sector institutions to have institutional isolation at their sites, H E Shamsi said, "The requests of 33 private institutions were

approved after verifying all the necessary health measures and procedures. A tripartite committee from the Relief and Shelter Sector, the Royal Oman Police and the Ministry of Health has been formed to follow up on these institutions' commitment to health procedures."

He said devices are being installed in all hotels offering quarantine to facilitate monitoring of violators of institutional isolation measures.

Tender Announcement

Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Company SAOG invites Bidders to submit their proposal for the below detailed tenders:

Tender No.	Description	Tender Fee (Nonrefundable)	Tender Purchase deadline	Clarification deadline	Tender Submission Date
PDEN/2021/03/006	SEMI-REVAMPING OF HITAM FILLING STATION IN WUSTA GOVERNORATE	50.000	18.03.2021	23.03.2021	28.03.2021

Bank Name & Account Number Bank Muscat (0319005687760012)

The Conditions:

- Collection of Tenders:** Interested, specialized companies and establishments with valid Commercial Registration Certificate can collect the tender documents from the procurement department by sending a copy of the payment slip to procurement@almaha.com.om The tender may be collected on any working day between 08:00 AM – 03:00 PM.
- Bank Guarantee:** The bidder should enclose a bank guarantee issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman for an amount equivalent to (1%) of the tender value, with a validity of (90) Days from the last date of submission and addressed to Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Company SAOG.
- Offer Submission:** Tender bid should be submitted in a sealed envelope and addressed to the **Chairman of Tender Committee**, Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing SAOG marked with tender number and subject. Other marks or any reference must not be printed outside the envelope. The exterior of the envelope containing the tender document must not reveal the identity of the bidder.
- Submission Location:** The bid should be deposited in the tender box at Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing SAOG head office located in Ghala before 02:00 PM on the submission date.
- Any bid received after the specified date or if it does not meet the conditions will not be considered.
- Each bid shall be signed and stamped with the signature of the authorized person.
- Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Co SAOG reserves the right to accept, reject or cancel the tender without giving any reasons.
- Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Co SAOG reserves the right to add or cancel some of the works mentioned in the tender if necessary.
- Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Co SAOG is not bound to accept the lowest bid or any other bid without giving any reasons.
- For any enquiry email us at (procurement@almaha.com.om) or by calling 24610289/24610282/24610355



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Ministry to promote grape cultivation, increase farmland

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources (MAFWR) has decided to cultivate grapes on more than 25 acres of farmland across all governorates in the sultanate.

The project aims to promote grape cultivation and expand the cultivated areas using modern irrigation systems, market the produce by using latest techniques, and raise the contribution of the agricultural sector to the national economy, the ministry said.

"The project also aims to train a number of farmers and the ministry's officials on modern technologies for cultivation, production, harvesting, circulation and marketing of grapes and the establishment of specialised farms to cultivate and produce different types of grapes with areas not less than an acre and not more than five acres," said an official at MAFWR.

He added, "The ministry has identified a number of sites in various governorates of the sultanate for the cultivation of grapes - seven acres in North Sharqiyah, five acres in Dhahirah,



The ministry has identified a number of sites in various governorates of the sultanate for the cultivation of grapes

MAFWR OFFICIAL

five acres in North and South Batinah, five acres in Dakhliyah, and three acres in Dhofar.

"The ministry has prepared several programmes for the implementation of the project, such as producing about 12,500 of grape seedlings, establishing grape nurseries in various governorates of the sultanate, supporting farmers, providing modern irrigation systems and giving them about 5,000 seedlings free."

The ministry will also run training courses for technicians and some targeted farmers and prepare a technical advisory programme that includes recommendations for cultivation, breeding, pruning, fertilisation and quality control of grape crops by one of the expert houses.

"Specialists of the ministry will follow up the implementation of the programme prepared for the targeted farmers."

Webinar raises mental health awareness

Our Correspondent
Muscat

On the occasion of International Women's Day (IWD), She is Arab, a platform dedicated to increasing the representation of Arab women in business leadership and at speaking events, held a webinar on the importance of mental health. The panel discussion featured prominent speakers from the Arab region.

Rania Atalla, mental health specialist and psychotherapist, moderated the session, held under this year's IWD theme 'Choose to Challenge'. Panelists included Sheikhha Intisar al Sabah, founder of Intisar Foundation from Kuwait, H H Sayyida Basma al Said, mental health specialist and founder of Whispers of Serenity Clinic from Oman, and Dr Mariam Ketaif, founder of Ebb & Flow from the UAE.

The 90-minute event explored the diversity of the Middle East and the issues of relevance to mental health and overall well-being in the region. The participants called for focused and targeted efforts in responding to specific needs facing Arab men and women living through these realities.

Anxiety, depression, and myriad other conditions have been on the rise in the Middle East. However, the culture surrounding mental health in the region is full of misconceptions, prejudice,



and judgement stemming from religion, tradition, and family, among others. The talk highlighted the importance of mainstreaming the mental health discourse in the Arab world.

Sheikha Intisar said, "We have gathered great evidence that women keeping what they think are great secrets and not sharing them with anyone else, even if to find solutions, is one of the biggest causes of poor mental health, and that sharing our problems with others and by sharing them, leads to a better life."

For her part, H H Sayyida Basma said, "Women need to appreciate where they are and what they've done and not doubt themselves a lot as they do. In the end, once a woman's mental health is well, then the whole family's mental health becomes well and the society's mental health becomes better."

Dr Mariam said, "It is very important to remind ourselves that

life continues to ebb and flow, and that we are able to restore the light of hope and create the future we seek."

Rania added, "The COVID-19 pandemic has fuelled a global mental health tsunami, the ramifications of which we are yet to fully comprehend, and women are affected disproportionately. This challenging situation also presents an opportunity to place mental health higher on the priority list."

Samar Alshorafa, founding CEO of She is Arab, said, "The notion of mental health still remains a stigma in the Arab world, even though it shouldn't. We hope that through our conversations, we can bring to light the importance of addressing such issues without fear or judgement. This was the first digital session in a series of upcoming ones, and we hope that today's discussion has helped encourage women to give priority to their mental health."

Economic Stimulus Plan hailed by ministers and citizens

Continued from Page 01

"This will not only help us but our families, too, because they all depend on our salaries. We understand what the businesses are going through and that is why we have to work together," said Mubarak al Dwahi, a private sector employee whose pay was cut.

Banks have also been instructed to respond to requests for postponement of installments and interest of all borrowers affected by the current situation for six more months until the end of September 2021, without prejudice to their credit rating.

This move is in addition to

calling on banks, and finance and leasing companies to reschedule loans to match the new cash flow of borrowers so as to enhance their capabilities to fulfil their contractual obligations to financing institutions without imposing fees for rescheduling.

@shadadm

NATIONAL MINERAL WATER COMPANY (SAOG)

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DIRECTOR'S REPORT 04/03/2021

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Chairman
Khalid bin Hamad bin Hamoud Al Busaidi

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

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

NATIONAL MINERAL WATER COMPANY (SAOG)

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

Notice and Invitation to attend the Annual General Meeting

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

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

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

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

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

Chairman	Legal Advisor	Auditor
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CBO instructs banks to continue COVID-19 relief for borrowers



Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) has instructed the banks and finance and leasing companies operating in the sultanate to continue providing incentives and relief to borrowers affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and its negative impact on the economy.

The central bank has issued new instructions to the financial institutions following the announcement of incentives in the new Economic Stimulus Plan that was endorsed by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin

The CBO has instructed banks and finance and leasing companies to postpone repayment of loans of low-income employees for an additional period of six months

Tarik on Tuesday.

Valuing the Royal Directives on banking incentives that were in full harmony with the government's concerted efforts pertaining to the Economic Stimulus Plan, the CBO pledged its support to all national plans aimed to promote economic recovery amid the current circumstances.

In a statement to Oman

News Agency, the CBO said it has instructed banks and finance and leasing companies to continue to grant a 12-month grace period for all existing and future laid-off borrowers, with effect from the date of termination of their services.

It also instructed banks and finance and leasing companies to postpone repayment of loans of

low-income employees for an additional period of six months till the end of September 2021.

'The deferment of loan repayment for these two segments has to be effected without imposing any type of interest fees during the grace period,' the CBO statement said.

The central bank also instructed financial institutions to continue to postpone premiums and interest fees payable by the borrowers affected by circumstances posed by COVID-19 for a further six-month period till the end of September 2021, without having to impose inter-

est fees against deferred interest or impacting the credit rating of those loans in any negative way.

As per the statement, the CBO has decided to go ahead with facilitation procedures capable of providing comfortable levels of cash liquidity in the banking sector.

'This will be in pursuance of the stimulus packages related to credit grants that include raising the ceiling of borrowing, facilitating lending to stricken sectors, cutting down percentages of protective capital and other procedures aimed to assist banks and finance and leasing companies to perform their role in supporting economic recovery and improving the levels of liquidity in the local market.'

The apex bank added that the overall aim (of the new measures) is to enhance the banks' ability to continue to offer credit to various stricken sectors.

According to the statement, the CBO also decided to increase the maturity period and cut down interest percentage on the open market operation instruments including interest against re-purchase transactions, foreign currency exchange and other procedures.

The CBO affirmed that it will work in cooperation with the banks and finance and leasing companies to re-schedule loans to tally with new cash flows for borrowers to ensure their ability to meet their contractual obligations with financing institutions in line with emerging economic developments, without imposing fees against re-scheduling.



Oman Cement receives bids for \$250mn project

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman Cement Company, which is currently focusing on expanding its production capacity and increasing efficiency, has received commercial bids from engineering, procurement and construction (EPC) contractors for its proposed integrated cement plant in Duqm.

'The company has decided to expand its operations by setting up a new integrated cement plant in Duqm area. The plant will have a capacity of producing 5,000 tonnes per day of clinker and envisages an estimated investment of about US\$250mn,' Oman Cement said in its financial report submitted to the Muscat Securities Market.

The company said that the project consultant for upcoming Duqm project has been appointed, adding, 'Offers from the EPC bidders have been received and after initial valuation the deviations in the commercial offers are yet to be updated and submitted by the EPC bidders.'

As part of the company's strategy to boost its operational efficiencies, Oman Cement is also planning to set up a new power plant and the tender in

this regard has been floated to appoint an EPC contractor.

'A decision has been taken to install a new power plant with the latest technology. Offers from EPC contractors have been received and the evaluation is completed. The installation of WHR (waste heat recovery unit) on existing gas turbine unit is under tender preparation,' Oman Cement said in its report.

As per the company's report, Oman Cement is also planning to utilise waste tyre as an alternate fuel and the company has carried out a feasibility study and appointed a project consultant to execute the project. 'The company has floated tenders for appointment of an EPC contractor. Offers from EPC contractors have been received and the evaluation is completed. Negotiation with bidders is under progress.'

For the financial year ended December 31, 2020, Oman Cement reported a net profit of RO5.183mn compared with RO4.013mn net profit reported in the previous year, recording an increase of 29 per cent. The company's sales turnover increased by 4.2 per cent to RO50.144mn for 2020 against RO48.129mn in the previous year.

OPEC says global oil demand to increase by 6.5% in 2021 as economy recovers

Vienna, Austria - Global oil demand is expected to increase by around 6.5 per cent to an average of 96.3mn barrels per day (bpd) in 2021, the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) said in its Monthly Oil Market Report.

'Oil requirements in the first half of 2021 were adjusted lower mainly due to extended measures to control the COVID-19 pandemic in parts of Europe and higher unemployment rates in the US,' the OPEC report said. It clarified that higher oil demand was expected in the second half of the year in line with expectations of solid economic recovery and the positive impact from vaccination rollouts.

Demand for OPEC crude in 2021 has been revised down by 200,000 bpd from the previous month to stand at 27.3mn bpd, which is 4.9mn bpd higher than in 2020.

Global oil production in February declined by 1.31mn bpd com-



pared to the previous month to average 92.28mn bpd, while reflecting a year-on-year fall of 7.62mn bpd.

The report showed that OPEC crude oil production decreased by 650,000 bpd month-over-month to an average of 24.85mn bpd, while the share of OPEC crude out of total global production fell to 26.9 per cent in February, marking a 0.3 per cent

decrease compared with the previous month.

Crude output increased mainly in Nigeria, Iraq, Iran, Venezuela and Libya, while production decreased primarily in Saudi Arabia and Angola.

Nigeria was the country among OPEC members that raised its monthly crude oil production the most in February with an increase of 161,000 bpd

to reach 1.488mn bpd.

Iran, Venezuela and Libya are exempted from OPEC's production cuts. However, these countries increased their outputs with Iran raising production by 35,000 bpd to 2.12mn bpd, Venezuela by 33,000 bpd to reach 521,000 bpd and Libya by 33,000 bpd to reach 1.18mn.

The February production of de facto leader of the OPEC group, Saudi Arabia, fell by 930,000 bpd to 8.15mn bpd, mainly due to the country's addition of around 1mn bpd to the OPEC+ production cuts.

Non-OPEC liquids production in February decreased by 670,000 bpd compared with the previous month to an average of 67.43mn bpd.

The preliminary production decreases in February mainly came from the US state of Texas where the extreme cold weather caused refinery shutdowns and losses of 600,000 bpd of oil.

