

Congratulations
on 50 years of
progress,
prosperity and
peace



Oman LNG
is honoured to congratulate

**HIS MAJESTY
SULTAN HAITHAM BIN TARIK**

and
the people of Oman
on the occasion of the
50th National Day of the Renaissance



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Oman LNG

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Empowered future
is our promise





Our warmest felicitations to
His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik
and the people of Oman on the joyous occasion
of the 50th National Day of the Renaissance

A LEGACY RENEWED AND ENERGISED

Our nation commemorates 50 years of achievements in its modern renaissance initiated by late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said (may Allah have mercy upon him), even as we accelerate towards a promising future under the guidance of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik (May Allah protect and preserve him).

At Khimji Ramdas, we are proud of our 150-year Omani legacy, and will continue to contribute to realising His Majesty's Vision 2040 by investing in the economy, supporting Omani youth, promoting the inclusion of women in the workforce, and creating equal opportunities for all citizens.

Eshraqa, the social development arm of Khimji Ramdas, epitomises our deep commitment to the nation and to the core values of trust, care, commitment, and learning. Eshraqa projects aim to touch and transform lives; enhance education; inspire professionals; awaken the entrepreneurial spirit; and enable communities in every corner of our great land to thrive.



EDUCATION



HEALTH



COMMUNITY
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"Our Best Wishes for
our Great Nation on this
Golden Occasion!"
Eshraqa al Ajeeba



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On the occasion of the 50th National Day of the Renaissance,
we extend our heartiest congratulations to
His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik
and the people of Oman.

We renew our pledge of allegiance and loyalty and pray to Allah
the Almighty to protect and grant His Majesty good health and
happiness, and to perpetuate blessings of success and progress
upon the people of Oman.



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**We salute the visionary leadership of
His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik
and extend our greetings to
His Majesty and the people of Oman
on the occasion of the
50th National Day.**



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The Chairman, Board of Directors and all the staff of Alizz Islamic Bank extend their warmest felicitations and best wishes to **His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik** and the people of Oman on the joyous occasion of our 50th National Day of the Renaissance

#هيثم_العز

اسياد
ASYAD

On the occasion of the **50th glorious National Day**, ASYAD Group and all its employees have the honor to extend their sincere congratulations to

His Majesty
Sultan Haitham bin Tarik,

praying to Allah the Almighty to protect him, grant him good health, wellbeing and a long life.

May Allah grant the Omani people continuous progress, welfare, security and growth under his Majesty's wise leadership.

REINFORCED TRADITIONS LEGACY CONTINUED



Heartiest felicitations to
His Majesty Sultan Haitham
Bin Tarik and the people of
Oman on the occasion of
the 50th National Day



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“ We stand today with a firm invincible will on the threshold of a vital stage of development and nation building. It is a stage which you all have participated in drawing out its prospects in Oman 2040 Future Vision, and contributed to devising its economic, social and cultural goals, in a manner that embodies a clear-cut vision, and great expectations towards a more prosperous future. ”

His Majesty
Sultan Haitham bin Tarik

Heartiest felicitations to **His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik** and the people of Oman on the glorious 50th National Day of Renaissance. As we celebrate this momentous day, Sohar Aluminium reaffirms its sincere vows of loyalty to His Majesty and asserts its continuous endeavours towards the prosperity of Oman.



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On the occasion of the Sultanate's 50th National Day of the Renaissance, we wish **His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik** and the people of Oman continued progress, peace and prosperity. Guided by a forward-thinking vision may we continue working together as one, building a better tomorrow for Oman.





With **you**
on the path of
progress

On this glorious occasion of the
50th National Day of the Renaissance,
we would like to felicitate and
congratulate

**His Majesty Sultan
Haitham bin Tarik**
and the people of Oman.



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A befitting legacy. An ever promising future.

Congratulations and warm wishes to
His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik
and the people of Oman on the occasion of the
50th National Day of the Renaissance.

Lulu Group pays tribute to this vibrant and progressive nation made possible
by a proud past and carried forward by a worthy and inspiring leader.

On the momentous occasion of the 50th National Day of the Renaissance, we
also salute the spirit of the people of Oman who have stood shoulder to
shoulder in living the dreams of its leaders. Lulu Group celebrates the same
indomitable spirit and character in a pursuit towards excellence and reaffirm
our pledge to keep exploring new heights, every day.



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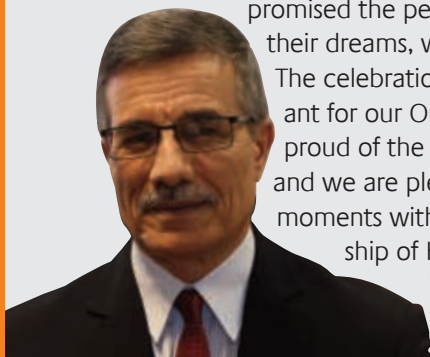
On the 50th
National Day,
residents hailing from
50 countries greet Oman
and reveal what living
in the sultanate
means to them



Hadj Bourdoucen
ALGERIA

Congratulations on the 50th National Day!
It is a very natural feeling for any citizen to be proud of his leaders and country's achievements. This results in a wonderful synergy between the wise leadership and the people. The Late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said, may Allah rest his soul, promised the people of Oman in 1970 to realise their dreams, which he fulfilled.

The celebration of the National Day is important for our Omani brothers and sisters to be proud of the achievements. We feel at home, and we are pleased to share these wonderful moments with them. Under the wise leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, more prosperity will be seen soon insha Allah.



Erich Rankl
AUSTRIA

On Oman's 50th National Day, it's a great honour to congratulate all Omani people and their wonderful country. I wish everyone peace and prosperity and a blessed future.

In Austria we say 'Servus', which is 'Marhaba' in Arabic or 'warm welcome'. My family felt this warm welcome, when we first arrived in Oman and ever since we have been enjoying living in this peaceful and socially well-balanced country among amazingly friendly Omanis. We admire Oman's incredible nature with endless beaches, the desert, stunning wadis between mountains and its rich heritage sites with forts, amazing old villages and traditional markets.



Ushering in 2nd Renaissance

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik issued 123 Royal Decrees as well as several Royal Orders this year to improve governance and lay down the foundations for financial sustainability in the sultanate



Muscat - The year 2020 will go down in history as one of the most remarkable periods for Oman as the government laid the groundwork for sweeping reforms for far-reaching economic and social benefits.

With an eye on improving the efficiency of the government's performance and laying down the foundations for financial sustainability in the sultanate, His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik issued 123 Royal Decrees this year. This in itself is a record compared to any time in the past when the average number of Royal Decrees was 50 annually.

Apart from the Royal Decrees, His Majesty the Sultan's Royal Directives and Orders issued this year will further strengthen rules and regulations, and several new initiatives announced in this period will help in the development of the country and welfare of its people.

On August 18 alone, His Majesty the Sultan issued 28 Royal Decrees which included re-constituting the Council of Ministers, establishing and merging a few ministries, while amending the names of some others.

The decrees merged ten ministries into five and five councils were abolished as part of the efforts to restructure the state's administrative apparatus, and to move towards standards set by

Oman Vision 2040.

'Mergers are meant to avoid duplication of specialisations and to organise sectors with clear objectives as well as fix responsibilities for each sector in harmony with the standards set by Oman Vision 2040,' the Government Communications Centre (GCC) said in a statement.

The GCC stated that the desired future results of the restructuring project are to raise the level of efficiency of the government's performance.

'The aim is also to create a more stimulating environment for doing business and to attract investment to achieve development that is more focused on the governorate level. This is in addition to enhancing Oman's indicators in government performance and e-governance and creating a stimulating work environment for employees.'

Following the restructuring of the government apparatus, Eng Mohammed al Busaidi, chairman of the board of directors of Omran, said there were high hopes of Oman to prosper further. "With great motivation, a new group of Omanis is taking their position in the government to continue the process of building the nation further. They have the confidence of His Majesty the Sultan and the high hopes of the people of Oman," he said.

Some described August 18 as a historic day created by His Majesty the Sultan's new vision.

"I believe the new phase of Oman will prosper and meet the aspirations of His Majesty the Sultan," Khalfan al Amri, a media personality, said.

The flurry of new legislations followed His Majesty the Sultan's Royal Speech on February 23, 2020, on the need to restructure and streamline the government and reformat the work of government-owned companies "with a view to upgrading their performance and efficiency, and enabling

ministers and four new female undersecretaries were also appointed by His Majesty the Sultan.

A slew of new laws were also issued establishing new government entities, including Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit, Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones, Environment Authority and the Authority of Small and Medium Enterprises.

Fiscal programme

In line with the pledge he made earlier declaring his keenness to

Additionally, the plan aims to increase government income from non-oil sectors, bolster the state's financial reserves and improve revenues from government assets to enhance their capacity to tackle any financial challenges and channelise these revenues in the right course for economic growth and prosperity.

Chief among the initiatives planned include taxing those in higher income brackets, providing government support on public services (water and electricity) to a targeted section of society instead of everyone, and visa ex-

procedures. The Royal Directive also included the implementation of a number of developmental projects to come up in different governorates to the tune of RO371mn.

Formation of OIA

In another remarkable move, a Royal Decree ordered the formation of a new authority named the Oman Investment Authority (OIA) in June this year. It was established to merge the two existing investment funds of the sultanate – the State General Reserve Fund (SGRF) and the Oman Investment Fund (OIF).

All the holdings, assets and investments of SGRF, OIF and the Directorate General of Investments (DGI) in the Ministry of Finance have been transferred to OIA. In addition, all ownership of government companies and investments are transferred to OIA by the Ministry of Finance, except for Oman Petroleum Development Company, government contributions to international institutions and companies for which an order is issued by His Majesty the Sultan.

The newly formed authority's aim is to make profitable investments and to encourage more inward investment into Oman, creating more jobs for Omanis and helping diversify the economy away from oil.

The authority has already started work on its ambitious aim with the launch of a special programme called 'Rawabet'. The programme will act as a direct link between the authority and its companies to enhance their governance, besides linking all their policies and systems with the policies of OIA.

The programme will also help OIA's affiliated companies align their policies with Oman Vision 2040. Rawabet aims to shed light on the role that the private sector plays in developing the Omani economy and promoting successful partnership in local value-added investments, in addition to promoting the securities markets, developing the national workforce, and working on the continuous development of different investment sectors in the sultanate.

In order to achieve the desired goals of the programme, OIA will involve all relevant sectors, including investment, asset management and allocation, risk and compliance, human resources, procurement and contract operations, finance, information technology, corporate communications, legal affairs and auditing. This will ensure alignment of government companies with the national goals to positively contribute in achieving the Oman Vision 2040.

Apart from the Royal Decrees, His Majesty the Sultan's Royal Directives and Orders issued this year will further strengthen rules and regulations, and several new initiatives announced in this period will help in the development of the country and welfare of its people



Mubaraka Tyebbhoy
AUSTRALIA

Hearty congratulations to Oman and all its people on the 50th National Day for the exceptional country that it is today! While living in Australia, Oman is a country that always fascinated me – the land of frankincense and myrrh! Oman has been the perfect place to explore my interests. The juxtaposition of the traditional architecture with the mountains and ocean as a backdrop – I was inspired the moment I landed. Every Australian that has been to Oman has always had a soft spot for this beautiful country and its beautiful people. The richness of culture as a base for relationship-building, coupled with natural serenity, what's not to love?



Natavan Malikova
AZERBAIJAN

Happy 50th National Day Oman! Salam! I have been in the sultanate for almost two years now and it has felt like home from the beginning because of the kind hospitality I've received from everyone. I feel so welcome and safe everywhere I go and I'll never forget my first Ramadan when a taxi driver and I shared iftar together - he wouldn't let me say 'no' to his mother's delicious sambosas. It reminded me of Azerbaijan where we welcome tourists and guests with open arms, happily showing them around and inviting them into our homes. I can't count the number of times my father has paid for the dinner of tourists dining next to us in restaurants! It has been an incredible experience to live and work in Oman.



Jannat Shafaei
BAHRAIN

Congratulations on the National Day! Hoping for happiness every day and a bright future. Being a Bahraini married to an Omani, Oman is now home for me. I have been here for 17 beautiful years. It has been amazing watching the country grow and change over the years that I have been here, and I am looking forward to seeing so much more coming. In my opinion, it is the best environment to raise a family because it is safe and calm. I have been lucky to be able to travel to many countries, and the longer I spend out of Oman, the more I miss it and look forward to coming back.



Women have shown collective power to make positive changes in Oman

Shaddad al Musalmey
Muscat

Statistics indicate the constructive role played by Omani women, reflecting in their achievements and success stories over the past 50 years. Women in Oman enjoy equal status with men and many of them hold key positions across sectors, thanks to the constant attention being paid by the government.

The new Council of Ministers includes Dr Rahma bint Ibrahim bin Said al Mahrouqiyah - Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation; Laila bint Ahmed bin Awadh al Najjar - Minister of Social Development; and Dr Madiha bint Ahmed bin Nasser al Shibaniyah, who will continue as Minister of Education.

Dr Muna bint Salim bin Khalfan al Jardaniyah was appointed as Undersecretary for Vocational Training in the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, and Maithaa bint Saif bin Majid al Mahrouqiyah as Undersecretary for Tourism in the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism.

The newly appointed undersecretaries include Asila bint Salim bin Sulaiman al Samamiyah as Undersecretary for Investment Promotion in the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion; Dr Fatima Mohammed al Ajmi as Undersecretary for Administration and Financial Planning in the Ministry of Health; and Halima bint Rashid bin Sulaiman al Zeraiyah, Chairperson (special grade) of Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority.

On the occasion of Omani Women's Day recently, the Honourable Lady, Spouse of His Majesty the Sultan, said, "Omani women, over the past 50 years of the Blessed Renaissance, have received ample attention, care and honour. They have got the education, training and employment opportunities to actively participate in the development process of Oman to keep the sultanate in line with other countries of the world. Complementing this approach, His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik is keen to establish the principle of partnership and social responsibility between women and men in Omani society."

The sultanate observed Omani Women's Day - the 11th edition - on October 17.

The day marks the prominent status accorded to women during the Blessed Renaissance and also celebrates the welfare programmes for them which ensured the advancement of their status and enthusiastic participation alongside men in nation building.



status granted to women by the Late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos.

"We must empower each other and those around us in building and shaping communities, moulding the minds of the leaders of tomorrow and contributing to the social and economic growth of the sultanate," said Shatha Abdul Majeed Issa al Zadjali, go-kart racer.

Wafa bint Ali al Amriyah, chairperson of Omani Women's Association - Seeb, said women could act as partners with men across sectors in roles that fit with their nature, abilities and skills.

"Women in Oman are keen to have legal and social awareness to protect their rights and ensure a balanced life. Women are expected to focus on religious aspects too to lead a sound life

Development without discrimination of women constitutes a basic pillar of progress. Women's role is undeniable in contributing to various social, economic and cultural aspects

WADHA AL ALAWIYAH

based on the principles of decent living. In this way, women can become a shield for the nation that secures the future of coming generations," she said.

Some women in Oman believe that nations move forward through the contribution of individuals.

"Development without discrimination of women constitutes a basic pillar of progress. Women's role is undeniable in contributing to various social, economic and cultural aspects. Their potential has been enhanced with a set of laws that grant them their deserved rights to enable them to shoulder their responsibility in sustainable development," said Wadha bint Salim al Alawiyah, director of Women's Affairs in the Ministry of Social Development.

Balqees al Hassani, president of Knowledge Oman, said, Omani women have proven their position in many different walks of life.

"They have shown collective power to make positive changes and have collaborated to achieve big strides in their personal and professional capacities. They have used their voice to advocate for other women too. That makes Omani women special," she said.

Prominent women in Oman say that every woman contributing to the country's success is a pioneer of a healthy work-life balance.

"Success in life is determined by what you do every single day; it can be something as simple as

a smile or a kind word with which you put your best foot forward. I feel that when you work hard and care about people, you tend to set an example for others. Women are determined to achieve success as we are hard workers by nature and this is

what stands out," said Hon Lujaina Mohsin Darwish, Member of State Council and joint deputy chairperson of Mohsin Haider Darwish.

Dr Suad Mohammed al Mudhaffar, life coach and business adviser, said, "We are at

the half-century mark of the Blessed Renaissance, and I have seen the growth and development of the second generation of Omani women who are energetic and have taken on the responsibility of working for an honourable Omani society. I

have witnessed firsthand the rapid development of Omani women; their continuous improvement is praiseworthy."

The recent appointments and Royal Decrees about women solidify His Majesty Sultan Haitham's vision to uphold the



Tanusree Dey
BANGLADESH

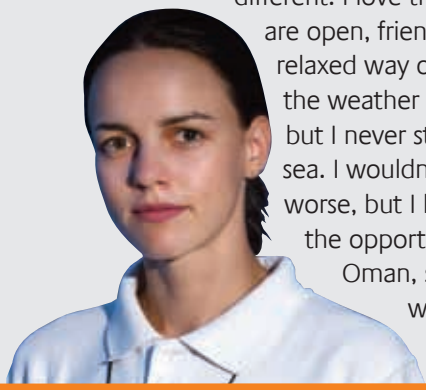
On behalf of the Bangladeshi community, I congratulate Oman on its 50th National Day! August 10, 1999, 1am - Our flight touched down and we were greeted by the orange city lights that sparkled like fireflies. Like many others, we came to this new land for a short period of time. Days turned to months and before we realised it, 21 years had passed. My family and I have spent our best times here, growing and flourishing in the hospitality and peace of Oman. I came here as a teacher but ended up learning more from all the people I met.

The Bangladeshi community is grateful to be a part of this extraordinary country, and I extend our heartfelt wishes on this special occasion.



Irina Samakar
BELARUS

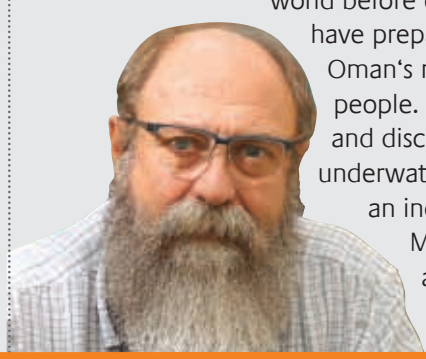
Happy National Day! I had lived all my life in Eastern Europe before I came to Oman, so I found myself in an absolutely new world. The weather and nature, the people and their culture, lifestyle and habits - everything was different. I love the people I work with. Omanis are open, friendly and hospitable. I like their relaxed way of life in general. Sometimes, the weather is too hot and it rains so rarely, but I never stop enjoying the sun and the sea. I wouldn't say this world is better or worse, but I like it very much! I appreciate the opportunity given to me to come to Oman, so I could see this country with my own eyes and enjoy every moment being here!



Prof Michel Claereboudt
BELGIUM

I have been indeed very fortunate to witness the metamorphosis of Oman since my arrival in 1997 as faculty in the College of Agricultural and Marine Sciences at Sultan Qaboos University. Although my wife (Canadian) and I (Belgian) had lived in many different countries around the world before our arrival, nothing could have prepared us for the wonder of Oman's nature and the grace of its people. Exploring all regions of Oman and discovering new species in its underwater world has been and still is an incredible adventure.

My family and I feel privileged and honoured to call Oman home.



Oman's Renaissance march presses ahead at full throttle

As the cool sun of November rises, shimmering on the horizon, it finds Omanis on a date with history — their hearts and minds full of enthusiasm. It is the blissful moment, which depicts the dawn of Oman's modern renaissance, still zooms forward, with full confidence and aptitude, under the wise leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq.