Agencies

AUCTION NOTICE

Port of Duqm Company S.A.O.C., hereby announces the following Used Vehicle Auction (in closed envelopes):

Auction No	Vehicle Details	Date for Inspection	Date for Receiving bids (sealed envelopes)	Bank Guarantee	Inspection Site
PODC/SCM/06/2021	Audi A8 Sedan, Engine Capacity 3 liters, Model Year 2016	Mar 14, 2021 to Mar, 17 2021 From 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. - 14:00 p.m. - 16:00 p.m., from Sunday to Thursday	Mar 21, 2021 From 8:00 a.m. - 14:00 p.m. - 17:00	25/- OMR Non-Refundable	Muscat Governorate, N. Azaiba, 18 November Street

General conditions:

- Interested bidders or individuals who would like to inspect the vehicles, should obtain bidding form no later than 14th March 2021 by email: tenders@portduqm.com
- All those wishing to inspect must abide by the decisions of the Supreme Committee in charge of dealing with the spread of Coronavirus:
 - A maximum of two people only are allowed at a time to inspect vehicles, from the date of the inspection commencement until the last date of the inspection.
 - Bidders to adhere physical distancing and wear protective face masks.
 - The temperature will be measured for all those who wish to inspect.
- Interested Bidders must deposit an amount of 50/- Omani Rials to Bank Muscat, account name Port of Duqm Company SAOC account No. 0423047518510013, Ghala Corporate Branch.
- Bids to be submitted in sealed envelope and red wax, with auction number and title addressed to "Procurement Manager" Port of Duqm Company SAOC, the envelope should not make any reference to the bidder details. All bidders are required to submit the bid in the Tender box in the main office of Port of Duqm Company North Azaiba, November 18th Street, Al-Mashreq Building during official working hours from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. - 14:00 p.m. - 17:00 p.m. on the assigned date for submission. Offers submitted after the above-mentioned date and time shall not be considered.
- Successful bidder is obligated to pay the full auctioned value of the vehicle within a maximum period of 10 working days from the date awarding notification. Failing to pay the outstanding amount within the specified period, the bidder shall be disqualified.
- Successful bidder is obliged to transfer the ownership of the vehicle after paying the auctioned value in full within a maximum period of 7 days from the date of payment and carry the necessary arrangement to transfer the vehicle outside the port within 3 days from ownership transfer. Failing in transferring the ownership in the specified period, will result in paying penalty charge of 10/- OMR per day as a daily space rent at site.

For any further inquiries related to the auction; please contact auction coordinator during official working hours (Sunday to Thursday) Khalid Al Balushi +968 99190276.

Notes:

- * Vehicles are sold as they are in their current condition.
- * Port of Duqm Company SAOC reserve the right to cancel or postpone the auction without giving any reasons.

Port of Duqm Company S.A.O.C.

PO Box: 2409, PC: 111, Sultanate of Oman, Almasheq Building, 18 November Street, N. Azaiba, T: (+968) 24342800 | F: (+968) 24587343 | www.portofduqm.om



OQ announces successful completion of its second Blockchain transaction

Muscat - OQ announced that it has successfully completed the second financial transaction leveraging a blockchain technology platform. This is the second blockchain transaction of OQ and it was processed during the fourth financial quarter of 2020, enabling a shipment of OQ's polypropylene from Oman to Bangkok, Thailand, the company said in a press release.

Back in November 2019, the first blockchain transaction was

completed. In comparison to the first operation, this subsequent transaction entailed more complexity with sea freight and required collaboration among various parties, including two financial banks from Asia.

The blockchain technology significantly expedites the trading process, allowing transactions to be processed faster, easier and in a more secure manner. The blockchain letter of credit (LoC) mirrors the tradi-

tional process with all participants using a single digital platform to complete the transaction, allowing end-to-end traceability to the LoC cycle, which can be accessed 24/7.

'This transaction is another validation of OQ's commitment to digitalisation and leveraging state-of-the-art technologies which transform the way we do business and maximise value to our customers and other stakeholders,' said Sadiq al Lawati, fi-

nance and strategy commercial value partner at OQ. 'Through using such automated and paperless platforms, we improved efficiency and reduced discrepancies. It helped us accelerate product movement and thereby optimised the use of our working capital. We look forward to the time when the banks start to provide more blockchain commercial offerings, which should take this journey to its next level,' added Lawati.

MARKET ANALYSIS - OMAN

MSM buoyed by economic stimulus package

The benchmark index of the Muscat Securities Market (MSM) ended the week up by 1.33 per cent, supported by the Financial index, which rose by 3.43 per cent. Services and Industrial indices, however, declined by 0.78 per cent and 1.21 per cent, respectively. The MSM Shariah Index was higher by 0.34 per cent.

New Economic Stimulus Plan

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik approved the new economic stimulus plan last week. The Economic Stimulus Plan (ESP) endorsed by the Council of Ministers is based on five main axes: (1) Incentives pertaining to taxes and fees, (2) Incentives to improve business and investment environment, (3) Incentives to boost small and medium enterprises, (4) Incentives for the labour market and employment, and (5) Banking incentives aimed to enhance efforts to alleviate the impacts of COVID-19 pandemic on the national economy.

His Majesty approved the economic stimulus plan aimed to achieve a high growth rate as planned by Oman Vision 2040 and ward off the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the economy. As part of the plan, the Central Bank of Oman announced new banking incentives.

►Continuation of postponement of the repayment of loans

taken by Omanis who have been laid-off and those whose wages have been reduced - waive loans until the end of September of this year and till further notice.

►Instructing banks to continue responding to requests to postpone the instalments and interest of all borrowers affected by the repercussions of the current situation for another six months until the end of September 2021, without prejudice to their credit rating.

Incentives announced related to taxes include:

►Exemption from the Income Tax shall be granted to all firms that undertake their business activities within the Economic Diversification Sectors for five years, right from January 1, 2021 till the end of 2022, in accordance with the terms and conditions to be announced by the Tax Authority (with effect from the date of the firms' registration in the Commercial Register).

►Exemption of hotel establishments from the Income Tax due for the two tax years of 2020 and 2021.

►Permission for the settlement of the due income tax and waiving of the additional income tax (for 2021) ensuing from the segmentation of taxpaying (paying by instalments).

►Deduction of 1 per cent of the value of the due tax, to a maximum of RO10,000 from the announced tax based on tax



declaration for the next year. This applies to all those who adhere to the presentation of tax declaration and process due tax payments within the deadlines stated in the law.

►Continued suspension of the application of the Withholding Tax related to the distribution of dividends on shares and interests for five years with effect from 2020.

►Deferring of the loss incurred by firms and establishments, as of the year 2020, to the next year and deducting the same from taxable income in the year 2021 and the subsequent years till such a time that the loss is zeroed, without commitment to the period of five years stated in Article No. 71 of the Income Tax

Law.

►Exemption from the Tourism Tax and the Municipality Tax payable by tourism establishments till the end of 2021.

►Postponement of settlement of the Tourism Tax and the Municipality Tax payable by tourism establishments till end of December 2021.

Expat permit fees slashed for some firms:

►The new stimulus package announced by the government on Tuesday, with the blessings of His Majesty, includes a reduction in fees to recruit and renew licenses of expatriate workers in intermediate, technical, and specialised professions. ►50 per cent for firms and establishments fulfilling the

approved Omanisation percentage.

►25 per cent for firms and establishments with an Omani workforce.

►It has been also decided to allocate RO20mn in the 2021 budget for the training of Omanis, which will qualify them for the labour market.

Local news

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

on all these six banks in the sultanate.

►Oman plans to increase royalty fees on annual revenue of fixed-line telephone services to 10 per cent from 7 per cent starting next year, according to information published in the official gazette. Royalty fees on mobile services will be at 12 per cent, it said.

Global news

Brent oil reached 15-month high supported by latest OPEC meeting outcome. The Meeting noted that since the April 2020 meeting, OPEC and non-OPEC countries had withheld 2.3bn barrels of oil by end of January 2021, accelerating the oil market rebalancing. OPEC ministers noted, the significant voluntary extra supply reduction made by Saudi Arabia, which took effect on February 1 for two months, which supported the stability of the market.

The Ministers also commended Saudi Arabia for the extension of the additional voluntary adjustments of 1mn bpd for the month of April 2021, exemplifying its leadership, and demonstrating its flexible and pre-emptive approach.

The ministers approved a continuation of the production levels of March for the month of April, with the exception of Russia and Kazakhstan, which will be allowed to increase production by 130 and 20 thousand barrels per day respectively,

due to continued seasonal consumption patterns. Overall conformity with the original decision was 103 per cent, reinforcing the trend of aggregate high conformity by participating countries. The next meetings of the JMMC and OPEC and non-OPEC Ministers are scheduled for March 31 and April 1, 2021, respectively.

Recommendation

Global stocks saw recovery, especially the Dow Jones Index, composed of blue-chip stocks, which hit new highs and this could mean the beginning of a flight to safety.

Tech stocks, which have been under pressure since the start of the year, are rebounding as Treasury yields recede from recent highs. US consumers are expecting higher inflation soon, and that's hurting confidence in their own financial outlook.

GCC markets remained in upbeat mood supported by improvement in oil prices and dividend announcements by some of the blue chip companies.

Locally, market was buoyed by the news of economic stimulus approval.

Financial sector companies were most sought companies, which were also highlighted by us in previously weekly report.

We continue to advise investors to invest in banking, petrochemical and infrastructure stocks in Oman and in GCC.

By special arrangement with U Capital

US stimulus offers 'significant' boost to global economy: IMF

Washington, US - US President Joe Biden's stimulus programme is being hailed as both boosting domestic growth and spurring the global recovery, but the IMF warned that policymakers will need to be alert to risks posed by the massive spending as well as low interest rates.

The package, which Biden signed into law on Thursday, will inject US\$1.9tn in aid into the pandemic-damaged economy by funding small businesses, extending unemployment benefits that were due to expire in days, and sending direct payments of as much as US\$1,400 to many Americans starting this month.

That spending will expand US GDP by 5 to 6 per cent over three years, according to the IMF's preliminary estimates.

And higher demand will help other countries sell more products to American consumers, the fund's spokesman Gerry Rice said.

"We see potentially significant positive spillovers in terms of global growth," he said. "Most countries should benefit from stronger US demand... so this will help global growth and recovery."

However, he cautioned that with low interest rates, policymakers worldwide should be on the alert for a sudden shift in borrowing costs.

That has been a growing concern for financial markets in recent weeks as accelerating COVID-19 vaccine rollouts offer hope of a rapid recovery, but also sparked fears that growth could ignite an inflationary spiral that



US President Joe Biden speaks about the American Rescue Plan in the Rose Garden of the White House in Washington, DC on Friday (AFP)

would force the US Federal Reserve to raise interest rates sooner than expected.

The concerns have sent stock markets reeling in recent sessions, especially tech shares, which are more likely to be hindered by rising lending rates.

Fed chair Jerome Powell has repeatedly tried to calm financial markets, saying that policymakers have no intention of reining in stimulus or raising the benchmark interest rate until inflation is holding solidly above 2 per cent and employment has recovered.

He acknowledged that inflation could jump this year compared to the depressed rates during the pandemic restrictions in 2020, but said those price spikes are likely to be 'transitory'.

Brian Deese, director of the White House National Economic Council, said the administration

is focused on the recovery but monitoring inflation.

"This is a risk, like many, that we are going to constantly monitor and keep our eye on," Deese said on CNN when asked about one private forecast that projects 2.8 per cent inflation this year.

Some economists including former Treasury secretary Larry Summers and former IMF chief economist Olivier Blanchard cautioned that the rescue package could add too much fuel to the economy.

But the White House has downplayed those risks, and Deese said, "We still have enormous slack in the economy."

The IMF, too, has largely dismissed inflation worries, saying the rate this year could increase to 2.25 per cent - which is unlikely enough to trouble the Fed.

AFP

UAE sets up \$10bn Israel investment fund

Abu Dhabi, UAE - The United Arab Emirates announced it was setting up a US\$10bn investment fund aimed at strategic sectors in Israel, with whom it normalised ties last year.

The decision, the UAE official news agency WAM said, was taken following a 'constructive' phone call between Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Through the US\$10bn fund the UAE 'will invest in and alongside Israel, across sectors including energy manufacturing, water, space, healthcare and agri-tech', it said.

Israel and the UAE established ties last year in a diplomatic coup for Netanyahu



Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed

brokered by his staunch ally, former US president Donald Trump.

The deal made the UAE only the third Arab state to establish relations with Israel, following Egypt in 1979 and Jordan in 1994.

Bahrain, Morocco and Sudan subsequently reached similar



Benjamin Netanyahu

US-brokered agreements with Israel, in what has become known as the 'Abraham Accords'.

The fund builds on the historic Abraham Accord and aims to bolster economic ties between two of the region's thriving economies, unlocking invest-

ments and partnership opportunities to drive socio-economic progress,' WAM said.

It said fund allocations 'will derive from government and private sector institutions'.

The announcement came as Netanyahu cancelled a historic visit to the UAE on Thursday, citing a disagreement with Jordan over crossing its airspace.

Netanyahu said the trip 'was not possible due to a misunderstanding' with Jordan, with which it is bound by a peace treaty since 1994.

But said he spoke to Sheikh Mohammed and that the pair agreed to meet 'very soon'.

The Israeli Prime Minister also said the UAE would invest US\$10bn in investments in Israel. AFP

UK economy sinks on virus curbs, Brexit

London, UK - Britain's economy hit reverse in January on renewed coronavirus curbs while the nation's post-Brexit EU goods exports suffered a record collapse, official data showed.

Gross domestic product shrank 2.9 per cent after 1.2 per cent growth in December, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) said in a statement, with heavy falls in services, production and manufacturing on COVID-19 restrictions.

"The economy took a notable hit in January with retail, restaurants, schools and hairdressers all affected by the latest lockdown," said ONS statistician Jonathan Athow.

"Manufacturing also saw its first decline since April, with car manufacturing falling significantly," he said, adding that the health sector was boosted by COVID testing and vaccines.



A lorry enters the Port of Dover, southeast England following Britain's departure from the European Union on January 4 (AFP)

The export of goods to the EU tanked by 41 per cent to £5.6bn in January from December, in the first month since Britain's final Brexit divorce.

The value of EU goods imported into Britain also sank, by a record 29 per cent or £6.6bn.

However, the British government described the performance as 'inevitable' due to various fac-

tors, adding that freight levels have since returned to normal.

"A unique combination of factors, including stockpiling last year, COVID lockdowns across Europe, and businesses adjusting to our new trading relationship, made it inevitable that exports to the EU would be lower this January than last," said a government spokesperson.

"This data does not reflect the overall EU-UK trading relationship post Brexit and, thanks to the hard work of hauliers and traders, overall freight volumes between the UK and the EU have been back to their normal levels since the start of February."

The nation's departure from the EU was finalised on January 1, after the government clinched a long-awaited Brexit trade deal over Christmas. Yet Britain has experienced a rocky start to life outside the bloc, with some UK exporters complaining of huge hurdles to previously seamless continental trade.