Since he assumed the reins of power in the country on January 11, 2020, His Majesty the Sultan has made every effort — armed with firm will, prudence and far-sightedness — to follow the tracks of the Late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said, the founder of Oman's modern renaissance. With this determination in mind, His Majesty Sultan Haitham focused on preserving what the Late Sultan has accomplished. He built upon his achievements, so as to elevate further the towering edifice of Oman and to promote standards of its people for a better life, albeit with the participation of its citizens, their cooperation and the collaboration of all efforts towards enriching the experience of development, progress and prosperity—all inspired to serve the country, safeguard its values and gains and enhance its security and stability.

In his historic speech on February 20, 2020, His Majesty Sultan Haitham laid down solid principles that outline the features of the forthcoming important stage in the country's comprehensive march of growth; his focus being the youth of the nation who represent its present force and future aspiration.

His Majesty the Sultan expressed his keenness to listen to youth, sense their needs and explore their interests, which, he reaffirmed, will be accorded due care.

His Majesty the Sultan also underscored the significance of the small and medium enterprises (SMEs) sector and the sector of entrepreneurship; particularly startups based on innovation, artificial intelligence and advanced technologies. He laid emphasis on training youth and enabling them to benefit from the opportunities available in this vital sector, so that they could build the core component of a smart economic system.

Guided by the judicious directives of His Majesty the Sultan, the sultanate has embarked on establishing tasks of Oman Vision 2040, which will begin to be implemented with effect from 2021. It is the vision which embodies the great expectations of Omani people for a brighter future.

The strategic approaches of



this vision have been defined in accordance with priority goals, on top of which comes a high-quality educational system, an effective schema of research and innovation to build a knowledge-based economy, the empowerment of nationals with expertise and dynamic skills that fare well at the local and international arenas, the achievement of sustainable healthcare and the employment of an administration that supports economic diversification.

The Royal Directives also underline the need to establish an attractive environment at the labour market, so that the private sector could take the lead in con-

structing a competitive national economy that fits well with the global economy. This is in addition to sustaining environment safety and building a comprehensive geographic development based on decentralisation and integration of roles of the government, the private sector and the community. All these priorities are part and parcel of a strategic approach to shape out a society that is fond of its identity and culture and faithful to its citizenship.

Oman Vision 2040

With effect from next year, the sultanate commences its 10th Five Year Development Plan (2021-2025), which will be the

first plan in Oman Vision 2040.

Despite adverse international conditions posed by challenges of low oil prices and coronavirus, the wise procedures and measures announced by His Majesty the Sultan are capable of helping Oman overcome the impasse and continue its triumphant march.

Many projects, past and present, come under the purview of Oman Vision 2040. These include projects completed in the second half of the current development plan (industrial, tourism, energy, food security and sea-ports projects), projects to be carried out in the next two years and programs to benefit from

fisheries and mining resources. This is in addition to measures on rationalising spending, optimising financial resources with a view to decreasing indebtedness, augmenting income to improve the economic position of the sultanate and diminishing dependence on oil.

The National Program for Enhancing Economic Diversification - Tanfeedh emerged as a national initiative within the context of the 9th Five Year Plan (2016-2020) and measures to maximise benefits from infrastructure build over the past five-year plans, with emphasis on basic sectors targeted within the programme of economic diversi-

fication, in accordance with the current plan.

Tanfeedh programme, of which 76.1 per cent was completed by 2019, comprises a number of stages. The results of each stage are being utilised to implement the subsequent stage, starting with sectors of manufacturing, tourism, logistics and finance, early funding, employment and the labour market, followed by the sectors of mining, fisheries, and interconnecting all these with the five basic sectors stated in the plan.

The sultanate takes pride in the development, prosperity, security and stability it has achieved, thanks and praise be to

the Almighty Allah. The state of law and institutions has come to its prime, based on principles of freedom, equality of opportunities, justice and dignity of individuals, whose rights and liberties are guaranteed by the law, including the freedom of expression.

Partnership between citizens and the government in shaping the present and future of their country is considered a basic pillar in the national action over the next stage of development on which the country pins its hopes, a fact clearly stated by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq.

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The management and staff of Curtis, Mallet-Prevost Colt & Mosle LLP - International Lawyers - and Mehdi Al Lawati Law Office, extend their warmest congratulations to HIS MAJESTY SULTAN HAITHAM BIN TARIK and the people of Oman on the occasions of the 50th National Day

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Haitham Bin Tarik

and the people of Oman on the occasion of the glorious 50th National Day of the Renaissance.

On this commemorable national occasion, we wish everyone health and prosperity renewing our commitments towards our people and the nation to continue moving forward as we work towards economic development poised for greatness and future 'wins'.

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Congratulations to
His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq
and the people of Oman
on the occasion of the
50th National Day
of the Renaissance.

Guided by His Majesty's
visionary leadership,
we remain committed to contribute
to the growth and prosperity of Oman
by collaborating to build
strong partnerships
that yield enduring results.



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We salute the visionary leadership of His
Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik
and extend our greetings to His Majesty and the
people of Oman on the occasion of the
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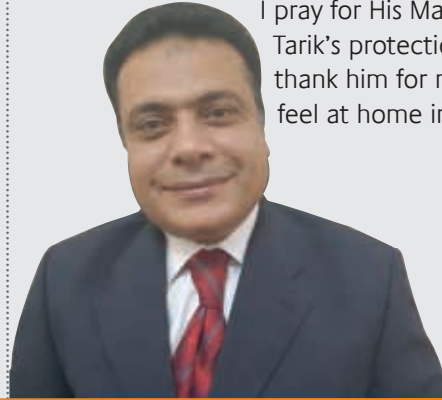
Claudia Reynaldo Prado
CUBA

I have been living in this beautiful country for over six years and it feels like my second home. I remember when I took a walk on Love Street (Qurm Beach) for the first time; it was such an incredible and surprising experience. I realised how much it looked like Havana city with the beautiful sea along the walking area. From that moment, I automatically felt the connection. Perhaps that is why I felt so at ease and comfortable to stay for so long. Another reason why I love Oman definitely has to be its people. Here, I have made incredible friends who became family and treat me as one of them.



Dr Eltantawi Gabr Moustafa
EGYPT

Oman symbolises love and safety to me. I am a doctor and have lived on this land of peace with my family for 14 years. Oman has become my second home where I have found a safe and secure environment to raise my family. I pray for His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik's protection and well-being, and thank him for making all of us expatriates feel at home in Oman.



Ave Peetri
ESTONIA

The warmth and kindness of Omani people still pleasantly surprises me. Estonians are a lot more reserved and might seem cold in the first encounter. Fortunately for me, Nortal – an Estonian IT company, had already operated in Oman a few years before I came. When I went to get my residence card in the ministry four years ago, I was greeted with 'Oh, great! Estonia!' and it was pointed out to me that the card I was getting was based on the ID card system in Estonia that Nortal had helped implement in Oman. The Estonian community is quite small here, and we are working with the initiatives that are important to Oman for the next 50 years – digitalisation and leadership development.



50 years of economic growth and development

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Over the past five decades, Oman has achieved an extraordinary economic performance thanks to the government's focus on careful economic planning, reforms and infrastructure development. The rapid economic growth over the years has changed the country and fully transformed it into a modern economy.

Oman's gross domestic product (GDP), which stood at just RO103.6mn in 1970 at the beginning of the blessed Renaissance, recorded remarkable and continuous growth over the years to hit RO30bn mark in 2018.

The discovery of oil and gas definitely served as an engine for Oman's rapid growth and development during the past five decades. But Oman had also recognised the need to diversify its economy and was the first

country among the GCC states to launch a long-term strategy – Vision 2020 – that focused on economic diversification to reduce its dependency on the oil sector.

The pace of Oman's economic development has been extremely rapid since the implementation of Vision 2020 just two decades ago. The Vision 2020 focused on diversifying the economic production base by encouraging investment in non-oil activities. Thanks to these efforts, the sultanate has grown significantly during this period, and non-hydrocarbon activities have supported this growth increasingly.

'Real GDP almost doubled from RO15bn in 1998 to RO29bn in 2019. The contribution of the non-hydrocarbon sector has more than tripled from RO5bn to RO19bn, in constant prices, over the same period. Non-oil activities accounted for nearly 63 per cent of Oman's real GDP in 2019



compared to 34 per cent in 1998,' the Ministry of Finance said in its recently released

Medium-Term Fiscal Plan (2020-2024) report.

The overall infrastructure de-

velopment has been a major enabler in boosting Oman's economic growth over the past

decades. The modern and efficient infrastructure, which has fully transformed the sultanate's economy, will continue to serve as an important foundation for the continuous economic growth and development in the coming years and decades.

Oman, which half a century ago had only a few kilometres of paved roads, is now home to a road network and national highways ranked among the best in the world. The sultanate's economy today benefits from world-class international and domestic airports, three major seaports and several special economic zones and free zones.

During the past five decades, Oman has witnessed the implementation of major economic projects, the most prominent of which were oil refineries in Muscat, Sohar and Duqm, and heavy and petrochemical projects in Sohar, Sur, Salalah and Duqm.

As per the recently released

official statistics, the contribution of the manufacturing sector in Oman's GDP amounted to RO3.071bn in 2019, which is equal to the 15 per cent of the non-oil GDP of the country.

Despite the sharp drop in oil prices in 2014, the sultanate continued the implementation of major economic projects and services. During this period the new Muscat International Airport and a number of other regional airports were completed. The development of Al Batinah Expressway, the first phase of the Bidbid-Sur road, and the Special Economic Zone at Duqm were also completed. In addition, a number of economic diversification projects such as the expansion of Sohar Refinery, Khazzan gas field project, and tourism projects such as the Oman Conference and Exhibition Centre, resorts, hotels, and other projects were implemented during this period.

Continued on page 26



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Jean-sébastien Madiou
FRANCE

After ten years in the Middle East, including two in Oman, the sultanate has been my best expatriation so far. It is a fabulous experience; I feel the sense of hospitality in daily life. I have rarely been able to appreciate it in other countries.

Windsurfing, kitesurfing, longboarding, hiking, diving, cycling and cliff jumping are some of the sports I play in my host country. Engaging in all these activities with freedom and security gives me a sense of peace. France is famous for its landscape diversity. Oman may be missing the snow, however in France we don't have your fjords of Musandam. I'll be grateful all my life to the Omanis for welcoming me to their land.



Dr Manuela Gutberlet
GERMANY

My sincere wishes for continuous prosperity and development in sustainable ways towards peace, women empowerment, stability and environmental conservation of the beautiful assets that Oman has. Oman is renowned as a model of stability and peace, spreading the seeds of tolerance to other nations and creating bonds between peoples and nations. I salute the Late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said and his legacy of establishing a young nation which will be continued by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik. I am grateful to be part of a striving, young nation. I have been enjoying living, working and researching in Oman during the past 16 years.



Eva Kountouraki
GREECE

The sultanate was a true revelation to me. I have been travelling around the globe throughout my professional career, and I must admit that I found a home in Oman. The ambience, the warmth of the people, the natural beauty, the traditions and long history of Oman are only a few of its characteristics that make it unique. As a Greek it reminds me a lot of my country because of the familiar feeling that I get everywhere I am in Oman.

The people of Greece and Oman have always enjoyed a relation based on mutual respect and friendship, and although the Greek community in Oman is still growing, our bond is strong. To me, Oman is a place that is not simply seen but truly and deeply felt.



Oman's new sukuk issuance credit positive for Islamic banking: Moody's

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Omani government's recently announced sukuk issuance for retail investors is credit positive for the sultanate's Islamic banks and Islamic banking windows of conventional banks, Moody's Investors Service said on Monday.

On November 10, the sultanate's Ministry of Finance announced a RO25mn sukuk issuance, the government's first sukuk issuance available to retail investors.

'The issuance is credit positive for Oman's Islamic banks and conventional banks' Islamic windows. The government's issuance of sukuk to retail investors increases Islamic finance penetration and awareness among the population and pro-



vides banks with Sharia'a-compliant instruments for liquidity management,' Moody's said in a sector comment report.

The newly launched sukuk issuance matures on November 24, 2022 and has a 4.75 per cent profit rate and minimum subscription of RO100. Once issued on November 24, 2020, the sukuk will be listed on the

Muscat Securities Market for trading.

Moody's said the demand for Sharia'a-compliant products in Oman is strong, reflecting its predominantly Muslim population. Islamic banking accounted for 14 per cent of banking assets as of September 2020, up from 2 per cent in March 2013, a year after the introduction of the Is-

lamic Banking Regulatory Framework.

The rapid growth of Islamic banking assets in Oman has outpaced the growth in conventional assets in recent years, which reflects Islamic banking assets' relatively recent introduction and low but increasing penetration, the ratings agency noted in the report.

Moody's expects Islamic banking to reach 20-25 per cent of Omani banking assets by 2025.

'For Omani banks, the growth in the country's Islamic banking segment will contribute to asset growth and profitability, particularly in an operating environment weakened by the coronavirus pandemic, low economic growth, weak hydrocarbon prices and slowing overall credit demand,' Moody's said.

Global economy facing deep recession with COVID-19: IMF

Washington, US - The International Monetary Fund (IMF) said that global economy is facing a deep recession with the ongoing impact of COVID-19.

'Uncertainty remains around the outlook, alongside long-term forces that shape and influence countries' response to the virus and the recovery. People all over the world have seen profound changes in their lives: Economic recession, unemployment, climate change, technology and the automation of jobs, the rise of digital currencies, lower returns on their savings, and rising inequality and debt,' the 2020 IMF Annual Report reads.

'As the world faces a crisis like no other, the IMF and its members have swung into action. National governments took bold steps to save lives and put a floor under the world economy,



Kristalina Georgieva

with nearly US\$12tn in fiscal actions and about US\$7.5tn in monetary actions,' said Kristalina Georgieva, IMF managing director, in the report's introductory message.

'This year, as the world faced

a crisis like no other, the IMF and its members swung into action. National governments took bold steps to save lives and put a floor under the world economy, with nearly US\$12tn in fiscal actions and about US\$7.5tn in monetary actions. The package of measures endorsed as part of the quota review approved by the board of governors in February 2020 preserves our financial firepower. These measures include the doubling of the new arrangements to borrow and a new round of bilateral borrowing arrangements, which are expected to be effective in January 2021,' she continued.

The 2020 IMF Annual Report focuses on COVID-19 response, the impact of economics on people's lives, debt, climate change, and fintech.

WAM

Stock markets lifted by fresh coronavirus vaccine hope

Hong Kong, China - Most Asian and European markets rose on Tuesday as hopes the world could begin to return to normal were boosted by news that another vaccine candidate appeared to be effective against the coronavirus.

However, while airlines led the gains, a broad rally across equities was tempered by investors moving out of tech firms and others that have benefited during the pandemic.

Surging infections across the US and Europe and concerns that Washington lawmakers are unlikely to pass any big stimulus package before the end of the year were also causing nervousness.

The mood among dealers has been upbeat this month after Joe Biden's US election win paved the way for a little more certainty on the world stage and pharma giants Pfizer and BioNTech announced their virus vaccine had been 90 per cent effective.

The news fanned hopes the global economy could soon begin to get back on track.

On Monday that outlook was given another boost when Moderna said early results showed its candidate was 94.5 per cent effective.

The United States' top infectious disease scientist Anthony Fauci hailed the announcement as 'stunningly impressive' and 'really a spectacular result'.

All three main indexes on Wall Street rallied, with the Dow and S&P 500 hitting new record highs.

And after a stuttering start, Asia battled to extend the advances following a healthy run-up on Monday.

Tokyo, Hong Kong, Sydney, Singapore, Wellington, Taipei,



Pedestrians walk in front of electronic quotation boards displaying share prices on the Tokyo Stock Exchange in Tokyo, Japan on Tuesday (AFP)

Mumbai, Manila and Jakarta were all in positive territory but Shanghai and Seoul edged down.

London dipped at the open but Paris and Frankfurt edged up. 'We might be transitioning from a defensive bull market to a more cyclically offensive one but more clarity is required in terms of when social mobility will normalise,' said Chris Iggo at AXA Investment Managers.

'That isn't clear yet. The euphoria created by the presidential election result and the vaccine announcement will give way to a more sober analysis of how long and smooth the road to recovery will be.'

Firms that have been battered by the virus were enjoying a healthy run-up.

Cathay Pacific surged more than seven percent in Hong Kong and Australia's Qantas piled on more than one percent, while Air China and Singapore Airlines each jumped more than four percent.

And Axi strategist Stephen Innes offered a positive assessment for the outlook, saying, 'The market is mega bullish on

every time horizon beyond a few days as the roaring 2020's trade is coming soon.'

However, investors are growing increasingly worried about the immediate situation, with the US reporting more than 100,000 new infections each day for almost two weeks, while several cities including New York have reimposed containment measures.

And with Europe also struggling with a second wave, there is a fear that the already shaky world economic recovery will be knocked off course.

'The fact remains that for all the optimism over multiple vaccine candidates, none of them will be available to offset the problems currently being faced right now, as we head into a long dark winter,' said CMC Markets analyst Michael Hewson.

Meanwhile, US Federal Reserve vice chair Richard Clarida said the central bank could expand its vast bond-purchase scheme to support growth, adding it 'is committed to using all of our available tools'.

AFP



Congratulations to
**His Majesty
Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik**
and the people of Oman on the
occasion of the 50th National Day



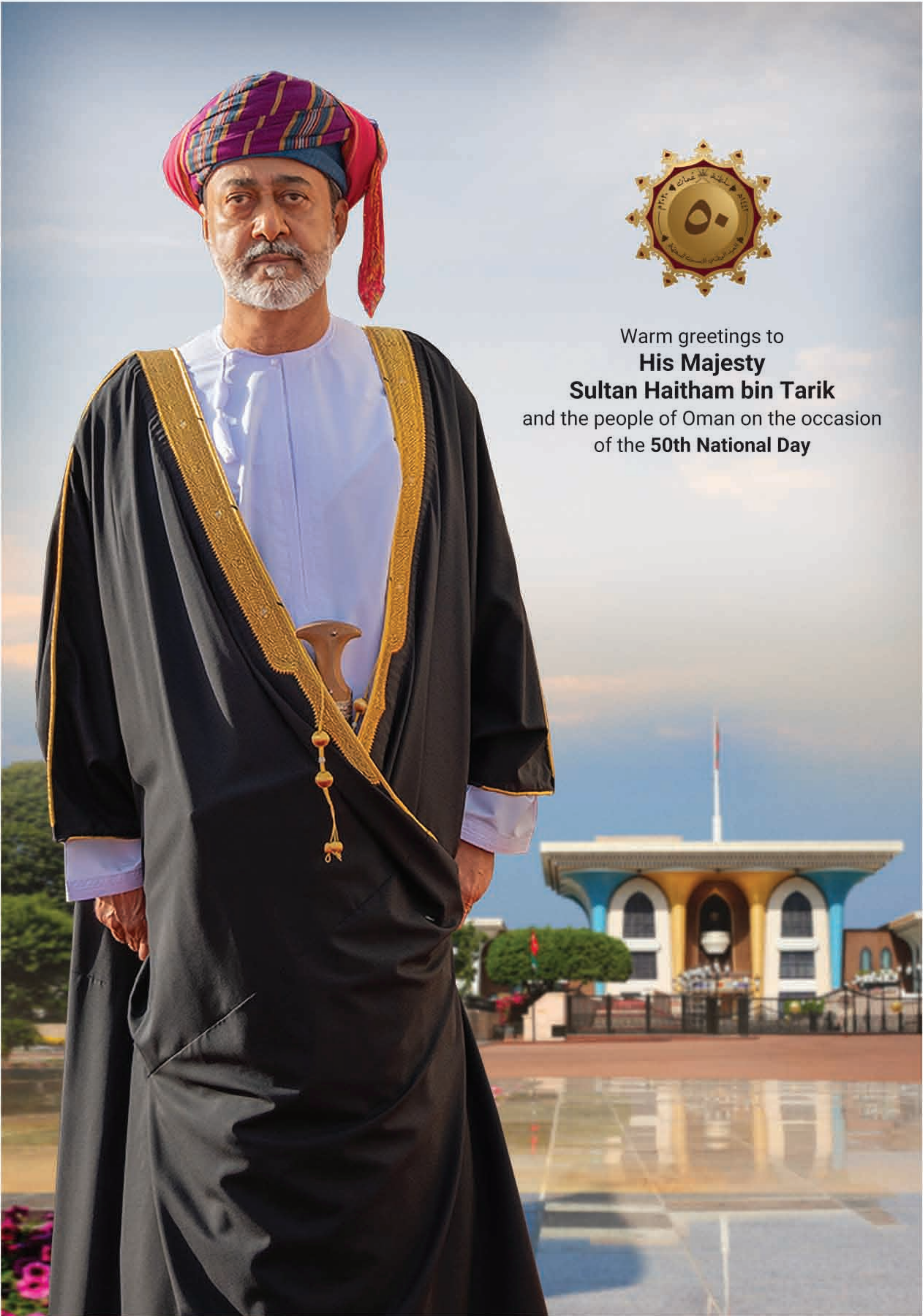
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THE LEGEND

Many shades of a visionary

Artist Shashikumar N Menon essays the persona of the Late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said in black and white

Taking on a self-assigned task of creating diverse images of the unparalleled and internationally revered persona of the Late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said, Shashikumar N Menon, an artist from Kerala, India, fulfilled it with great dedication.