Overall, UK exports dropped 19.3 per cent while imports slid 22 per cent.

The ONS added that the economy was 9 per cent smaller in January than its pre-pandemic level in February 2020.

AFP

Meethaq Hafawa redefines Islamic private banking



Meethaq, the pioneer of Islamic banking in Oman from Bank Muscat, in line with the bank's vision 'To serve you better, everyday' is offering exclusive solutions for its ultra-high net worth clients.

The Hafawa Private Banking proposition is built on the strong foundations of Meethaq Islamic banking.

Meethaq Hafawa Private Banking is defined by its commitment to provide privileges and solutions specifically designed to meet the exclusive financial and lifestyle goals of the Ultra High Net Worth Individuals (UHNIs). Being the leading Private Banking proposition in Oman based on Sharia'a principles, Meethaq Hafawa Private Banking places

great emphasis on developing long-term relationships with its customers who are served through exclusive Hafawa Centres across the length and breadth of the sultanate.

All Hafawa Private Banking clients are also assigned a dedicated Relationship Manager who provide personalised wealth management and financial advisory services.

Meethaq Hafawa has launched several innovative products, solutions and services since its launch for the benefit of its Private Banking clients. These include easy access to a Global Sukuk Fund, customised wealth management solutions, access to a large number of benefits including complimentary access to

more than 1,000 airport lounges, complimentary life Takaful on Savings Account equal to the savings deposit, complimentary annual Family Travel Takaful Cover, daily ATM withdrawals up to RO1,500, complimentary chauffeur service to and from Muscat International Airport up to six times a year, toll free access to a Global Concierge Service, more than 1,500 'Buy 1 Get 1 free' offers through the Hafawa Entertainer App and merchant discounts across fine dining, entertainment, leisure, beauty and wellness segments.

Meethaq Hafawa Private Banking customers are also eligible for the Hafawa Visa Signature Credit Card, which is based on the Sharia'a-compliant concept of Ujrah. The Hafawa Visa Signature Credit Card offers up to 52-days profit-free credit period and is accepted worldwide at more than 30mn locations.

Cardholders are also provided coverage against accidental damage or loss and this coverage extends to goods purchased online.

In addition, Hafawa Visa Signature Credit cardholders have access to value-added benefits at over 900 luxury hotels around the world including automatic room upgrades (subject to availability), free in-room Internet and Valet parking, complimentary continental breakfast, late check-outs, VIP Guest status and vouchers for free food and beverages.

Meethaq adopts the highest standards of professionalism conforming to Sharia'a principles and internationally accepted best practices in Islamic banking including those of the Accounting and Auditing Organisation for Islamic Financial Institutions (AAOIFI).

Every Meethaq product is certified by the bank's Sharia'a Supervisory Board for compliance with Sharia'a principles and is created in line with the guidelines of the Central Bank of Oman.

More details about the features and benefits are available at <https://www.meethaq.om/en/hafawa/Pages/hafawabanking.aspx#hafawaPrivate>.

Rado's new version of True Square an 'open' secret

Rado's True Square has attracted a great deal of attention over the last year with its premiere. Its gently rounded corners, scratch-proof high-tech ceramic and smooth feel effortlessly combine apparent opposites. The Open Heart version also grants a sophisticated glimpse into its mechanical heart - which is now also presented with silver-grey accents.

The black dial of the new True Square Open Heart with an automatic movement has large cut-outs and features rhodium-coloured bevelled edges. The skeletonisation allows the finely decorated Swiss-made movement, which offers a power reserve of 80 hours and is a work of art in itself, to be seen. The hands and indexes are also rhodium coloured and filled with



ated using injection moulding, which demands meticulous precision in manufacturing - a technique that we have perfected. This is actually the first square watch with a monobloc case made from high-tech ceramic. This timepiece is completed with a magnificent bracelet made from polished black high-tech ceramic.

The True Square Open Heart with an automatic movement combines everything that makes Rado what it is: unmistakable design, innovative materials, a sensual feel, maximum scratch resistance and Swiss precision. It carries this and much more in its heart. Feel it.

Rado is known as the Master of Materials for the way it has revolutionised traditional watch-making.

white Super-LumiNova.

It is not just the intricate movements inside the watch that draw all eyes to them. The polished black high-tech ceramic case is equipped with a titanium case back with black PVD coating and sapphire crystal. Its monobloc construction is cre-

Gulf Air supports vaccine delivery

Gulf Air, the national carrier of the Kingdom of Bahrain, has operated a cargo-only flight, delivering 300,000 Sinopharm COVID-19 vaccines from China in support of the National Vaccination Campaign.

Since the onset of the pandemic, Gulf Air has supported vaccine shipments to Bahrain, alongside supporting wider viral mitigation efforts, and delivering vital food and medical supplies.

Furthermore, Gulf Air has redesigned its on-board experience to safely connect passengers with their chosen



destinations as well as assisting citizens and residents with their safe return as part of the International COVID-19 Repatriation Programme (ICRP).

Gulf Air has also encouraged its employees to register for the COVID-19 vaccines, which remain optional and free of charge for all citizens and residents.

Danube Home launches its all-new Ramadan 2021 e-catalogue

The region's leading one-stop-shop for all home needs, Danube Home, launched their all-new Ramadan 2021 e-catalogue at their megastore in Al Barsha where Adel Sajjan - managing director Danube Group, Shubhojit Mahalanobis - director, Danube Home and Hospitality, and Sayed Habib - director Business Development, Franchise and E-Commerce, Danube Home, addressed the media and other esteemed guests virtually.

The theme of the Danube Home Ramadan 2021 e-catalogue is 'Celebration begins at home'. The e-catalogue reveals a truly spectacular collection of products that is sure to ring in the

Ramadan celebration at home. It is also loaded with well put together design ideas that you can use as inspiration when designing your home. The e-catalogue is linked to the e-commerce interface which means you can simply click on the product you'd like to learn more about and shop for it online with just a few clicks.

"This Ramadan, we wanted to focus on the importance of family and celebrating with loved ones in the place we call home. We feel that the last year has taught us the importance of family and brotherhood and the joy that comes from sharing. Through our carefully curated collection, we hope to inspire



people to celebrate the joy of being home with those they love. We have put together a catalogue that is filled with design inspiration for everyone and the

seamless integration with our e-commerce interface makes shopping on-the-go even easier," said Sajjan.

The Ramadan 2021 e-cata-

logue features an all new collection of products in different categories ranging from bedroom sets, dining sets, sofa sets, table ware, wall paper and flooring and so much more.

"Each of the furniture pieces in this collection strikes the perfect balance of style and functionality with different designs to suit the preferences of our diverse customer base. We have paid a lot of attention to detail with our collection this year, with a lot of polished gold and silver metallic accents infused into the design making it a true visual treat. Our Ramadan 2021 e-catalogue also acts as a style guide as opposed to just a product display thanks

to the efforts of our expert team of designers and buyers who put their heads together to create look-books to showcase the immense design potential that every space in a home holds. The catalogue also includes tips for customers who wish to design their home," said Habib.

Danube Home also offers free design consultation at all their showrooms through their Design and Develop services. Design and Develop provides tailor made solutions for those who prefer customised furniture and fittings for their home.

"The Ramadan e-catalogue also features video testimonials from our happy customers who

opted for the Danube Home Design and Develop service," added Habib.

"Our goal has always been to provide customers the best, whether it is in terms of product offering or in terms of a wholesome shopping experience be it in-store, online or via our mobile app. We are very proud to introduce our latest Ramadan collection that is sure to get the Ramadan celebrations started at home while contributing to the overall turnover in the furniture, décor and kitchenware segment," said Shubhojit. The Ramadan 2021 collection is available in Danube Home showrooms as well as on danubehome.com.

Renault Oman's latest 'Refer-A-Renault' programme offers customers gift vouchers



Renault Oman, from the house of Suhail Bahwan Automobiles, has launched 'Refer-A-Renault' programme. As part of this 'refer and earn gift voucher' programme, a referee can win a gift voucher worth RO50 for each reference once successfully converted into a sale.

All existing customers of Renault who have purchased a vehicle from an SBA facility will be able to participate in the programme. Referrals can be made by logging on to <http://www.referrenault.com/en.html>.

A spokesperson for SBA said, "We are delighted to announce the 'Refer-A-Renault' pro-

gramme. A reference can be given by any resident of Oman who is an existing Renault customer and owns a Renault vehicle that was originally sold by Suhail Bahwan Automobiles (Oman) as a new vehicle. The referee will be entitled for the RO50 gift voucher provided the reference completes a Renault vehicle purchase and takes delivery of same on or before March 25."

The referee will be eligible for incentive if the reference buys a new Renault vehicle from any outlet of Suhail Bahwan Automobiles in Oman. A pre-owned Renault car purchase / Renault

purchase from any other outlet will not qualify under this programme.

A referee can submit multiple references, but only successful references will be considered for incentivisation. The gift voucher of the referee is non-transferable.

The RO50 gift voucher can be redeemed by the successful referee at any SBA premises for vehicle service, parts/accessories purchase or any other consumable purchase. However, the voucher cannot be redeemed for cash and needs to be used all at once. The voucher such issued will be valid for six months from the date of issue.

SBA commitment

SBA is largely committed to supporting Renault Oman's growth in the sultanate through major emphasis on customer satisfaction and by providing world-class after-sales services in Oman.

With a national network of nine showrooms, 16 service centres and 23 spare parts outlets, SBA has further built upon its legacy of trust, excellent customer service and providing value for money to each of its customers.

For more information, visit <https://www.renault.com.om/> or call the Toll Free number on 80050011.

JOYALUKKAS Exchange Your favourite money exchange					
SUMMARY OF ASSETS & LIABILITIES JOYALUKKAS EXCHANGE LLC (MONEY CHANGING ESTABLISHMENT) AS OF 31.12.2020					
Implementation & Follow - up Section		(In RO 000' s)			
ASSETS	31.12.2020	31.12.2019	LIABILITIES	31.12.2020	31.12.2019
1. Cash in hand	583	603	1. Capital & Reserves	3,278	2,943
2. Deposits with Central Bank of Oman	110	110	2. Borrowings from Banks	1	4
3. Precious Metals		-	3. Balances due to Branches	-	-
4. Balances due from Banks and Money Changers	2,801	2,193	4. Balances due to banks and Money changers	335	288
5. Balances due from Branches		-	5. Loans and Advances payable	-	-
6. Cheques and drafts purchased		-	6. Cheques and Drafts issued & outstanding	-	-
7. Loans and Advances		-	7. Other Liabilities	323	218
8. Investments		-			
9. Fixed Assets	362	453			
10. Other Assets	81	94			
TOTAL	3,937	3,453	TOTAL	3,937	3,453
H.O. CR No. 1048446, PO Box:583, Postal Code:117, Ruwi, Sultanate of Oman +968 24794017/18, Fax: +968 24794019, Email: customercare@joyalukkasexchange.com Website: www.joyalukkasexchange.com					

Alfa Romeo pays tribute to its female racing drivers

A number of women from different eras and different countries all shared a pioneering spirit and a passion for racing, trailblazing uncharted territory in what is a challenging sport.

We reconstruct the history of their contribution to the success of the Alfa Romeo brand, with a quick roundup that, in the style typical of social media, starts from the present day and goes back to the early 20th century.

Tatiana Calderon
Born in 1993 in Bogotá, Colombia, Calderon took her first steps in motorsport in 2005, winning a National Championship in the Easy Kart Pre-Junior series. Just three years later, she would become the first woman to win the JICA class of the Stars of Karting Championship East Division in the United States. In 2017, Calderon became a development driver for the Sauber Formula One team. One year later, Sauber promoted her from F1 development driver to F1 test driver for Alfa Romeo Racing.

Tamara Vidali
In 1992, Vidali won the Italian Tourism Championship (Group N) in an Alfa Romeo 33 1.7 Quadrifoglio Verde, set up by the brand's newly established Racing Department. Just as unforgettable is the fully yellow livery of the Alfa Romeo 155 that she drove in the Italian Superturismo Championship (CIS) in 1994.

Maria Grazia & Anna Cambiaghi
To follow Maria Teresa de Filippis in the 1950s, the second Italian woman to drive in a Formula



1 race – in as many as 13 GPs – was Maria Grazia Lombardi, known as “Lella”. Between 1982 and 1984, she took part in the European Tourism Championship with the Alfa Romeo GTV6 2.5, together with Anna Cambiaghi, Giancarlo Naddeo, Giorgio Francia and Rinaldo Drovandi, and helped to bring in multiple titles.

Christine Beckers & Liane Engeman
The 1960s were the era of the Alfa Romeo Giulia Sprint GTA. Its results, victories and importance in Alfa Romeo’s history are well-known. Less known, however, are the events of the (supercharged) Alfa Romeo GTA-SA. Prepared in ten units for Group 5, it was equipped with two hydraulically operated centrifugal compressors that boosted output to 220 hp, resulting in a top speed of 240 km/h. It reached peak performance, but as historical test driver from Au-

todelta Teodoro Zeccoli explained, the GTA-SA had “an unpredictable boost of power would kick in suddenly without notice, making the SA an unpredictable vehicle, hard to govern on curves or when maneuvering.” One able to govern this ill-tempered vehicle better than any other was the young Belgian driver Christine Beckers, who won in Houyet in 1968 and went on to achieve excellent results the following year in Condroz, at the “Tre Ponti”, at Herbeumont and at Zandvoort.

Susanna Raganelli
Possibly the only woman to have won a World Championship on four wheels was Rome-born Susanna “Susy” Raganelli, who won the 100cc Kart World Championship in 1966, defeating Leif Engstrom and the great Ronnie Peterson. Raganelli forever linked her name to Alfa Romeo when she ended her career behind the wheel of an Alfa Romeo GTA.

Ada Pace
In the 1950s, another driver achieved outstanding results behind the wheel of several Alfa Romeos: Turin-born Ada Pace. Throughout her 10-year career, Pace won as many as 11 national speed races, 6 in Turismo and 5 in Sport class. Almost always enrolled in races under her pseudonym “Sayonara” – based on the derisory wording she often posted as a rear licence plate – her most prestigious successes were achieved in the Alfa Romeo Giulietta Sprint Veloce and the Alfa Romeo Giulietta SZ, in which she also won the Trieste-Opicina race in 1958.