Hailing from an orthodox family in a small village in Kerala, colours and lines had always caught his fascination from a tender age when he let his creative instincts flow forth by sketching images of sports stars and celebrities in his sketchbook. He was keen on observing nature and spending time with his obsession, rather than pursuing academic excellence. Menon, however, fulfilled his parent’s wish by securing a degree in science and then following it up by joining the Sir J J School of Art, the pioneer art college in Mumbai, to pursue his passion. “That was the turning point in my life and I got a new perspective on the world of art and design,” says Menon who is currently Creative Director at Apex Media. He has spent over two decades in a fulfilling career in the publishing field.

‘Nature is the best teacher not me,’ the words of his first art teacher still rings in his ears and he takes up every assignment with a sense of eagerness and pride. Fond of expressionism and impressionism, Menon claims his work has been influenced by the likes of Wassily Kandinsky, Henri Matisse, SH Raza and Mark Rothko, to name a few.

“Trying to communicate emotions in a minimalistic and formless way of painting gives me joy,” says Menon, who is also skilled in sculpting. He lets his creativity take wing by writing stories and poems as a hobby, too.

Recalling Paul Klee’s words - ‘Colour is the place where our brain and universe meet’, Menon says, “Art is everywhere, everyday. We are all influenced by it, whether we realise it or not. It has no boundaries and one can’t give a definition to it. I like simplicity of life, so I have a minimalistic approach towards everything and, I believe, colour is a power which directly influences the soul. Simplified images have the power to stimulate your senses to react positively to life in general. So, with creative expression, reflection and practice, I try to transform mundane life into art.”

Having come to Oman in 2012, Menon was bowled over by its natural beauty as well as its rich culture and friendly populace. It was also heartwarming to witness the people’s love and devotion for the beloved the Late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said.

“This unique experience inspired me to express my true feelings on my own way. The towering personality and powerful gaze of the Late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos reflected his strong will for the people of this country. I realised that black and white lines and shades were apt to portray his great personality. And I enjoyed every moment while rendering his true character,” Menon reflects.

“I feel there is much symbolism associated with black and white, and the pencil is the simplest tool that enables a host of possibilities. When it comes to portraits and sketches, I prefer to do it in shades of grey because, I believe, it helps in getting deeper into the real character and bringing out emotions strongly,” he asserts.

“This was a fulfilling journey and I enjoyed the entire process as much as I did beholding the end result.”

Email: menonsn8@gmail.com



Trying to communicate emotions in a minimalistic and formless way of painting gives me joy

SHASHIKUMAR N MENON



As I had imagined, this image was much easier to render. The mussar, the uniform and beard, I finished fast. But getting the subtle smile on his lips within that serious look wasn't easy. I think, it turned out as I expected

I really don't remember how long I studied this picture before I sat down to sketch it. The whole emotion of this portrait is reflected through the contrast shades of his eyes. It was quite difficult to get the tonal values right. The right feel of the skin and texture of the al amamah al saidiyah helped enhance the character

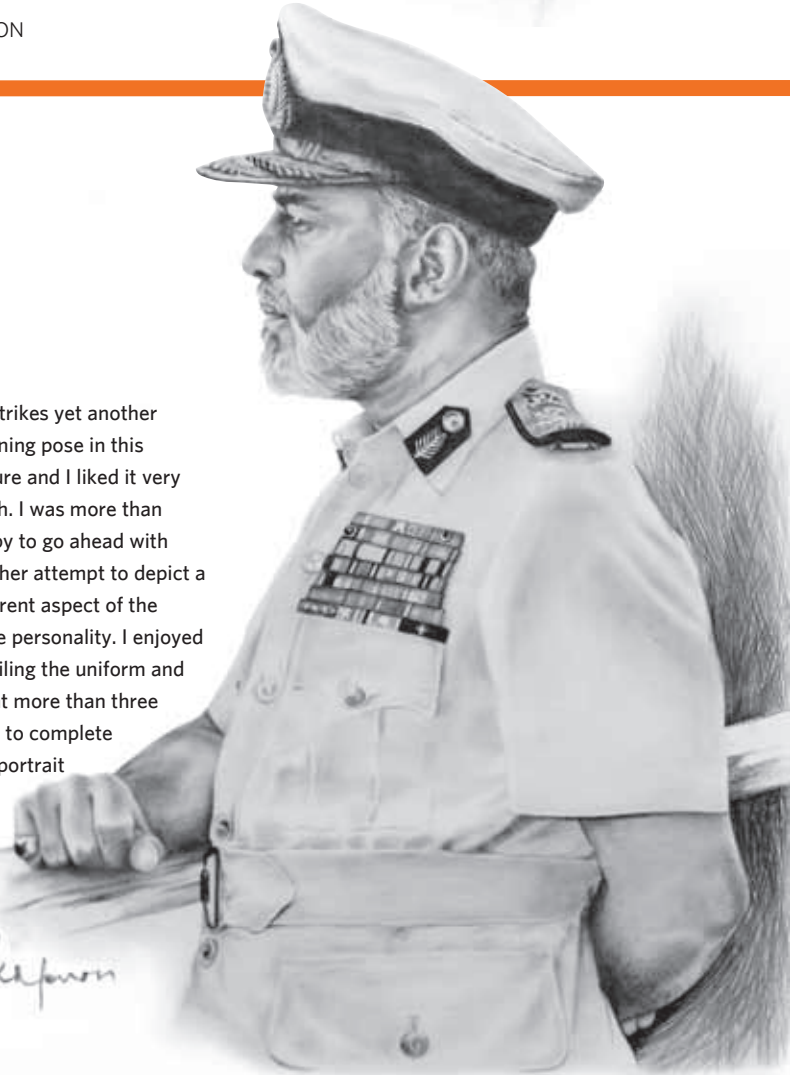
SK Menon

SK Menon



He strikes yet another stunning pose in this picture and I liked it very much. I was more than happy to go ahead with another attempt to depict a different aspect of the same personality. I enjoyed detailing the uniform and spent more than three days to complete this portrait

SK Menon



D LIVES ON

Baba Qaboos: In our hearts and minds forever

The Late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said may be gone from our sight but is never out of our thoughts. In January this year, our hearts were saddened deeply by his loss but we are all glad that he left us with lifelong memories. His vision will forever be like a torch that we as his children will use throughout our lives.

He brought us up teaching us to love peace, to pride in ourselves and respect others; to love our country and culture and also how to conduct ourselves in the best manner. He made sure we felt secure in this beautiful country. He spread optimism amongst us and being a confident leader, he taught his people to have confidence in both him and ourselves. We appreciate all the efforts that he put into his people and the country to make it one of the safest and most beautiful places in the world, and because of him, Oman feels like home to many.

Today, Oman celebrates its National Day without him. Even though many people are far too young to remember that glorious day in 1970 when the Late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos came to throne, they have seen the development that Oman has undergone which is remarkable. It has seen a rapid transformation in this short period of time.

Over the past years, the Late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos's exceptional leadership abilities and planning brought a radical transformation in Oman, in the life of each individual living in sultanate. According to citizens and residents, the hardships, lack of proper basic needs and proper transportation and communication are things of the past because of him. Oman has grown and developed manifold in 50 years.

In his first speech on July 23, 1970, the Late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos said, "I promise you to proceed forthwith in the process of creating a modern government. My first act will be the immediate abolition of unnecessary restrictions on your lives and activities. My people, I will proceed as quickly as possible to transform your life into a prosperous one with a bright future. Yesterday, it was complete darkness, but with the help of God, tomorrow will be a new dawn on Muscat, Oman and its people."

Oman has not only grown into a safe haven for citizens but also for expatriates, who say it is heaven on earth. Those who have been in Oman for a long time testify that the lifestyle in the sultanate has evolved into a modern, forward-looking society with its culture and heritage intact.

Under the Late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, Oman witnessed continuous overall development and the energetic Omani youth are moving forward to excel in their chosen fields. There have been numerous infrastructure developments, including roads, hospitals, schools, colleges and universities. All these cater to the future of our youths.

"In order to prepare our youth to undertake their responsibilities towards their country, and to show



Shaddad al Musalmi

our pride in them, it will be our pleasure to lay the foundation stone of Qaboos University," the Late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos said on November 18, 1982.

Now almost every village is connected with excellent roads to nearby towns and every big town has specialist hospitals, technical training colleges and a university. The healthcare facilities in Oman are world class.

Among the significant structures that Oman has seen come up under the Late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos are the Grand Mosque, the supreme court building, Royal Opera House Muscat, Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre, the Duqm, Salalah and Sohar ports and the new Muscat and Salalah airports.