Odette Siko
In the 1930s, Alfa Romeo asserted itself as one of the main protagonists in motorsport. This was partly down to extraordinary vehicles, but also to drivers who became part of the legend: these were the years of Nuvolari, Varzi, Caracciola and Sommer. The lat-

ter won the 24 Hours of Le Mans in 1932 behind the wheel of an Alfa Romeo 8C 2300, but the Alfa Romeo 6C 1750 SS driven by the striking Odette Siko finished fourth overall and won the 2.0lt category.

Hellé Nice
A model, acrobat, and dancer, Mariette Hélène Delangle was more commonly known as Hellé Nice. Renowned for her outgoing personality, Nice was good friends with the Rothschilds and the Bugattis.

She raced in Europe and America and became one of the first drivers to display the logos of her sponsors on the bodywork of a single-seater racing car. She took part in the 1933 Italian Grand Prix at Monza in her own 8C 2300 Monza.

Anna Maria Peduzzi
The years of Scuderia Ferrari marked a crucial chapter in Alfa Romeo’s history. The drivers of the “Prancing Horse” included Como-born Anna Maria Peduzzi, the wife of driver Franco Comotti, who was nicknamed the “Moroccan”. After her debut aboard her own Alfa Romeo 6C 1500 Super Sport Peduzzi almost always raced alone and only occasionally with her husband.

Maria Antonietta d’Avanzo
The forerunner of female Alfa Romeo drivers, Baroness Maria Antonietta d’Avanzo made her debut in the interwar years. A pioneer of Italian motorsport, aviator and journalist, d’Avanzo won third place in the Alfa Romeo G1 at Brescia in 1921.

Tech companies are empowering women today

Supporting women is not only beneficial for their immediate environment but also transcends into many aspects of the global economy. Representation is increasing on a worldwide scale, with countries such as the UAE implementing several policies that help to empower women in business. I am proud to see the work being done to help women access opportunities in the field of technology.

Nevertheless, challenges persist. In fast-growing fields such as artificial intelligence (AI), where women account for only 26 per cent of job positions, and cloud computing, in which female representation is a mere 12 per cent, according to the World Economic Forum (WEF)’s Global Gender Gap Report 2020.

At Alibaba Cloud we see an emerging role for technology companies to address the gender gap by increasing access to STEM education and careers for women as well as ensuring equality in the pursuit of senior positions in the industry. It is clear that more access will come through a change in mindset and greater encouragement for young girls to pursue a STEM education and its related disciplines.

We are advocating for girls to be given the same encouragement as boys to enter

STEM fields. Greater gender diversity is good for business.

Achieving gender equality
The pursuit of equality for women is about removing systemic barriers and providing a pathway for women to self-determine and achieve their full potential. We are proud that women represent almost half of the Alibaba Group’s workforce, with female executives’ representation at 34 per cent.

However, we believe progress will be limited if we work alone – instead, it is necessary that we work together, creatively and with determination. This was the motivation behind Alibaba Cloud’s Tech for Change program, which was launched in 2019 to forge collaborations and partnerships around a wide range of causes.

The overarching goal of the movement is to teach one million women and girls to code by 2030 by offering tailored online courses to aspiring female technologists, especially those from marginalised areas.

Alibaba Cloud has always believed in the importance of women’s empowerment and technology as a force for change to unlock greater opportunities for the development of women in the technology sector.

Selina Yuan, president, International Business, Alibaba Cloud Intelligence



Go the distance with Nissan genuine car parts

Nissan Oman, from the house of Suhail Bahwan Automobiles (SBA), has urged owners to use only Nissan genuine parts which are designed under strict standards and rigorous rounds of quality control. Nissan genuine parts, which assure maximum safety and reliability, are tested for best accuracy of fit, and are available at a competitive price and covered for warranty.

Nissan Oman offers a broad range of Nissan genuine parts which are designed, tested and manufactured to the same exacting standards to fit perfectly for optimum performance, durability and safety. The genuine parts have received satisfied customer testimonial and experience.

Salem al Kamyani who uses only Nissan genuine spare parts says, “They keep our cars operating with optimal performance and extend performance lifetime.”

Abdullah al Kindi stresses that genuine parts are rigorously tested by the makers as an integral component of the vehicle to meet high quality, safety and performance standards.

“This ensures that our vehicle will drive, function and protect us the way it was intended. I always go for Nissan genuine spare parts when I need to replace a part,” he says.

Naser al Araimi advises that non-genuine parts might look like the real thing but they have not been made, selected or approved by the car maker.

“We should always remember that non-genuine parts can’t promise the same quality and safety attributes that come with



Nissan genuine spare parts,” he says.

A senior official from Nissan Oman said, “Every Nissan deserves the best spare parts and accessories and long term reliability, safety and quality. Nissan genuine parts enhance vehicle life cycle, increase safety and overall lower cost of ownership. In Oman we have widespread Nissan genuine parts outlets. Our state-of-the-art service centers spread across country are well-equipped with trained technicians.”

He added, “Suhail Bahwan Automotive Company, the exclusive distributor of Nissan genuine parts in Oman, over the years has become a trusted name in Oman automotive market and is renowned for its customer service excellence, fostering enduring customer relationships. Suhail Bahwan Automotive leads the way across the region as a value adding partner and has been recognised globally

by Nissan. Living by the corporate core values and commitment to their customers, SBA continuously conducts awareness campaigns to educate their customers on the importance of using genuine parts.

“Owners can also be assured that when their car is in for service, maintenance or repair, not only is it in the safe hands of experts who have genuine knowledge of everything that has to do with your car – they can count on lasting quality and a perfect fit every time.”

Safety
Nissan genuine parts have undergone thousands of hours of rigorous testing to meet the highest standards of quality and performance, as your safety is our priority.

Nissan genuine parts are built to be reliable, with the added peace of mind that they are covered by the Nissan New Vehicle Warranty.

ISG holds virtual annual awards ceremony

Indian School Ghubra (ISG) organised a virtual Annual Awards Ceremony for the academic year 2019-20. It was conducted to recognise the achievements of students in both curricular and co-curricular activities and also to honour the staff who have rendered long service.

Dr P Mohamed Ali, founder of ISG, presided over as the chief guest. The event began with Papri Ghosh, principal, according a warm welcome to the chief guest, Dr Ali, Ahmad Rayees, president-SMC, Sunil Kattakath-convener, members of SMC, teachers, parents, staff and students.

The principal summarised the pandemic era by quoting a few lines from the famous novel *A Tale of Two Cities* by Charles Dickens. The Annual Report pro-



vided a glimpse of the myriad achievements of the students in inter-school events and in-house celebrations and events.

Dr Ali congratulated the staff and students and appreciated the efforts put in by all the members. He profusely thanked Helen Lobo, coordinator, Pre Primary Section and Shamsu M K, assistant admin manager for 30 years of service to the institution. He also thanked the teachers who

have completed 20, 15 and 10 years of service. Dr Ali highlighted the advantages of technology which makes the meeting possible but said that the human element was missing. Addressing the students, he emphasised on the attitude of gratitude and advised them to focus on their goals.

The school choir presented the song ‘May the Good Lord Bless and Keep you’.

Shamshad Hamza, supervisor - Middle School, Ann Thomas and Rajasri Lakshman announced the awards for students who have excelled in GK, Art and Academics. Students were also awarded for Perfect Attendance and Victor Ludorum Certificates in Sports and Academics for five consecutive years. The other awards for students included the winners at the CBSE Nationals in Sports and Games (2019-20) as well as at the Western Region Asian Cricket under-16 (2019-20). The toppers in the CBSE examinations in Classes X and XII were honoured. The subject toppers in both Classes X and XII in the CBSE examination were also awarded.

The event concluded with the principal proposing the vote of thanks.



Oman Cricket celebrates Women’s Day

Reiterating its commitment to promotion of women’s cricket in the country, Oman Cricket celebrated the International Women’s Day on March 8 by holding a ceremony during a Women’s League game in Amerat.

Recognising the importance of female participation in cricket, senior OC officials presented purple colour ribbons to all the players and match officials be-

fore the start of the game between Indian Social Club and Wadi Kabir Women teams.

Apart from having Oman Women’s Cricket Academy with world-class facilities where players are trained by qualified coaches, Oman Cricket has a dedicated league for its female players, providing them a platform to showcase their talent and skills.

“Women’s Day is a very special occasion for us and our female players. We are glad to see that various schools and social clubs are coming forward and supporting the development of women’s cricket in Oman. During the last ICC World Cup final in Australia, 86,000 supporters were present in the stadium to support their teams which itself proves that cricket is growing at

world stage. Oman Cricket will leave no stone unturned for the development of women’s cricket in the country,” said Madhu Jesrani, secretary, Oman Cricket.

Vaishali Jesrani, lady coordinator, Oman Cricket, added, “Women are in the forefront of all major activities including business, career or sports. Women in Oman are now coming forward and participating in all sports.”

At least 3 dead as Myanmar protests grow after violence

Yangon, Myanmar - At least three people were killed when demonstrators took to the streets again across Myanmar on Saturday, after a deadly overnight crackdown as hundreds defied a curfew to hold vigils in honour of those killed since the military seized power.

The junta has deployed increasing force against daily protests since the February 1 coup, with more than 70 people killed according to the UN's top rights expert on the country.

But hundreds of thousands have continued to gather across the country to call for the release of civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi - who was detained in the February 1 putsch - and a return to democracy.

Saturday brought early crackdowns by security forces in Myanmar's second largest city Mandalay, which saw more than 20 injured, including a monk.

At least three were killed, including a 21 year old, according to an AFP reporter and a doctor on the scene.

The sister of Saw Pyae Naing sobbed as she uncovered her brother's body and gently touched his face at a makeshift medical centre.

Further south along the Irrawaddy river, protesters in Pyaw wearing hard hats and carrying homemade shields attempted to hold off authorities as they retrieved an injured man.

"Come! Come and protect with the shields!" they yelled as they carried a slumped bleeding man to safety.

The fresh violence against protesters comes after three people were killed overnight in commercial hub Yangon.

Footage shared on social media late Friday and verified by AFP showed police pulling three



A monk, who was shot with live rounds during a demonstration against the military coup, receives medical attention at a makeshift medical centre, in Mandalay on Saturday (AFP)

residents out on the streets of Thaketa township, beating them on the head and hauling them away.

Angry residents went to the police station to protest, and sounds of gunshots were heard hours later in the township, including by an AFP reporter.

"Security forces arrested three young men, and as we followed

to get them back, they cracked down on us," recounted a resident on Saturday, requesting anonymity.

"Two were killed - with one shot in his head and another one hit with a shot that penetrated his cheek to the neck," he said, adding that they had to wait until the police stopped shooting to retrieve the bodies.

'Drive them out'

One of the deceased was 37 year old rickshaw driver Si Thu, a staunch supporter of Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy party.

His body, displayed outside his home on Saturday as part of a traditional mourning process, was covered with the NLD flag.

His wife Su Yadanar Hlaing

said she had begged her husband to remain at home, but he had rushed out after hearing about the arrest of the three men.

"I don't want anyone to end up like him," she told AFP sobbing. "Now I just want to die."

Across town in Hlaing township, residents alarmed at the presence of police and soldiers in their neighbourhood left their homes on Friday night to protest, fearful they were going to make arrests. "We wanted to drive them out," one told AFP, adding that residents deployed Molotov cocktails against security forces.

"Police and soldiers used stun grenades to disperse us," he said.

His account was confirmed by another resident, while AFP-verified footage shared on social media showed residents hiding behind cars as loud bangs could be heard before they retrieved a bleeding man shot in the head.

He was 18 year old Aung Paing Oo, whose brother Wai Lin Kyaw confirmed he died hours later, after struggling to breathe through the night.

"The doctors could not do much for him as his head was burst," he told AFP, sobbing.

Before the violence, hundreds defied a nightly 8:00pm curfew to hold candlelight vigils across the country, from the northern jade-producing city of Hpakan to the southern coastal hub of Myeik.

Near Yangon's Hledan junction - which has for weeks been a hotspot for unrest - protesters carrying posters of Suu Kyi sat and prayed, holding their candles in the air to mourn those killed in anti-coup demonstrations.

"People were so fearful to go out after 8:00pm... so when that call comes out, it's powerful," activist Thinzar Shunlei Yi told AFP.

AFP



This file photo shows Kremlin critic Mikhail Khodorkovsky in the defendant's box during his trial, in Moscow on September 9, 2004 (AFP)

Russia detains several opposition deputies at forum

Moscow, Russia - Russian police on Saturday arrested dozens of opposition politicians and municipal deputies at a conference in Moscow, organisers and participants said.

Participants from more than 50 of Russia's regions had gathered to discuss parliamentary and local elections in September at a forum organised by a project backed by prominent Kremlin critic Mikhail Khodorkovsky.

Forty minutes into the conference police broke up the event and detained around 150 deputies, said opposition activist Ilya Yashin.

'A very symbolic end to a short forum: deputies in police vans, and masked police are twisting people's arms,' Yashin said on Facebook.

A number of well-known opposition figures including Yashin, Vladimir Kara-Murza, Yulia Galyamina, Yevgeny Roizman and Andrei Pivovarov as well as journalists have been detained.

A spokesman for Moscow police told AFP he was unaware why the conference had been broken up.

Pivovarov, speaking to AFP from a police station, said the forum participants had been detained because authorities believe that the conference was organised by Open Russia, a

movement founded by Khodorkovsky and designated as an 'undesirable organisation'.

The municipal forum - the first of its kind - was organised by the United Democrats group, Pivovarov said, noting that authorities appeared to look for a pretext to interrupt an opposition event.

"Their goal is to intimidate us," he said.

The team of jailed Kremlin foe Alexei Navalny said authorities were putting pressure on critics ahead of the September elections.

'It is clear why the forum has been broken up - authorities are afraid of any competition during elections,' the team said on Telegram messaging app, adding that the ruling party United Russia was getting increasingly unpopular.

'Winning even rigged elections is becoming ever more difficult.'

Khodorkovsky's Open Russia was banned in Russia in 2017 in line with a controversial law that targets foreign groups accused of political meddling.