What matters most to the people of Oman is that despite all the developments, it remains genuine and authentic. Wherever you go in Oman, you will find traditional Arab hospitality and culture and this has been the call of the Late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos.

For some people, the county's rapid development is a dream come true. Indeed it is because life in Oman during the 1970s was very hard. Oman started improving only after 1970, and now in 2020, there is no better place than Oman, thanks to the efforts of the Late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos.

In the last 50 years, the country sped to the limits of achievement in every sector including empowerment and progress of women. Women are seen in all sectors, including participation in governance.

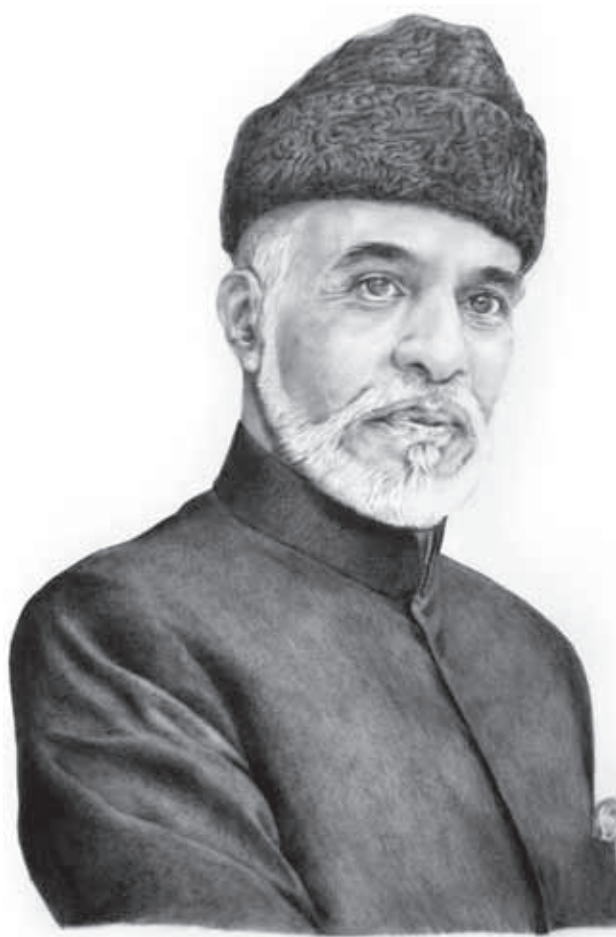
"We call upon Omani women to shoulder this vital role in the community, and we are confident that they will respond to this call," the Late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos said on the occasion of the opening of the second term of the Majlis A'Shura.

Educational institutions have developed and showcased what science and technology can do for society. Oman has made a clear mark in the digital arena and how it can bring in huge changes in the lives of citizens and the way of doing business. Yet another great achievement is that in Oman, people of all cultures and religion live in harmony; even expatriates consider Oman their own home.

"We live in an age of science and education. Education and work are our only means of progress and development within the context of our Islamic civilisation. It is your duty to bear this in mind and to work whole-heartedly for your graduation so that you may serve Oman well, your mother land," the Late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos said in 1986.



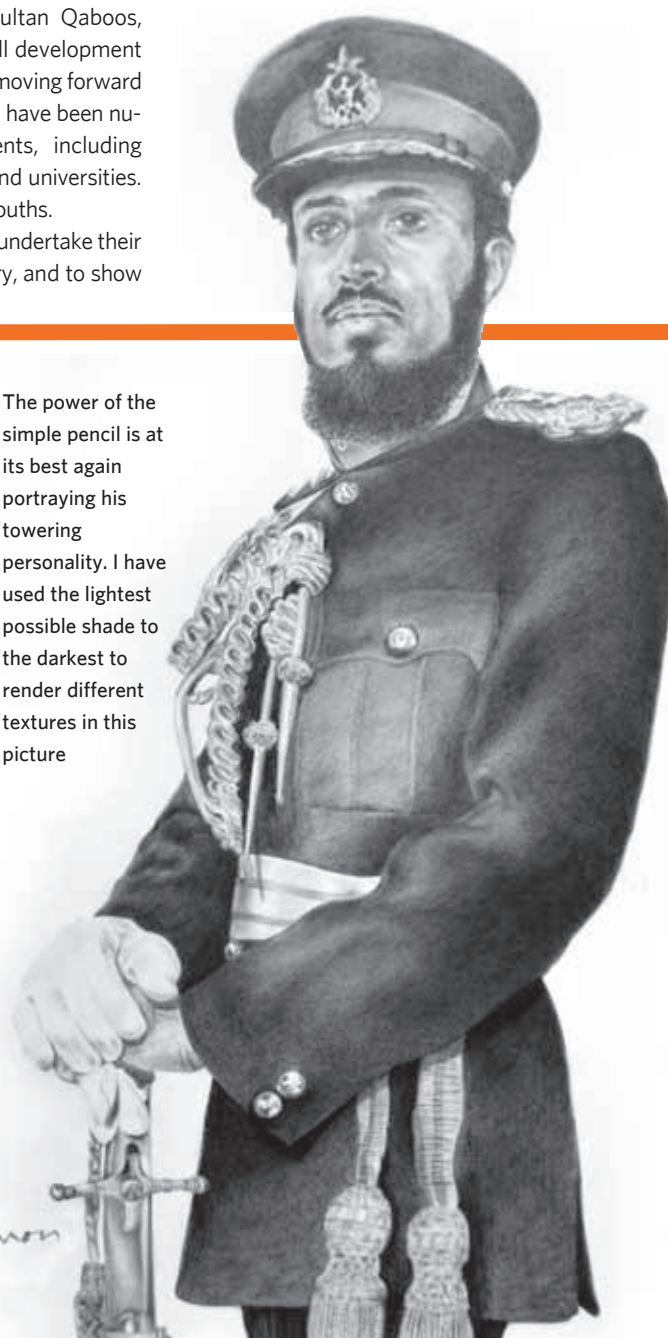
The Late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said has an amazing personality. When I saw this picture of him I was moved by his persona. His vision is clearly reflected through his powerful eyes. It wasn't an easy task for me at all to bring out the essence of his confidence and determination. To capture the calmness and kindness reflected in his countenance, through different shades of grey, I spent hours together to arrive at it accurately. While signing off, I thought, my decision to use graphite wasn't wrong at all



I chose this picture because of the contrast. The dignified look of the Late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos is well highlighted between the dark shades of the hat and the black coat. I had to concentrate much on the sparkle in the eyes to portray his disposition



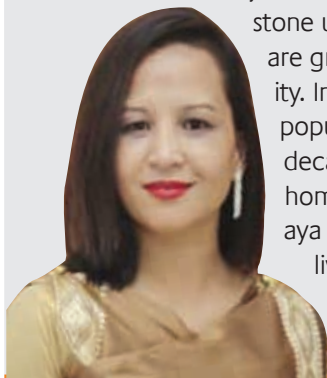
He commands a special charismatic authority in this profile and the affable smile on his face clearly shows his affection and connect with his people. There is so much of depth in his gaze. The quest to take on the challenges and the ability to deal with hardship as a great leader is evident in this Royal Army of Oman uniform. I enjoyed rendering this image while trying to bring out the young and energetic Sultan



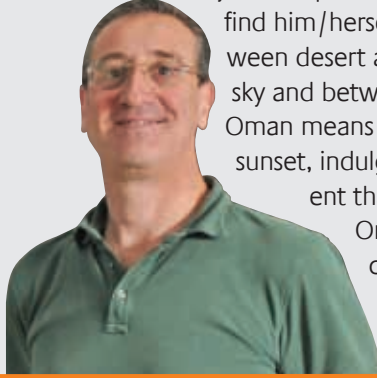
The power of the simple pencil is at its best again portraying his towering personality. I have used the lightest possible shade to the darkest to render different textures in this picture


Niscora Mawlong
INDIA

Khublei Oman! Congratulations Oman! Oman is known for its peace and tranquility. Omanis' hospitality and unbiased nature have made expatriates feel comfortable and at home in the country. The serenity and natural beauty have attracted many Indians to work and live here. They leave no stone unturned to do their best for Oman and are grateful to the sultanate for the opportunity. Indians form a major part of the expat population, some of who have lived here for decades making the sultanate their second home. I hail from the small state of Meghalaya in northeast India and am the only Khasi living and working in Oman. The two years that I have been in Oman have been an incredible experience.


Fabio Damico
ITALY

I have seen many beautiful countries in South, Central and North America, Europe, the Far East and Western Asia. I think of myself as a citizen of the world, but only two places have the power to make me feel at home: my Rome and Oman. It is a country full of spirituality, where every individual can find him/herself. Oman is the convergence between desert and ocean, between mountain and sky and between traditions and modernity. Oman means standing still and admiring the sunset, indulging in a mix of emotions, confident that the next day will be different. Oman is the scent of food and spices, the sound of prayers, the singing of birds, and the luminous smile of the people who live here.


Fukuda Kanako
JAPAN

Sincere congratulations to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and the people of Oman on the occasion of the sultanate's 50th National Day! Its natural beauty, including the dramatic combination of sea and rocky mountains, rich tradition and culture, and warm hearted people have fascinated me and many others, including my Japanese friends visiting and living here. Having Omani breakfast with kahwa is one of my favourite things to do on my relaxed weekend. And I always introduce my friends visiting Muscat to Omani culture with halwa. We have a similar textured sweet in Japan but without the spices. My warmest wishes for further success and prosperity to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and the Omani citizens.



'World democracies must unite on trade policy'

Wilmington, US - US President-elect Joe Biden on Monday said the United States must join forces with other world democracies to present a united front in global trade policy as a counterweight to China.

"The idea that we're poking our fingers in the eyes of our friends and embracing autocrats makes no sense to me," Biden said in a press conference to discuss his economic plan.

He pledged to release details of his trade policy agenda on January 21 - the day after he takes office.

Outgoing US President Donald Trump used an aggressive trade policy against friend and foe alike, imposing tariffs on steel, aluminium and other goods from Canada, Mexico and the European Union, in addition to China.