Entities put on the 'undesirable' list are banned from issuing any publications in Russia, while people cooperating with them could be hit with fines, jail time and Russian entry bans.

AFP

Bomb kills 8, injures 47 in Afghanistan

Herat, Afghanistan - A powerful car bomb in western Afghanistan killed at least eight people and wounded dozens more, authorities said on Saturday, as the United Nations condemned attacks on civilians in the country.

The blast targeted a police headquarters in the city of Herat around 10:00pm on Friday, damaging dozens of houses and shops, Jailani Farhad, the spokesman for the Herat provincial governor, told AFP.

"The death toll from a car bomb in the city of Herat increased to eight, and 47 others are wounded," he said, adding that women, children and security personnel were among the dead.

The Interior Ministry spokesman, Tariq Arian, confirmed the death toll, adding that 54 had been wounded.

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said the blast in Herat had no links to their group.

However, the group's insurgents are active in the western province and have carried out recent attacks against Afghan government forces.

President Ashraf Ghani blamed the Taliban, adding in a statement the group 'continued their illegitimate war and violence against our people' and 'showed once again they have no intention for peaceful settlement of the current crises'.

Violence has surged in Afghanistan in recent months - including a wave of assassinations against journalists, activists and civil servants, despite the launch of peace talks between the warring Afghan government and Taliban.

On Friday, the UN Security Council 'condemned in the strongest terms the alarming number of attacks deliberately targeting civilians in Afghanistan'.

It comes as speculation is rife about the United States' future in Afghanistan after a two-decade military involvement in the country.

US President Joe Biden is wrapping up a review on whether to stick to an agreement with the Taliban negotiated by his predecessor Donald Trump who wanted to pull out the final US troops by May.

The Biden administration has signalled that it wants to take a hard look at Trump's deal and its repercussions for Afghanistan and regional stability.

Washington recently submitted a draft peace agreement to the authorities in Kabul and to the Taliban, including the creation of a 'new inclusive government', according to a letter from US Secretary of State Antony Blinken that was revealed by Afghan media.

AFP

'Allegations of ethnic cleansing in Tigray unfounded'

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia - Ethiopia on Saturday rejected US accusations of ethnic cleansing in the conflict-hit Tigray region as 'unfounded and spurious'.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, in an appearance before Congress on Wednesday, said that 'acts of ethnic cleansing' had been committed in western Tigray, calling for them to stop and for 'full accountability'.

Blinken's 'allegations, in fact, outright accusations of ethnic cleansing of Tigrayans... is a completely unfounded and spurious verdict against the Ethiopian government', Ethiopia's Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

"Nothing during or after the end of the main law enforcement operation in Tigray can be identified or defined by any standards as a targeted, intentional ethnic cleansing against anyone in the region.'



Members of the Ethiopian community stage a protest in Brussels on March 11, 2021 to bring awareness on the situation of Ethiopia's conflict-hit Tigray region. (AFP)

However it added that the Ethiopian government 'attaches particular importance to its long-standing and strategic relations

with the United States'.

"It is committed to work closely with the current US administration in further strength-

ening and boosting this important bilateral relationship over the coming years."

A spokesman for Ethiopia's

Amhara region already denied Thursday that its forces were engaged in ethnic cleansing.

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed launched a military campaign in Tigray in November after blaming the region's ruling party, the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), for attacks on army camps. Abiy, winner of the 2019 Nobel Peace Prize, leaned on forces from Amhara to secure western and southern Tigray once the TPLF retreated from those areas, and Amhara officials set up transitional administrations in multiple cities and towns.

It was a sensitive move, given that many ethnic Amharas believe the once-dominant TPLF illegally incorporated the fertile territories after it came to power in the early 1990s - and that they should fall under Amhara administration.

AFP

Despite pope euphoria, Iraq Christians left without illusions

Baghdad, Iraq - Iraqi Christians say they will 'never forget the joy' of Pope Francis' historic visit to the country but they don't expect it to stem the minority's exodus from the country.

Wajdane Nouri, a Christian in her fifties, will soon join her daughters in the United States.

At the St Joseph Cathedral, where she has long led the choir, huge posters and a red carpet still bear witness to the first ever papal visit to Iraq.

Earlier this month, Francis led a mass in Baghdad, ravaged for



Iraqi Christian Wajdane Nouri gets ready to lead the choir at St Joseph Church in central Baghdad on Wednesday (AFP)

40 years by wars and economic crises, shortly after having prayed in a church that was the scene a decade ago of the bloodiest anti-Christian attack in Iraq.

For Nouri and the estimated 400,000 other Christians left in Iraq, the pope's words that no one should be treated like a 'second class citizen' and against 'the plague of corruption' in the country resonated deep.

Those who were reluctant to speak to the media before Francis flew in are today irrepressible. The pontiff has emboldened

them to air their grievances.

But since the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime in the 2003 US-led invasion, the Christian community has shrunk from six to just one per cent of the country's population.

And only large job creation projects can head off emigrations, warned Father Nadheer Dakko, a priest at Saint Joseph.

Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani who met with the Pope said he was working to ensure that Christians can live 'in peace'.

AFP

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Facing COVID and China, US leads vaccine push in India

Washington, US - India will produce more than one billion more COVID vaccine doses by the end of next year in an initiative launched on Friday with the United States, Japan and Australia, challenging China as the four leaders held their first-ever joint summit.

US President Joe Biden, who has vowed to reinvigorate alliances in the face of growing worries about China, met virtually with the three nations' prime ministers as they pledged together to defend a 'free and open' Indo-Pacific region.

"We're renewing our commitment to ensure that our region is governed by international law, committed to upholding universal values and free from coercion," said Biden, who like the others made no explicit, but plenty of implicit, mentions of China.

Vowing to show concrete results, the so-called Quad announced that Indian company Biological Ltd. would manufacture at least one billion additional vaccine doses by the end of 2022, focusing on the single-shot, US-developed Johnson & Johnson jab that was approved on Friday by the World Health Organization.

Biden's national security advisor, Jake Sullivan, called the plan a 'massive joint commitment' and said that Southeast Asia would be the priority to receive the shots, which should come well after the United States is largely vaccinated.



US President Joe Biden (left), with Secretary of State Antony Blinken (second from left), meets virtually with the Prime Ministers of the other three 'Quad' member states - Australia, India, Japan, in the State Dining Room of the White House in Washington, DC, on Friday (AFP)

Indian company Biological Ltd would manufacture at least 1bn additional vaccine doses by the end of 2022, focusing on US-developed Johnson & Johnson jab

US, INDIA, JAPAN, AUSTRALIA

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi said the vaccine initiative showed that the Quad is 'a positive force for global good and for peace, stability and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific'.

India, a global pharmaceutical hub, is already sending vaccines to 70 nations and called the Quad initiative a vindication.

"We believe that this will speed up the process of post-pandemic recovery and enable families and businesses to put the COVID-19 crisis behind them," Foreign Secretary Harsh Shringla said in New Delhi.

The White House said that Japan and the United States would provide favourable loans to allow the Indian production, with Australia stepping up to nearly US\$500mn funding to administer vaccines Southeast Asia and the Pacific.

The plan comes as China, where the deadly virus was first detected in late 2019, works to

transform its image into that of a global healer.

China has shipped vaccines as far afield as the Dominican Republic and provided doses to international partners such as Pakistan and Zimbabwe.

'New dawn'

The Quad format has been growing for more than a decade, but Friday's talks are the first at the leaders' level and come as all four nations see relations with China deteriorate.

China over the past year has engaged in a deadly clash with Indian forces in the Himalayas,

stepped up activity near islands administered by Japan and imposed sanctions on Australian products following a series of disputes.

Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison said that the summit marked 'a new dawn in the Indo-Pacific'.

"As four leaders of great liberal democracies in the Indo-Pacific, may our partnership be the enabler of peace, stability and prosperity, and to do so inclusively with the many nations of our region," Morrison said.

Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga, speaking to re-

porters afterward in Tokyo, said he raised 'strong opposition to China's unilateral attempts to change the status quo' and voiced concern over Myanmar's coup. "They supported each of my remarks," Suga said of the other leaders.

China has denounced the Quad as a US plot against it and put particular pressure on India, which under Modi has increasingly aligned with the United States and shed its historic non-alignment.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian called on all nations to 'refrain from forming closed and exclusive cliques and act in a way that is conducive to regional peace, stability and prosperity'.

The Quad summit kicks off a flurry of diplomacy by Biden, who promised an in-person meeting with the other three leaders this year.

AFP



Protesters gather outside al-Hussain New Salt Hospital after virus patients who died of lack of oxygen, in Salt on Saturday (AFP)

Outrage in Jordan as oxygen shortage leads to deaths

Salt, Jordan - At least seven COVID-19 patients died on Saturday when a Jordanian hospital ran out of oxygen, triggering an outcry in the kingdom and forcing the health minister to resign.

Jordan's King Abdullah II ordered the head of the state hospital in the town of Salt northwest of Amman to resign, state media reported, as hundreds of angry people gathered outside the hospital.

"Between 6:00 and 7:00 this morning, oxygen ran out for nearly an hour at the hospital and this probably led to the deaths of six patients," Health Minister Nazir Obeidat said.

The official Al-Mamlaka television channel later reported that a seventh patient had also died.

Obeidat, who travelled to the Al-Hussein New Salt Hospital after news of the tragedy broke, told reporters he was assuming 'full moral responsibility' for what happened. "I have submitted my resignation to the Prime Minister," he added.

Prime Minister Bisher al-Khasawneh later told reporters he had accepted Obeidat's resig-

nation and that the hospital's director had been sacked.

The head of health services for the Balqaa province, where Salt is located, was suspended pending the completion of an investigation, he said.

"What happened is a huge and flagrant mistake, unjustified and unacceptable. We cannot accept the death of a single Jordanian," Khasawneh added.

"The government alone assumes full responsibility for what happened."

The king also headed to Salt in the wake of the reports of the deaths and demanded the head of the hospital step down, Al-Mamlaka reported.

In video footage that circulated online, a visibly angry Abdullah, shaking his head and gesticulating, can be heard telling the hospital director: "How could such a thing happen. This is unacceptable."

Hundreds of people rallied outside the hospital to vent their anger over the deaths, with a crowd surrounding the King's car as it neared the hospital, AFP reporters said.

AFP

Five European states seek talks on 'disparities' in vaccine handouts

Vienna, Austria - Austria, the Czech Republic, Slovenia, Bulgaria and Latvia have called for talks among EU leaders regarding 'huge disparities' in the distribution of vaccines, according to a letter published on Saturday.

Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz suggested on Friday that some members of the European Union may have signed 'secret contracts' with vaccine companies to receive more doses than they were entitled to under EU-wide agreements.

An EU spokesman has said

that it was up to members states to 'ask less or more of a given vaccine', while another EU official on Saturday said that 'the coordination in the fight against the pandemic' will be the first point of discussions during the bloc's next summit.

The summit is already scheduled for the end of March and will likely be held in person, the official said.

Kurz and his four counterparts on Friday sent a letter to Ursula von der Leyen, president of the European Commission,



An employee draws up a syringe with a COVID-19 vaccine, at a centre in Schwaz, Austria, on Thursday (AFP)

and Charles Michel, president of the European Council, claiming that 'deliveries of vaccine doses by pharma companies to individual EU member states are not being implemented on an equal basis'.

'If this system were to carry on, it would continue creating and exacerbating huge disparities among member states by this summer, whereby some would be able to reach herd immunity in a few weeks while others would lag far behind', the letter said.

'We therefore call on you... to

hold a discussion on this important matter among leaders as soon as possible', it said.

A spokesman for the European Commission said it had received the letter, and 'we are studying it and will respond in due course'.

Czech Prime Minister Andrej Babis said on Twitter on Saturday that, until vaccination rates were high enough to stop the virus, 'the supplies must indeed be distributed among member states according to their population'.

AFP

Museums, coins to mark Greek revolution bicentenary

Athens, Greece - Hundreds of rare items dating to the 1821 Greek revolution go on virtual display in Athens this month, with bicentenary events scaled back because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

A new museum dedicated to the Philhellenic foreign volunteers who fought and died for Greece will be inaugurated in April, featuring contemporary paintings, weapons, ornaments and personal items of the fighters, among them celebrated 19th century poet Lord Byron.

"The Philhellenic movement seduced all social classes...it was a vertical and horizontal movement without precedent," says museum founder Constantinos Velentzas, a private collector and IT entrepreneur.

"We are preparing a 3D virtual tour...we have to address a wide public that is not only based in Greece," he told AFP



Museum founder Constantinos Velentzas describes a painting by German painter Georg Christian Perlberg in the new museum that houses hundreds of rare items dating to the 1821 Greek revolution (AFP)

this week.

Items on display include Byron's weapons, a letter by American revolutionary war hero and French aristocrat the Marquis de Lafayette, early drawings of the Greek revolutionary flag, and the logbook of a warship that

participated in the pivotal naval Battle of Navarino that led to Greek independence.

Two key Greek museums are also holding exhibitions to mark the revolution against Turkish rule.

AFP

UK policeman in elite unit charged with murder of Sarah Everard

London, UK - London police on Friday charged a fellow officer with kidnap and murder, hours after confirming a body discovered in woodland was that of a missing woman in a high-profile case that has shocked Britain.

Wayne Couzens (48), a serving officer in the Metropolitan Police's elite diplomatic protection unit, was charged with killing 33 year old marketing executive Sarah Everard, the force said.

She vanished while walking home in south London on the evening of March 3, with Couzens' arrest a week later sending shockwaves through the Met - and the wider public - and triggering an angry debate about women's safety.

"Following a referral of evidence by the Metropolitan Police related to the death of Sarah Everard, the CPS has authorised the police to charge Wayne Couzens with murder and kid-



A woman places flowers at a bandstand where a planned vigil in honour of murder victim Sarah Everard was cancelled after police outlawed it due to COVID-19 restrictions, on Clapham Common in London on Saturday (AFP)

napping,' Rosemary Ainslie, of the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), said in a short statement.

Couzens, who was first arrested late on Tuesday in Kent, southeast England - where he lives and Everard's remains were found the following day - ap-

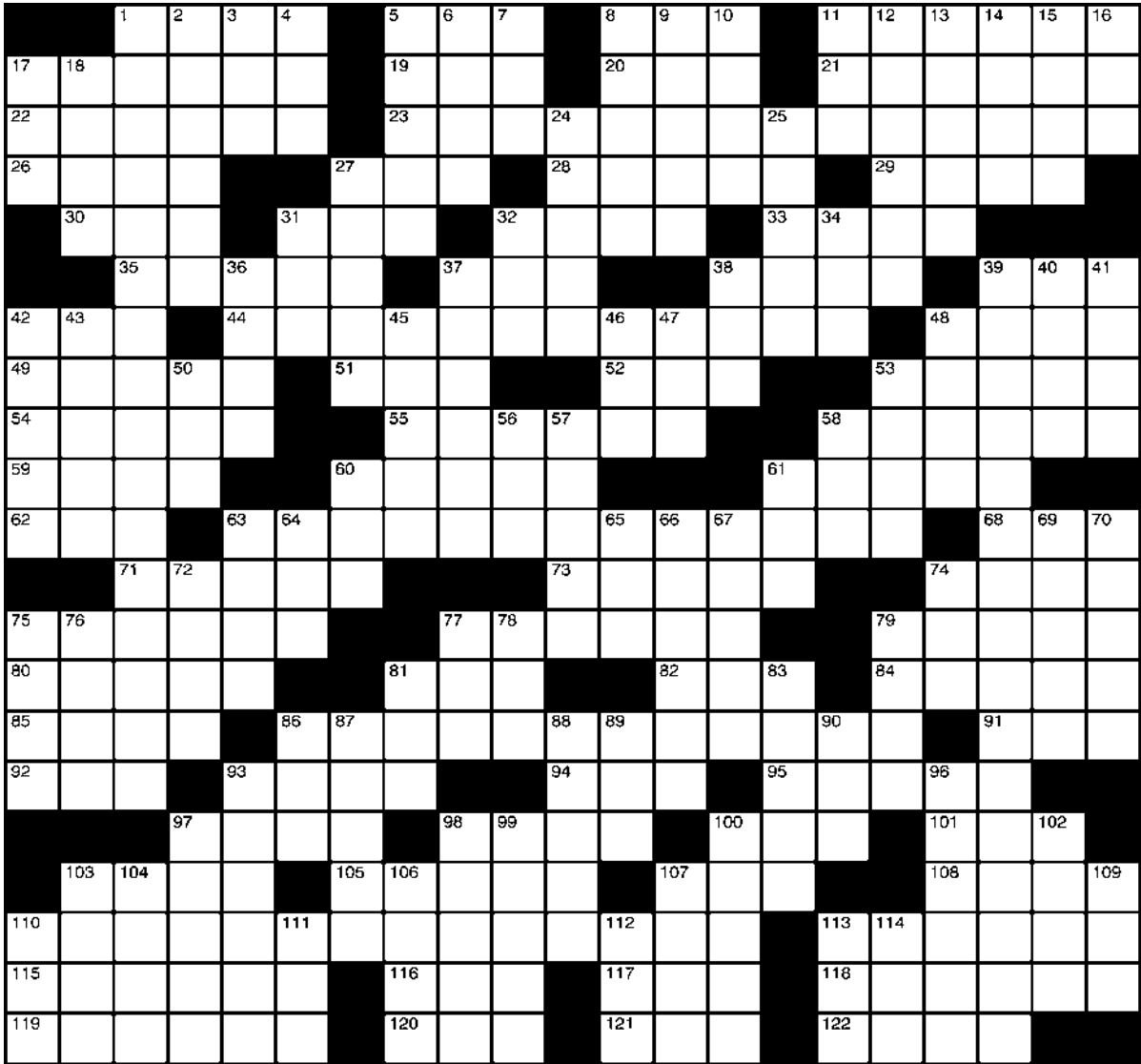
peared on Saturday at Westminster Magistrates' Court.

His charging came several hours after police confirmed that the body, found in an area of woodland in Ashford, Kent, late on Wednesday had been identified as Everard.

Officials also revealed Couzens had again been admitted to hospital on Friday with a head injury, a day after being briefly hospitalised for a similar injury sustained while 'alone in his cell'.

AFP

DAILY CROSSWORD



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ACROSS

- 1 Force down
5 With 86 Across: abbr.
8 Federal conservation agcy., 1933-43
11 Favor
17 Stabler
19 "Ask ___ what your country . . ."
20 Openings
21 Portuguese port
22 Baltimore's team or bird
23 Armchair transport
26 Invited
27 Pedro's uncle
28 Phileas Fogg, on film
29 Then, for Merkel
30 Cornhusker State: abbr.
31 With some or struck
32 Goddess of Justice
33 Yuletide
35 Ruth's mother-in-law
37 "Those who ___, do"
38 Care for
39 Fireproof fiber: abbr.
42 Blink
44 Original transport
48 Govt. news agcy.
49 Vase handles
51 Fan or sun
52 Actor Carney

- 53 Goddess of Virtue
54 Sneary
55 Standards of perfection
58 With 27 Down, Dickens novel
59 Deride
60 ___ King Mt., NY
61 Bored with life
62 Deciduous tree
63 Famous rail transport
68 We, to Loren
71 Moderate
73 Seabirds
74 Newtons
75 Native of Seoul
77 Adorn
79 Overact
80 Satellite of Uranus
81 Greek forest god
82 Latin law
84 More positive
85 Weasel-like animal
86 Transport of Queen Mary class
91 Three, in Palermo
92 Iron or stone
93 Confound
94 Down or cake
95 "Once to ___ man . . ."
97 Duke, Earl or Baron
98 Walked
100 Beholden to
101 Horned viper
103 Waste allowance
105 William or talk
107 "It ___ the best of

- times . . ."
108 Extreme
110 Earth-circling transport
113 Splinter
115 Oldsters sometimes are
116 Elec. unit
117 Beaver State: abbr.
118 Ukraine river or basin
119 Tried
120 Tea or smart
121 Square or tide
122 Portent
DOWN
1 Ohio class naval transfer
2 One-celled animal
3 Film director
Brooks
4 With amble or dawn
5 Loose
6 A London square
7 "Eve of ___ Agnes": Keats
8 Strip or opera
9 Need
10 Skeleton framework
11 Time slot
12 Dug up
13 Sub or sum
14 ___ go bragh
15 College or jacket
16 Sec. day of the week
17 Watch pocket

- 18 Khomeini's home
24 With pen
25 Tube or Mongolia
27 See 58 Across
31 Poetess Lowell
32 Dangerous ___ McGrew
34 ___ a penny
36 Mind
37 Impartiality
38 Tit for ___
39 Air transport
40 Camp or building
41 Heavyweight champion, 1934
42 Merit or police
43 "For want of ___"
45 2010 quake site
46 "My Gal ___"
47 Marriage title: abbr.
48 Author of "Exodus"
50 The Simpson's patriarch
53 Axillary
56 With long or now: poet.
57 Fossil resin
58 Bullring cheer
60 Aldrich Ames
61 Dental degree
63 Israeli airline
64 Friday or power
65 Swiss canton
66 Goad
67 Hawaiian state flower
69 Aquatic mammal
70 Grenoble river
72 Onion relative

- 74 Ostrich lookalike
75 Russian river to the Volga
76 Source: abbr.
77 You are what you ___
78 Compass reading
79 ___ quam videri: N. Carolina motto
81 King or safety
83 Oyster and Irish
86 Colorado Indian
87 Florence Nightingale
88 Hindu loincloth
89 Your lawn
90 Abel's mother
93 Wooden bench
96 Sometimes with ranting
97 Four or bourgeois
98 Succinct
99 Confute
100 Equipped for rowing
102 Ready in Rouen
103 "How do I love ___?"
104 Bull and home
106 Tribulations
107 "The Way We ___"
109 Decade: abbr.
110 Fast air transport: abbr.
111 Musical "Zeppelin"
112 Rocky peak
113 Roar and murmur: abbr.
114 French law

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

Your reputation is your top concern, but is such an obsessive focus keeping you from making deeper emotional connections with other people? It certainly can be difficult to balance your goals with your personal relationships, but you need to do it. You can master the art of being yourself and being there for others if you try. You have an older relative who has some helpful insight.



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

Listen when that little voice in your head tells you to power through today, and then take action! Work through lunch or stay late to finish up what you need to do. Any further postponement could leave you painted into a corner with no options. You have some nice momentum right now, and you shouldn't let it go to waste. You might prefer to take it easy this afternoon.



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

Rush around and you could cheat yourself out of some very pleasant experiences. Don't think that all of your errands are boring things you need to get out of the way in order to move on to more fun. Think of each one as an opportunity for adventure. The dry cleaner, grocery store, or dentist's office might not usually be the most interesting place, but today, who knows?



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

The people you'll be dealing with are a lot more grounded than you are right now, which could make you uncomfortable at first. It's tough to work with people who don't see things the way you see them. But if you just relax, you will slowly become much more grounded yourself. Reach out to the people who are always cool, calm, and collected and they'll reach right back.



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

Your healthy ambition has been feeling a bit sickly, but when you get a little taste of power, you'll finally start to feel robust. You can see where you want things to go, and with a little patience you'll see a path to take to get there. Your sense of who you are is going to continue to grow slowly but steadily, and you're starting to see the rewards of being more self-assured.



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

You're getting into the good graces of some very influential people. While this is great for your career prospects, it could have a negative effect in terms of your personal relationships. You don't like to think that the people who want the best for you can get jealous, but they can and they are. Try to cool it when it comes to talking about the exciting things that are going on.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

More than ever, you are open to the unfamiliar today. Your quick mind is ready to sort through a confusing matter. You'll figure out what to make of it. Go out early today and try to find something or someone to keep your brain humming. It's a great day to tackle a puzzle that's been driving you nuts. Or you might want to try (one more time) to get along with that difficult personality.



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

Being the odd one out can be an advantage, so don't get upset if someone calls you out and makes you feel weird for doing something you thought was the right thing to do. Whoever is trying to push your buttons simply doesn't know how to peg you or figure you out, and they're being lazy in trying to understand you. But you shouldn't let their jealousy bug you.



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

It's time for you to be a bit more frugal and put some stricter financial restrictions on yourself. Even if you feel like you're flush with cash right now, it would do you some good to tighten your belt. Pretend that you have less than you have and you'll end up being grateful for what you do have instead of always being hungry for more. All you have to do is be happier with less for now.



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

The clouds in your mind have been confusing you a lot, but today brings good news! The sun is coming out, and it will burn off that foggy thinking to show you exactly what you need to do. Someone or something could come into your life unexpectedly and provide you with the light you need to understand a mystery that's been plaguing you. This is definitely an exciting development.



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

You have everything you need to make your dreams come true. You have the energy and, most importantly, you're getting the green light from those in power. Everyone has some advice they think you should hear, but you don't need instructions from people to know how to run your own life. Being a part of a community is important, but your first priority is to yourself.



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

You could be involved in a serious game of follow-the-leader, and the good news is that you'll be the leader! Everyone is eager to follow in your footsteps because they have taken you such great places. Make sure you don't go too quickly for people to keep up. Get ready for some serious attention to cause a disruption. A few personal facts might become public knowledge.

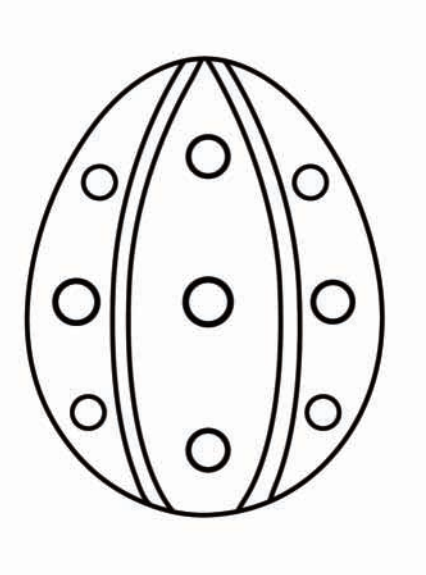
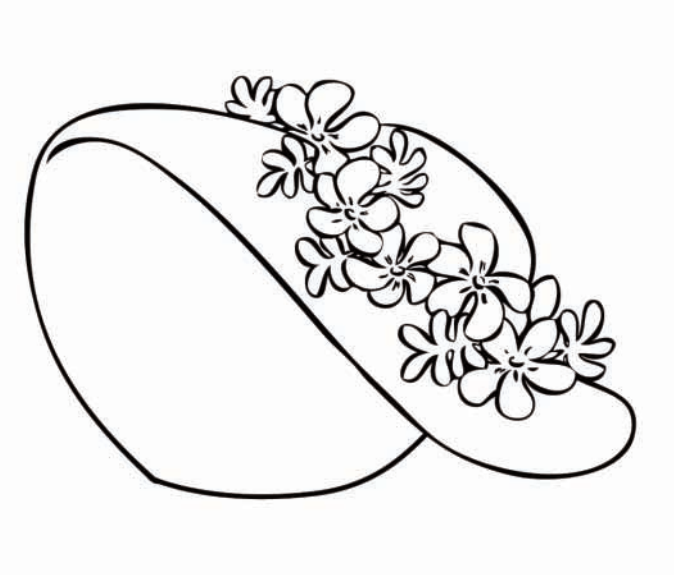


TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. The Treaty of Versailles was signed in
a. 1917
b. 1918
c. 1919
d. 1920
2. The temporary suspension of hostilities by mutual consent in order to stout a peace negotiation is called
a. arbitration
b. asylum
c. armistice
d. apartheid
3. The term used when a member of a legislature leaves his party on whose ticket he was elected to join the ruling party or the opposition, is called
a. floor crossing
b. fourth estate
c. fifth column
d. free ports

Answers: 1: c 2: c 3: a

KIDS COLOURING



DO YOU SUDOKU?