"We need to be aligned with the other democracies... so that we can set the rules of the road instead of having China and others dictate outcomes because they are the only game in town," Biden said.

The Trump administration eschewed multilateral organisations, and hamstringed the World Trade Organization over claims it was unfair to the US, paralysing the dispute settlement body and blocking the naming of a new director general.



US President-elect Joe Biden speaks during a press conference in Wilmington, US on Monday (AFP)

Trump's rhetoric was generally more friendly towards Russia and North Korea, a pariah nation whose head of state nevertheless won two meetings with the US President.

Biden said he has spoken to some world leaders in general terms about trade issues, but declined to get into specifics with them on what he might do - including whether he would join a new Asia-Pacific free trade pact - because 'there is only one president at a time'.

However, he said he will not pursue 'punitive' trade policy, but rather aim to make American workers more competitive, and ensure labor and environmental leaders 'are at the table in any trade deals we make'.

Biden also repeated his pledge to rejoin the World Health Organization and the Paris climate accord, which Trump walked away from.

AFP

AFP

Biden calls for new US stimulus

Wilmington, US - US President-elect Joe Biden has called for a new stimulus package to help the United States recover from the damage caused by coronavirus pandemic.

Biden renewed his plea for more aid following a meeting with business and labour leaders to lay out his plans for the world's largest economy.

The type of massive stimulus spending only Washington lawmakers can approve is regarded as key in getting the US back on its feet after the mass layoffs and sharp downturn in growth caused by COVID-19, but Republicans and Democrats have been unable to agree on a new package.

Biden, a Democrat who triumphed over Republican President Donald Trump in elections earlier this month, called for Congress to back a US\$2.2tn measure approved by the Democrat-led House of

This is about keeping Americans afloat. Get them through this pandemic. The money is there

JOE BIDEN

Representatives.

"It has all the money and capacity to take care of each of those things now. Not tomorrow, now," Biden said in a speech in his hometown Wilmington, Delaware, the state he represented for three decades in the Senate.

But Republicans in the Senate have refused to support a measure anywhere near that large, preferring to pass smaller bills targeted at specific needs, which Democratic

leaders have rejected.

Congress in March approved the US\$2.2tn CARES Act, which included a programme of loans and grants to aid small businesses as well as expanded payments to the workers who lost their jobs.

Those programmes were seen as crucial in helping sectors like retail sales recover from the downturn, but they expired over the summer, raising fears of a renewed slump in economic activity.

"This is about keeping Americans afloat. Get them through this pandemic, get them through where they still - their businesses are able to come back," Biden said. "The money is there."

Biden called for Republicans to overcome their opposition to a spending package in the weeks before the new Congress is seated.

AFP






Warm greeting to
His Majesty Sultan
Haitham bin Tarik
and the people of Oman
on the occasion of

50th National Day
November 18

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50 years of economic growth

Continued from page 20

When it comes to securing future economic growth through increasing trade and investment, Oman is leaving no stone unturned to make the sultanate a globally competitive destination for doing business and international trade in all aspects. The development of Oman's logistics and transport sector is the most important aspect of facilitating foreign investment and international trade.

In the last decade or so, Oman's government has been working on major long-term initiatives - expanding deep-water ports and free zones, developing the roads network and building modern airports - that prove Oman is moving towards the right direction and evolving into a significant regional logistics hub.

As per the Medium-Term Fiscal Plan (2020-2024) report, the last half-century has seen a period of unprecedented economic and social development across all sectors in the sultanate. Yet the sharp fall of oil prices since 2014 has been a burden on government finances, directly increasing the gap between government revenues and expenditures. The government has undertaken various measures to address this challenge by increasing non-oil revenues and reducing government expenditures and avoided any measures with direct social impacts.



Martin Mbuta
KENYA

I have always described Oman as 'home away from home,' more so owing to the 20 years I have lived and worked here. Oman presents the visitor from a country with a buzzing lifestyle like Kenya with a tranquility that at first feels incompatible until you realise it has pleasantly grown on you. The friendly and hospitable nature of the Omani people is unmatched by most accounts, a factor that intuitively comforts you to address Omanis as brother or sister. The language – Swahili, spoken widely in Oman, and other historical links between Oman and Kenya make it even more comforting to call Oman 'home.' It's a community in which the culture of sharing and giving is built into the DNA of every citizen.



Sulaiman Majdi Barakat
Kuwait

When I came to Oman, I immediately fell in love with the country and the people with its beautiful scenery of tall and breathtaking mountains, one-of-a-kind beaches, powdery golden dunes and never-ending warm weather. The treasure is not just in the land and the sea, but also in the people of Oman and their humble hospitality and warm-hearted personalities. Coming from Kuwait with my wife and two daughters, I have never felt more welcoming to a country as much as Oman. Kuwait and Oman are very similar countries linked by brotherly relations going back decades. I feel extremely grateful and blessed to experience what Oman has offered me and my family.



Alisa Kage
LATVIA

Congratulations and best wishes to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and all the people of the sultanate on the occasion of the 50th National Day! It is my great pleasure to be able to spend part of my life in this beautiful country and being able to call it my home away from home. I have found Oman and Omanis to be one of the most friendly and welcoming places and people I have ever come to meet. One of the first things I and my family found out when moving here was that Oman's National Day and the Independence Day of Latvia are on the same date – November 18 – which made us feel even more at home to be able to celebrate this very important date for both countries on the same day.



Trump asked aides about striking Iran: Report

Washington, US - Two months before he is due to leave office, President Donald Trump asked top aides about the possibility of striking Iran's nuclear facilities, *The New York Times* reported Monday.

During a meeting at the Oval Office last Thursday, the outgoing Republican leader asked several top aides, including Vice President Mike Pence, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and the chairman of the Joint Chiefs, General Mark Milley, 'whether he had options to take action against Iran's main nuclear site in the coming weeks', the newspaper said.

The senior officials 'dissuaded the President from moving ahead with a military strike', warning him that such an attack could escalate into a broader conflict in the last weeks of his presidency, the *NY Times* wrote.

Trump reportedly asked the question after a report by the International Atomic Energy



During a meeting at the Oval Office last Thursday, President Donald Trump (left) asked Vice President Mike Pence (centre) and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo (right) about the attack option

Agency (IAEA) said that Iran was continuing to stockpile uranium. According to the *NY Times*,

the most likely target of such a strike would have been Natanz, where the IAEA reported that

Tehran's 'uranium stockpile was now 12 times larger than permitted under the nuclear accord that

Mr Trump abandoned in 2018', three years after it was signed in a bid to curb Iran's nuclear capa-

bilities. Iran has long been Trump's bete noire, and he first reintro-

The senior officials dissuaded him from moving ahead with a military strike warning him that such an attack could escalate into a broader conflict in the last weeks of his presidency

duced sanctions and then tightened them even further after scrapping the nuclear accord.

European partners in the accord have struggled to keep the deal afloat despite Trump's efforts to torpedo it, and are hoping for a renewed diplomatic approach after the election victory of Democrat Joe Biden on November 3, although Trump refuses to concede his loss.

AFP

3 arrested over spectacular Dresden museum heist

Berlin, Germany - German police on Tuesday arrested three suspects and raided properties over a spectacular heist a year ago in which more than a dozen diamond-encrusted items were snatched from a state museum in Dresden.

Investigators were searching 18 properties in Berlin, including ten apartments as well as garages and vehicles, in connection with what local media had dubbed one of the biggest art heists in modern history.

The main target of the probe was the so-called 'Remmo clan', a family of Arab origin notorious for ties to organised crime whose members were in February convicted in another high-profile museum break-in in central Berlin.

Prosecutors did not name the three detained, but said they are German citizens. They added however that they were hunting another two suspects of the Remmo family, Abdul Majed Remmo and Mohammed Remmo, both 21, over the Dresden heist.

All five are accused of 'serious gang robbery and two counts of arson', said Dresden prosecutors.

The robbers had launched their brazen raid on the Green Vault museum in Dresden's Royal Palace on November 25, 2019. Having initiated a partial power cut and broken in through a window, they had snatched priceless 18th-century jewellery from the collection of the Saxon ruler August the Strong.

Items stolen included a sword whose hilt is encrusted with nine large and 770 smaller diamonds, and a shoulderpiece which contains the famous 49-carat Dresden white diamond, Dresden's Royal Palace had said.

AFP



Police officers bring one of the arrested men into the Higher Regional Court building in Dresden, eastern Germany, on Tuesday (AFP)

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Juliana Frem

LEBANON

Oman has been my home for ten years now. This country is a place where we learn about honesty and integrity; a place where we know how to spread respect and love; a place where we learn what humanity is.

The vision of its leaders, from the Late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said to its current Sultan His Majesty Haitham bin Tarik, is exemplary. Oman has developed in a beautifully eco-friendly way in the past ten years by expanding its infrastructure and tourist sites. I have never felt away from home while living in this charming country amongst its warm-hearted people.

I extend my warmest wishes and prayers that Allah the Almighty bestows his gracious blessings upon Oman.





Nasreen Khalid

MALAYSIA

A country comprising soul piercing fragrances, enigmatic flavours, elaborate textures and genuine heart-warming hospitality that transcends barriers. A people that amplifies its splendid history towards enduring advancements in its future. A country that surrounds those fortunate to call it home in a cocoon of safety and security. This is Oman.

When we first moved here in 2008, little did we know the 'trap' we were landing ourselves in. It is a country that inspires and deeply affects you. On behalf of more than 500 Malaysians living in Oman, I express gratitude to Oman and its people for the opportunities afforded. The moments we cherish are multiplied by the generosity and spirit of the Omani people.





Su Sandee Win Hman

MYANMAR

I have been living in Oman for the last 11 years and already call it my second home.

I enjoy the peace of being here, which is hard to find and is increased by the affectionate people I have come across and the friends I have made in this time. Oman is filled with historical and old towns with sights that are like no other. The beautiful mountains, wadis and sand dunes give you the best idea of desert life. The simple and loving people and the modern lifestyle that we have become accustomed to, from malls and cafes, to infrastructure like roads, communication and health facilities... in short a safe place to call home.