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

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

BOGGLER

F	T	H	M
G	E	Qu	M
E	A	D	E
U	S	I	A

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

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

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

DAILY CROSSWORD ANSWERS (MARCH 10)

PLIED	ADAM	ESSOR	WEST
RONDE	EDNA	ATIQUE	EVER
OGRES	COON	TRUTH	BONE
DEE	PEERSIAT	EAISES	KIN
DAFS	EGALLER	ARGENT	
RABBITTS	ELATED	TOUR	
IDLERS	AMOR	ER	ADAM
CLAYS	STRENGTH	ASSISTIT	
EAP	SHIREN	ERRA	LASSIE
OTIED	ANEST	REPUBLICAN	
ELIAS		PRATE	
COMMUNISTS	OCEAN	PUSS	
ORIOLE	BOIM	WANLY	BAA
MINCED	SPOTLESS	TROUT	
AGER	KEITH	TREATY	
CAMP	BLESS	TREATER	
NETTIE	BARBARA	ROAD	
TICE	ORIAS	SNORERS	PRIO
SLAM	SANTA	ERIN	UNION
PAST	ORIEL	STAT	RTINSE
STERN	NEEDS	SALE	EPISES

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





Sarah Milroy Thompson

MAGIC - JOINT EXHIBITION

Tarini Agarwal

LOVE FOR OMAN

Hubert Vaz

Art & Soul gallery, in Water Front Mall, Shatti al Qurm, at present displays a unique collection of paintings depicting varied faces of Oman and its culture. The exhibition, titled 'Magic', hosted on the occasion of International Women's Day (March 8), includes artworks of two women artists - Tarini Agarwal and Sarah Milroy Thompson.

Tarini, a senior Indian artist who finds the natural beauty of Oman an easy inspiration, disclosed, "The works that I have created for this exhibition are inspired by the Omani women, and their presence and participation in the country's economic and social development. They are modern yet very rooted in their country's culture and the family. The artworks are inspired by the colours of the

dresses Omani women wear, and the effort is to bring out the aspects of their personalities."

Explaining the theme of the joint exhibition - Magic - Tarini further said, "I have had the good fortune to interact with Omani women from different walks of life and I'm always amazed at how they hold their own. For me, it is magical that they can be modern, traditional, all at the same time. The natural setting of this beautiful country is magical, so the magic comes alive. The theme of this presentation of works is, hence, very fitting."

About how well her exhibits complement those of Sarah, Tarini who believes that Oman is an ideal place for artists, asserted, "A chance meeting resulted in this presentation of artworks for International Women's Day. Yet another reason to call this show 'Magic'. Our works are different but sit well together, there is variety for the viewer. Sarah's art is expressive of her love for the architecture of this beautiful country. Her love for colour matches mine. We show different aspects of the same



The works that I have created for this exhibition are inspired by the Omani women, their presence and participation in the country's economic and social development

TARINI AGARWAL

subject - Love for Oman."

Having explored her talent widely in Oman, Tarini also notes that Omani artists are very willing to share their knowledge and expertise with resident artists.

Sarah, a Scottish artist, on the other hand,

believes there are so many magical elements in the simplest of things. "My work relates to the theme or title of 'magic' as it highlights magical details within this beautiful environment and country. This country to me has been 'magical', especially during this tough year as we have still been fortunate to have simple pleasures and freedom. It's continuation of historic traditions is 'magic' to me. The fact they are still practised today, the architecture and beauty in the older villages are magical. Bold expressions of colour and the meeting of us two artists, who inspire one another, is magical," she says.

About her exhibits, juxtaposed with those of Tarini's in this exhibition, Sarah says, "Our work complements one another's in local theme and colour palette. Two women of different ages, coming together from different countries and cultures, to inspire others and allow viewers to see how we want to interpret Oman. Tarini's work is more traditional while mine is slightly contemporary and illustrative

in style, allowing the gallery visitors to be exposed to many different styles."

About Oman as a perfect country for artists, Sarah asserted, "Oman has provided me with a slower pace of life, time to breathe, time to think, time to reflect. It allows me as an artist to create art at a pace that works for me. It has also allowed me to introduce my own style to a country that isn't exposed to a lot of contemporary artworks. I hope to inspire the younger generation of artists here. I'm bringing the magic into simplicity and raw traditions. I'm taking classic scenes, and my art introduces a magical element with colours and textures."

Along with teaching and tutoring, Sarah works closely with her students and holds regular workshops on her techniques and styles. She hopes to create a little more freedom in artistic expression and disciplines, and make it safe to produce brand new works that are very different from the norm, she disclosed.

The duo exhibition is on till March 19.

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Photo by Syed Fasiuddin

Living with Art

COLOURS OF LIFE

Hubert Vaz

Kanak Mitra, an art teacher who has been working with Indian School Wadi Kabir since October 1999, is a man of many parts. He is not just an artist but also a musician and former classical dancer, and has participated in numerous solo and joint exhibitions in India and Oman over the past three decades.

A Bachelor of Fine Arts (Painting) from Visva Bharati, Santiniketan West Bengal (India), World University, founded by the legendary Indian artist and poet Rabindranath Tagore, Mitra had been invited by the Sultan Qaboos University Art Education Department to participate in an on campus 'Artist-in-Residence' teaching programme for SQU students in 2018.

Earlier, he had been awarded an honorary prize in the 25th Annual Exhibition of Fine Arts organised by Omani Society for Fine Arts, held in the National Museum to coincide with the 47th National Day celebrations of Oman. He was also recipient of an honorary prize in the 24th Annual Fine Art Exhibition by the Diwan of Royal Court.

"Art is my eternal and endless love. I love to make paintings with my heart and soul. My soul is infinitely happy and peaceful when I am in the process of painting or when I get inspired for a new creation," says Mitra adding that at the beginning, his paintings were very much influenced by the Bengal School of Art as well as contemporary Indian artists' work. Later, he felt the urge to express himself differently, in a more free way. So, he switched from oil to acrylics and mixed media techniques.

Over the years, his paintings have become more

and more abstract and colourful. "It is no more the exact representation of an image, but the emotions and the feelings to which my paintings seem to lead the viewer. My artistic expression is spontaneous and creative, releasing my memories and personal feelings. I now express myself in semi abstract or fully abstract compositions," he asserts.

Mitra is aware that artists are currently work in a globally-influenced, culturally-diverse and technologically-advancing world. Therefore, he feels that his art should go out to everyone.

"It is wonderful to connect with people through my art. When people respond to a painting, I really feel good about it. For me, the task of making a painting is a process of self-discovery. Rhythm and harmony of colours is the main characteristic of my paintings," he says.

Mitra, who is a bachelor by choice, admits that his

life revolves around art which brings him fulfillment every single day. It enables him to savour and celebrate nature's glory all around him and express it in a riot of colours and patterns with intricate details in his own typical style. He cannot imagine a life that's devoid of art and considers it the breath of life itself.

Mitra believes that words cannot express or explore the depiction of any artist's work as it has varied interpretations for every one. Also, nature is so vibrant in its diverse forms that mere shapes and shades cannot really convey the depth and diversity of all creation which is still a mystery for man, he says.

"When I paint, it brings me peace, it brings me joy, it brings me contentment. I do not crave for anything more, nor do I believe in selling my art in different galleries. I am satisfied with the process of expressing myself through art, as that, I believe, is a journey with no end," Mitra asserts.



Colours of nature
Showing the changing hues during the process of growth of young plants, this painting is symbolic of the cycle of life in nature



Divine message
This painting signifies a 'divine message' that has come forth via a symbolic bird during troubled times



In search of happiness
This painting depicts the human quest for happiness in many different ways, yet it remains incomplete despite all effort



Love and separation
This painting symbolises the turmoil in relationships wherein togetherness and separation are part and parcel of life



Creation and continuity
This painting with intricate details represents the complexity of creation which cannot be confined to finite patterns

MUSCAT EMERGE CHAMPS

Oman Cricket's Premier Division (50-over-a-side) concludes with Al Turki NMC taking runner-up spot



A file photo of Muscat CT team at the Al Amerat ground. The team won the Oman Cricket Premier Division (50-over-a-side) title on Saturday after a gap of eight years

Ashok Purohit
Muscat

OMAN CRICKET PREMIER DIVISION

Eight years since they won the inaugural top-flight domestic title (50-over-a-side) played on the turf wicket at Al Amerat, Muscat CT regained glory on Saturday as they were crowned Oman Cricket Premier Division (50-over-a-side) champions.

On the concluding day of the league on Saturday, Muscat CT were not in action and sat back with a healthy net run-rate (NRR) to their credit and watched the runner-up being decided with Al Turki NMC claiming the honours with a facile win over Renaissance CT.

Muscat CT, one of the oldest

teams in the top division, failed to end their campaign on a high as they lost to IT Works on Friday but ended with the title, on the basis of a better NRR (+2.29). Al Turki's five-wicket victory, courtesy a brilliant unbeaten 146 by Khalid Kail, saw them take the second spot with a NRR of +1.41. IT Works with a NRR of +1.36 finished a close third. All the three teams had eight wins and two losses after completing their league engagements of ten matches in the six-team league.

Speaking to *Muscat Daily* on Saturday after winning the title, Muscat's long-serving manager Wilson Burboz said, "Absolutely delighted to have won the league after a long time. I am happy the way the team played throughout



Al Turki NMC players celebrate after finishing second in the Premier Division (50-over-a-side) on Saturday

the season despite the challenges we faced for arranging training schedules due to the coronavirus restrictions.

"We have had a good mix of players with some talented youngsters drafted to our squad in the past few seasons. And

shepherding them were senior players and national team stars like skipper Jatinder Singh, Sandeep Goud, Naseem Khushi

and Syed Amir Kaleem. It was a winning combination."

Burboz said that the team's focus over the years have been on 'sportsmanship and discipline' and it was nice to watch the youngsters deliver the goods'.

Burboz expressed his deep appreciation to his coaches, Hemal Mehta and Nilesh Parmar, team management and the employers, Khimji Ramdas, for their encouragement and trust in the team.

The team's mentor, Madhu Jesrani, who is also Oman Cricket secretary, expressed happiness at the team's success after eight years. In his remarks, Jesrani said, "We are very happy for the title, which we have won after eight years. It is a perfect tribute to our team's patron late Kanakbhai Khimji [former Oman Cricket chairman], who passed away recently."

"It is a present from the boys to the team owners, Khimji Ramdas Group."

On the pitch on Saturday, it was Al Turki's Kail who shone with bat as he hammered an unbeaten 146 to outplay Renaissance. This was the third cen-

tury by Kail, who had earlier struck 157, the highest score in the top-flight league this season. Following the conclusion of the league, Kail emerged as the highest scorer with 526 (average 75.1) from nine matches as he missed one game due to injury.

In bowling, four bowlers-Shakeel Ahmed, Muhammed Nadeem, Khawar Ali (all three from IT Works) and Sandeep Goud (Muscat) - shared the honours of maximum wickets as all four took 20 wickets each.

Earlier on Friday, Zeeshan Maqsood's century and Shakeel Ahmad's five for 25 guided IT Works to a 30-run win over Muscat CT.

BRIEF SCORES:

Saturday: Renaissance CT 238-8 in 50 overs (Shubopal 71, Rafi Ullah 52; Jay Odedara 3-39, Hemalkumar Tandel 2-35) lost to Al Turki 235-5 in 38.4 overs (Kail 142 n.o. Ajay Lalcheta 29; Rafi Ullah 2-34).

Friday: IT Works 246 in 49.5 overs (Zeeshan Maqsood 116, Khawar Ali 29, Akmal Shahzad 29; Sandeep Goud 4-37, Ayaan Khan 2-37, Ganesh Chandrashekar 2-41) beat Muscat CT 216 all out in 44.4 overs (Ayaan Khan 71, Wasim Ali 44; Shakeel 5-25, Maqsood 2-14).

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Khalid Kail of Al Turki



One player tests positive in UAE camp

Ashok Purohit
Muscat

OMAN FOOTBALL TEAM'S TRAINING CAMP IN UAE

Oman and Dhofar Club striker Omar al Malki went into mandatory isolation on Saturday after he tested positive for COVID-19 in Dubai, UAE, following the RT-PCR test results of the national football team that were revealed on Saturday.

The Red Warriors, under coach Branko Ivankovic, had left for Dubai for a 14-day camp on Thursday.

Oman Football Association (OFA) confirmed that only one player had tested positive in Dubai while the rest of the team and the support staff had all tested negative.

Speaking to *Muscat Daily* from Dubai on Saturday, a top team official told *Muscat Daily*, "Omar al Malki is the only player who tested positive. The rest of the team and the support staff have been given all clear and we already had couple of training sessions under coach Ivankovic."



Oman players train during a preparatory camp in Dubai, UAE, on Saturday. Photo right: Oman's coach Branko Ivankovic of Croatia at the training



Earlier, ahead of the team's departure on Thursday, Dhofar Club's striker Khalid al Hajri, the hero of their recent tenth HM's Cup title, and Dhofar captain Ali Salim al Nahar, failed the COVID-19 RT-PCR test and had to abandon their trip.

The national team is currently

preparing for the joint 2022 FIFA World Cup and 2023 Asian Cup qualifiers.

Oman is currently second in Group E with Asian champions and World Cup hosts Qatar leading the table. Also in the group are India, Afghanistan and Bangladesh.

Oman is due to play their remaining qualifiers against Qatar, Afghanistan and Bangladesh in Doha, Qatar, in June after the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) confirmed on Friday that the Group E qualifiers will be played at the centralised venue in Qatar.

As part of the build-up for the June qualifiers, Oman will play two friendlies in Dubai during the ongoing camp. They take on Jordan on March 20 and then play fellow Group E contestant India on March 25 before returning home.

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Morgan hails bowling effort in England win

INDIA VS ENGLAND
FIRST T20I

Ahmedabad, India - Skipper Eoin Morgan praised his bowlers for setting up England's comprehensive victory in their T20I series opener by restricting India to a total that proved impossible to defend on Friday night.

The pace trio of Jofra Archer, Mark Wood and Chris Jordan made life difficult for India's batsmen, who managed just 124 for seven from their 20 overs - having been 22 for three after the powerplay - despite a fighting 67 off 48 balls from Shreyas Iyer.

Archer claimed three for 23 from his four overs, his best T20I figures.

Before the series, Chris Silverwood, England's coach, had played down concerns about the quality of training facilities in Ahmedabad, saying they were 'the same for both sides'.

But speaking after England's eight-wicket victory with 27 balls to spare, Morgan raised questions over the standard of the nets.

"The wicket was as expected. [It] was better than the net facilities that we've had here, so that was a huge positive for us," Morgan said in the post-match presentation.

"But the plans were very basic: hit a good length, straight, we didn't have to go to plan B and C very often, which is always a good sign when the bowling unit does that.

"One of Jof's strengths is that he can bowl really fast, amongst others, but Mark Wood's super strength is that he can bowl fast. It's hard to do the whole time but when he bowls like he did tonight it's very good entertainment but also it's great to have him in your side.

"Our bowling unit, similar to



England players celebrate a wicket during the first T20I match against hosts India in Ahmedabad on Friday

our batting unit, there's a lot of competition for places.

"There's guys on the sideline today that could easily have got a call in that XI - Reece Topley, Tom Curran - today, so we're trying to cover all departments, particularly when we're put under pressure or under the pump.

"Today the guys were so good that they almost didn't allow that to happen. Throughout the series there will be continuous challenges and we will be up against it a lot of the time, so it's important for those moments to produce your best."

Jason Roy and Jos Buttler set off England's pursuit well with a 72-run partnership.

Roy top-scored for the visitors, one shy of his half-century, having come into the match without reaching 25 in his previous ten international innings going back to February 2020 and amid talk of Alex

Hales possibly returning to the England fold, at least in a training capacity to begin with, after a strong BBL season.

Clarity of plans needed: Kohli

Meanwhile, Indian skipper Virat Kohli said that India's batsmen 'weren't aware enough of what we had to do on that kind of pitch'. India's batsmen came a cropper against England's fast bowlers who regularly breached the 140kmh mark - and Wood even crossed 150kmh a few times.

Kohli said they would have to come up with 'clarity of plans' for the next game, which will be held at the same ground on Sunday.

"We just weren't aware enough of what we had to do on that kind of pitch, I think lack of execution of the shots that we tried to play out there in the middle is something we have to address as batsmen that it was-

n't an ideal day on the park," he told *Star Sports* at the post-match presentation.

"You have to accept your faults, come back in the next game with a bit more intent, clarity of plans, what are the areas you want to hit.

"It was a strange kind of a start for us. The wicket didn't allow you to hit the kind of shots you wanted to. Shreyas' innings was an example of how you could use the depth of the crease, ride the bounce because there was variable bounce at times, and hit the areas square of the wicket which others failed to do. It was just a below-par batting performance from us today and England made us pay for it."

Shikhar Dhawan was bowled while hitting across the line against Wood's express pace for four off 12, KL Rahul chopped on, while facing Jofra Archer, for one, and Kohli slapped Adil Rashid straight to mid-off for a second

duck in a row in international cricket.

SCOREBOARD		
INDIA		
S Dhawan b Wood	4 (2)	
KL Rahul b Archer	1 (4)	
V Kohli c Jordan b Rashid	0 (5)	
R Pant c Bairstow b Stokes	21 (22)	
S Iyer c Malan b Jordan	67 (48)	
H Pandya c Jordan b Archer	19 (21)	
S Thakur c Malan b Archer	0 (1)	
W Sundar not out	3 (3)	
A Patel not out	7 (3)	
Extras: (w 2)	2	
TOTAL: 124 for seven in 20 overs		
Fall of wickets: 1-2, 2-3, 3-20, 4-48, 5-102, 6-102, 7-117		
Bowling: A Rashid 3-0-14-1, J Archer 4-1-23-3, M Wood 4-0-20-1, C Jordan 4-0-27-1, B Stokes 3-0-25-1, S Curran 2-0-15-0		
ENGLAND		
J Roy lbw b Sundar	49 (22)	
J Buttler lbw b Chahal	28 (24)	
D Malan not out	24 (20)	
J Bairstow not out	26 (17)	
Extras: (w 3)	3	
TOTAL: 130 for two in 15.3 overs		
Fall of wickets: 1-72, 2-89		
Bowling: A Patel 3-0-24-0, B Kumar 2-0-15-0, Y Chahal 4-0-44-1, S Thakur 2-0-16-0, H Pandya 2-0-13-0, W Sundar 2-3-0-18-1		

Lewis, Hope help WI clinch series



Evin Lewis of West Indies celebrate on reaching his century on Friday

WEST INDIES VS SRI LANKA
SECOND ODI

North Sound, Antigua and Barbuda - West Indies turned a leisurely canter into a desperate scramble to achieve a series-clinching five-wicket victory over Sri Lanka with two balls to spare in the second One-Day International (ODI) of their three-match series at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium in Antigua on Friday.

A fourth ODI hundred by Evin Lewis and an elegant supporting 84 by opening partner Shai Hope seemed to have set the home side up for an effortless stroll to the target of 273 as the pair put on 192 for the first wicket.

However, Lewis' dismissal for 103 in the 38th over triggered a surprising level of indecisiveness with the Sri Lankans coming to life in the final stage of the match as seamers Nuwan Pradeep and Thisara Perera claimed two wickets each.

But when he most needed to be on target, Pradeep's final two overs were plastered for 28 runs with Nicholas Pooran's unbeaten 35, which included two boundaries in the last over the match, taking the West Indies to an unbeatable 2-0 lead ahead of the final match at the same venue on Sunday.

Lewis' hundred, which came off 121 balls and was embellished by eight fours and four sixes, earned him the man of the match award.

Earlier, Danushka Gunathilaka just missed out on a century as Sri Lanka posted a competitive 273 for eight after being put

in to bat. Two days after his controversial dismissal - he was ruled to have obstructed the field in a run out attempt by Pollard - the left-hander played fluently for 96 in helping his team recover from an indifferent start.

Fast bowler Alzarri Joseph's early double-strike and Oshada Fernando's demise with the total on 50 was counteracted by a efficient 100-run stand for the fourth wicket between Gunathilaka and Dinesh Chandimal.

Four runs short of his third century in this format of the game though, the left-hander fell to Jason Mohammed.

AFP

SCOREBOARD

SRI LANKA	
D Gunathilaka b Mohammed	96
D Karunaratne b Joseph	1
P Nissanka b Joseph	10
O Fernando c Holder b Hosein	2
D Chandimal c Allen b Mohammed	71
A Bandara c Shepherd b Mohammed	18
T Perera run out	19
W Hasaranga c Joseph b Holder	47
L Sandakan not out	2
D Chameera not out	1
Extras: (lb 1, w 5)	6
TOTAL: 273 for eight in 50 overs	
Fall of wickets: 1-7, 2-32, 3-50, 4-150, 5-186, 6-204, 7-268, 8-271	
Bowling: A Joseph 10-1-42-2, J Holder 9-0-66-1, A Hosein 4-0-20-1, R Shepherd 3-0-37-0, F Allen 10-0-43-0, K Pollard 4-0-17-0, J Mohammed 10-0-47-3	
WEST INDIES	
E Lewis st Chandimal b Sandakan	103
S Hope c Pradeep b Perera	84
D Bravo c Bandara b Perera	10
N Pooran not out	35
K Pollard lbw Pradeep	15
F Allen c Bandara b Pradeep	15
J Holder not out	2
Extras: (b 1, lb 5, w 3, nb 1)	10
TOTAL: 274 for five in 49.4 overs	
Fall of wickets: 1-192, 2-194, 3-212, 4-233, 5-249	
Bowling: N Pradeep 9.4-0-66-2, D Chameera 10-0-56-0, T Perera 7-0-45-2, D Gunathilaka 3-0-17-0, W Hasaranga 10-0-48-0, L Sandakan 10-1-36-1	

Sharjeel returns to Pakistan T20I side for tour of SA, Zimbabwe

Lahore, Pakistan - Sharjeel Khan's Pakistan Super League (PSL) form has been rewarded with a recall to the national side for the first time in over four years, as he was included in Pakistan's T20I squad for the tours of South Africa and Zimbabwe next month. Pakistan play three ODIs and four T20Is against South Africa before moving to Zimbabwe, where they are scheduled to play two Test matches and three T20Is.

Test squad: Babar Azam (capt), Imran Butt, Abid Ali, Abdullah Shafique, Azhar Ali, Fawad Alam, Saud Shakeel, Agha Salman, Faheem Ashraf, Mohammad Nawaz, Mohammad Rizwan (wk), Sarfaraz Ahmed, Shaheen Shah Afridi, Haris Rauf, Tabish Khan, Hasan Ali, Shahnawaz Dhani, Nauman Ali, Zahid Mahmood, Sajid Khan.

ODI squad: Azam (c), Imam-ul-Haq, Fakhar Zaman, Shafique, Haider Ali, Danish Aziz, Saud Shakeel, Ashraf, Mohammad Wasim Jr, Shadab Khan, Nawaz, Rizwan (wk), Sarfaraz (wk), Shaheen Afridi, Rauf, Mohammad Hasnain, Usman Qadir, Hasan.

T20I squad: Azam (c), Shadab Khan, Sharjeel Khan, Mohammad Hafeez, Haider Ali, Danish Aziz, Asif Ali, Nawaz, Ashraf, Rizwan (wk), Sarfaraz (wk), Shaheen Afridi, Wasim Jr, Rauf, Hasnain, Qadir, Hasan, Arshad Iqbal.

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NEW SEASON, NEW CHALLENGE

• Al Faisal al Zubair to debut in endurance championship series • Talented Omani racer to team up with Spanish driver Andy Soucek for Lechner Racing in the highly-competitive 2021 International GT Open



The Porsche GT3-R car that Al Faisal al Zubair will drive along with Andy Soucek in the 2021 International GT Open Championship

GT3-R as they hope to provide a tough competition to their rivals at the series which features some of the world's best endurance racers and teams.

The International GT Open will hold its 16th season since starting in 2006 and the seven-leg series will begin the season with a race at the Paul Ricard circuit in France on May 16. The series concludes in Barcelona on October 24.

Al Faisal's return to a full-fledged endurance series is a welcome development since motorsports across the globe were affected due to the coronavirus pandemic from early March in 2020. He now joins another Omani star, Ahmad al Harthy, in endurance racing and will be competing in the top Pro class at the GT Open.

With Ahmad having established himself as an endurance racing veteran, Al Faisal's entry will put Oman drivers in focus at the top stage and boost the sultanate's profile in international motorsports.

Al Faisal's last participation was at the Silverstone Formula One circuit last October, when participating for the first time in the British GT Championship, he, along with Croatia's teammate Martin Kodric, claimed a Silver Cup class podium finish and an overall fourth spot.

Revealing details of his participation in the 2021 International GT Open Series, the two-time former Porsche GT3 Cup Challenge Middle East champion said, "I am excited to go for a new endurance series for the first time. It will be a new challenge and I am looking forward to it along with my teammate Andy [Soucek]."

In the past, Al Faisal has competed in endurance races but this is the first time that the Muscat-based driver will be participating in a complete endurance championship series. His previous participation were in three endurance races - Abu Dhabi 12Hrs, Dubai 24Hrs and the British GT, where he took a podium in his class.

Al Faisal said, "It is going to be a new experience and with a large grid and some of the best endurance racers in the field with big professional teams, I am eager to provide a healthy

competition on my debut season. We will compete but it will be difficult to challenge for the overall championship title. We are hopeful of having good races and then taking each race as it comes."

Al Faisal will be racing in No77 car with all new black and red livery for the Porsche GT3-R car. The new design further enhances the beautiful lines of the Lechner Racing as the pair will battle out in the 70-minute races across Europe.

A tribute to Walter Lechner

Al Faisal said the decision to

International GT Open scheduled from March 18-20 at the Circuit de Barcelona-Catalunya in Barcelona, Spain, has been postponed to April 19-20, at the same venue.

The measure was taken in the light of travel restrictions taken, or recently reinforced, by different countries, which make travel virtually impossible for drivers, teams and personnel from a number of countries targeted by specific restrictions.

Prior to the rescheduling of the Winter Test, GT Sport had announced that the cancellation of 2021 season-opening round, scheduled at Algarve in Portugal



A file photo of Late Walter Lechner (left) and Al Faisal al Zubair

He [Walter Lechner] played a big role in building my motorsports career and it would be a nice way to pay my tribute by racing for his team in the new championship

AL FAISAL AL ZUBAIR

team up with his previous team, Lechner Racing, was a way to pay his tribute to his mentor and Lechner Racing founder, Late Walter Lechner, who passed away on December 9, 2020.

"He had played a big role in building my motorsports career and it would be a nice way to pay my tribute by racing for his team in the new championship. That's the best way he would have liked me to continue with the sport he loved the most," said Al Faisal, who is fully backed by Oman-based Al Manar Financial Investments.

Testing and opener postponed

Al Faisal was due to fly to Barcelona in the coming week but the organisers, GT Sport, on Friday said that the 'Winter Test' [testing sessions] for the

on April 23-25 and replaced by a round at Imola in Italy on July 23-25.

The event at Imola will be the fourth in the 2021 season, which will now kick-off at Circuit Paul Ricard on May 14-16.

@ashokmuscat

2021 INTERNATIONAL GT OPEN CALENDAR:

May 16: Paul Ricard, France
June 20: Spa-Francorchamps, Belgium
July 11: Hungaroring, Hungary
July 25: Imola, Italy
September 12: Red Bull Ring, Austria
September 26: Monza, Italy
October 24: Barcelona, Spain



A file photo of Al Faisal al Zubair during a race

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Ashok Purohit
Muscat

He loves the thrill of being on motor racing tracks for hours. He has brought laurels for the sultanate in recent years. He has driven in some of the biggest races across the globe in his young career.

At 22, here is a talented driver who loves to challenge himself, and it is this very approach and attitude that makes Oman's Al Faisal al Zubair stand out from the rest.

A burning desire to excel behind the wheel has already got him back to back titles at the Porsche GT3 Cup Challenge

Middle East Series in 2018 and 2019.

As a champion of the GT3 Cup Challenge, Al Faisal also made it to the world-class Porsche Mobil 1 Supercup and the experience of racing against the best has now made him go for new goals in his sporting career as he announced his decision on Friday to make a full-fledged debut in motorsports endurance championship. Al Faisal will team up with experienced Spanish driver Andy Soucek for Lechner Racing in the highly-competitive 2021 International GT Open Championship Series.

The pair will drive a Porsche



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