NATO chief warns of ‘high’ price of Afghan pullout

Brussels, Belgium - A hasty pull-out of US and allied troops from Afghanistan could see the country become a 'platform for international terrorists' again, NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg warned on Tuesday.

His blunt message, given in a statement, was in response to reports that US President Donald Trump is planning to accelerate the withdrawal of American forces from Afghanistan, where they support a NATO mission, and from Iraq.

"The price for leaving too soon or in an uncoordinated way could be very high," Stoltenberg said.

"Afghanistan risks becoming once again a platform for international terrorists to plan and organise attacks on our homelands. And ISIS (the Islamic State group) could rebuild in Afghanistan the terror caliphate it lost in Syria and Iraq," he said.

The warning was unpre-



US Defence Secretary Mark Esper (left), NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg (centre) and Afghanistan's President Ashraf Ghani (second from right) arrive for a joint news conference in Kabul

cedented criticism by Stoltenberg of a Trump decision.

Up to now, the NATO secretary general has been careful to not publicly contest statements by Trump relating to the Alliance.

But after his defeat in US elections this month by Joe Biden, Trump - who remains in power until January 20 next year - fired his defence secretary Mark Esper, replacing him with Christopher Miller, who said last weekend of American troops in conflicts abroad: "It's time to come home."

AFP

Water cannon, tear gas at latest Thailand rally

Bangkok, Thailand - Thai police on Tuesday fired water cannon and tear gas on pro-democracy protesters attempting to get close to parliament, where lawmakers were debating possible changes to the military-scripted constitution.

Thailand has seen months of student-led demonstrations demanding reform to the constitution and monarchy, and for the current prime minister to quit.

Several thousand took to the streets around the parliament building on Tuesday, where riot police had blocked off roads with concrete and barbed wire.

Police fired water cannon at protesters trying to dismantle a barricade, and later used water laced with irritant, sending demonstrators scrambling to wash their eyes.

Some sheltered behind giant inflatable rubber ducks which protesters had planned to float along the river behind parliament as lawmakers debated inside.

"What are police thinking by firing water cannon at people? The police are serving a dictator," one protest leader said over a loudspeaker.

At one point police were forced to retreat when protesters threw tear gas canisters back into their lines. Five people were taken to hospital for treatment, medical officials said.

Student-led rallies have rocked Thailand since July, demanding the removal of Prime Minister Prayut Chan-O-Cha - who took power in a 2014 coup - and reform of the military-scripted constitution.

Some in the movement have also called for reforms to the monarchy - a once-taboo subject - sending shockwaves through the Thai establishment.

As police and protesters clashed, lawmakers were considering whether to debate seven possible constitutional amendments.

They include a proposal to replace the present military appointments in the Senate with directly elected representatives.

But any constitutional change in Thailand is expected to take a long time and the junta-appointed Senate is unlikely to vote itself out of power.

Protesters insisted they just wanted to listen to the parliamentary debate.

Several opposition lawmakers came out of parliament to observe the protest and try to urge the police not to crack down hard on demonstrators.

Taopipop Limjitrakorn, an MP from the pro-reform Move Forward Party said police were ignoring pleas to de-escalate the situation.

"Police should not be overly violent and threaten them," he told reporters.

One group of protesters confronted several hundred ultra-royalist supporters who were staging their own rally, with the two sides throwing bottles and other objects at each other.

The royalists are against all proposals to change Thailand's 2017 constitution, saying they would undermine the monarchy.

Parliament is expected to vote on Wednesday.

AFP



Pro-democracy protesters kneel down amid tear gas and water cannon during a rally in Bangkok on Tuesday (AFP)



We salute the visionary leadership of
His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik
and extend our greetings to
His Majesty and the people of Oman
on the occasion of the **50th National Day**



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Chinese official backs judicial reform in Hong Kong

Hong Kong, China - A senior Chinese official on Tuesday backed calls to 'reform' Hong Kong's judiciary, in a landmark speech signalling Beijing's determination to assert more control over the city's independent legal system.

Semi-autonomous Hong Kong owes much of its success to a transparent and internationally respected common law legal system that stands in stark contrast with the opaque, party-controlled courts in authoritarian China.

But following months of pro-democracy protests last year, Beijing has cracked down on dissent and ramped up direct oversight in the city.

On Tuesday a veteran official in charge of Beijing's Hong Kong policy said it was time to re-examine how the judiciary operated. "Even in Western countries, judicial systems have to catch up with the times and reform constantly," Zhang Xiaoming, deputy head of the Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office, said in a speech marking the 30th anniversary of Hong Kong's mini-constitution.

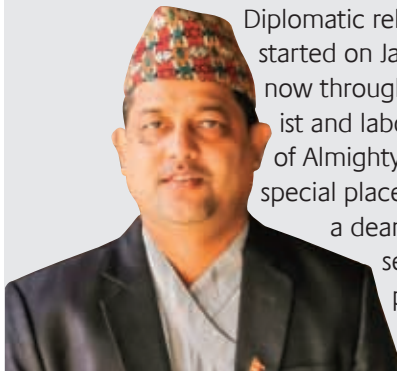
AFP



DB Chhetri
NEPAL

I am proud to be a part of a prosperous country. I have been residing in Oman for the last 15 years. It has been an enriching experience from employee to employer in an SME. Despite coming from a different cultural and ethnic background, Oman has always treated us like family.

Diplomatic relations between Nepal and Oman started on January 21, 1977, and continues now through, among others, economic, tourist and labour diplomacy. With the blessings of Almighty Allah, Oman will always have a special place in our hearts and be considered a dear home. On behalf on the Nepalese community, I wish a happy and prosperous 50th National Day to the people of Oman.



Dr Ben Emenyeonu
NIGERIA

Oman, unu nwe aka a!
Well done, Oman!
Having lived and worked in this haven of peace and serenity for nearly two decades, I have seen so much to conclude that Oman is a truly remarkable nation: a nation blessed with consistently visionary leadership and fiercely loyal and patriotic citizenry, a nation where peace and harmony form the cornerstone of development and progress, a nation that recognises and respects the value of diversity and multiculturalism, a nation passionately devoted to the even development of all its constituencies.

As my people in Nigeria would pay homage to those who do exceptionally well in any honest endeavor, Oman, unu nwe aka a!



Femke Tijs
NETHERLANDS

Oman has held a special place in my heart since the day I first arrived in this country back in 2012. Having travelled around, I never experienced such sincere and heartwarming hospitality of a nation and its people before. A proud nation with a rich and deep-rooted culture, with gratitude to the legacy of the Late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said properly preserved in the current era. In 2019, my dream of working and residing in Oman was fulfilled when I came to work here. In my leisure time, exploring the stunning and pristine beauty of Oman is a blissful privilege. Hiking through the mountains and enjoying the country's beauty is a blessing.



Escape from massacre: Ethiopians recall horror

Um Raquba Refugee Camp, Sudan - For Ethiopians who escaped intense fighting in their northern homeland of Tigray by fleeing into Sudan, they are now safe; but the terrifying nightmare of what they witnessed haunts them.

"I saw bodies dismembered by explosions," said Ganet Gazerdier, a 75 year old sitting alone in the dust at Um Raquba refugee camp in the east of the country, newly opened to cope with a sudden influx into Sudan of over 27,000 people fleeing air strikes, artillery barrages and massacres in Ethiopia.

"Other bodies were rotting, lying on the road, murdered with a knife," she added.

Distraught at having been forced to flee their homes, traumatised by becoming separated from family members in the mad rush, and horrified after witnessing killings, refugees wander as if dazed in the camp.

"I lived with my three daughters," said Gazerdier, dressed in a blue dress and white headscarf to protect her from the blazing sun.

"When the shells started to rain down on our house, we all panicked and fled in the dark."

The bombardment not only destroyed her house in the western Tigray town of Humera, the site of reportedly some of the heaviest fighting, but also separated her from her family.

Everyone scattered, and she has yet to make contact with them.

"I met some friends who were fleeing too, and I followed them," she added.

"I looked around several times in search of my daughters, but to no luck."

She has found some help at Um Raquba, 80km from the border, but conditions are spartan, with so far only basic emergency relief set up at the isolated camp.

She stops other Ethiopians to tell them her story, but no one



Ethiopian refugees who fled fighting in Tigray sleep in a hut at the Um Rakuba camp in Sudan on Monday (AFP)

pays attention. So many have terrible stories to tell.

"I have a daughter who lives in Khartoum but I don't know her address," she said quietly. "How can I find her in this big city?"

Ethnic divides

Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed announced on November 4 he had ordered military operations in Tigray in response to attacks by the regional ruling

party, the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF).

The conflict has turned ethnic divides deadly, said Gerdo Burhan.

If you are Tigrayan and cap-

When the shells started to rain down on our house, we fled in the dark. I saw bodies dismembered by the explosions. Other bodies were rotting on the road



GANET GAZERDIER

tured by government soldiers, you are in trouble, said the 24 year old. "They ask you, with a gun pointed at you, if you belong to Tigrayan forces," he said. "At the slightest hesitation, you are dead. They shoot you down on the spot and leave the body in the street."

"They beat you, sometimes to death, or they take you with them to an unknown destination - and I doubt if you come back

alive from there," he added.

"It's terror."

Burhan managed to escape to Sudan, trekking through the hot bush across the border, but he was separated from his father, mother and two sisters on the way. "I don't know if they're okay," he said.

Faced with long columns of refugees suddenly crossing into Sudan, the government decided to reopen Um Raquba, a camp closed 20 years ago.

It once housed refugees who fled Ethiopia's 1983-85 famine that killed more than a million people. Now the basic camp is expected to house thousands of refugees.

For the Ethiopians who arrive, there is an initial sense of relief that they are safe. But for many, a sense of guilt soon kicks in, as they sit and wait in the hope that those they love - and who they were separated from in the panic - may also turn up.

AFP



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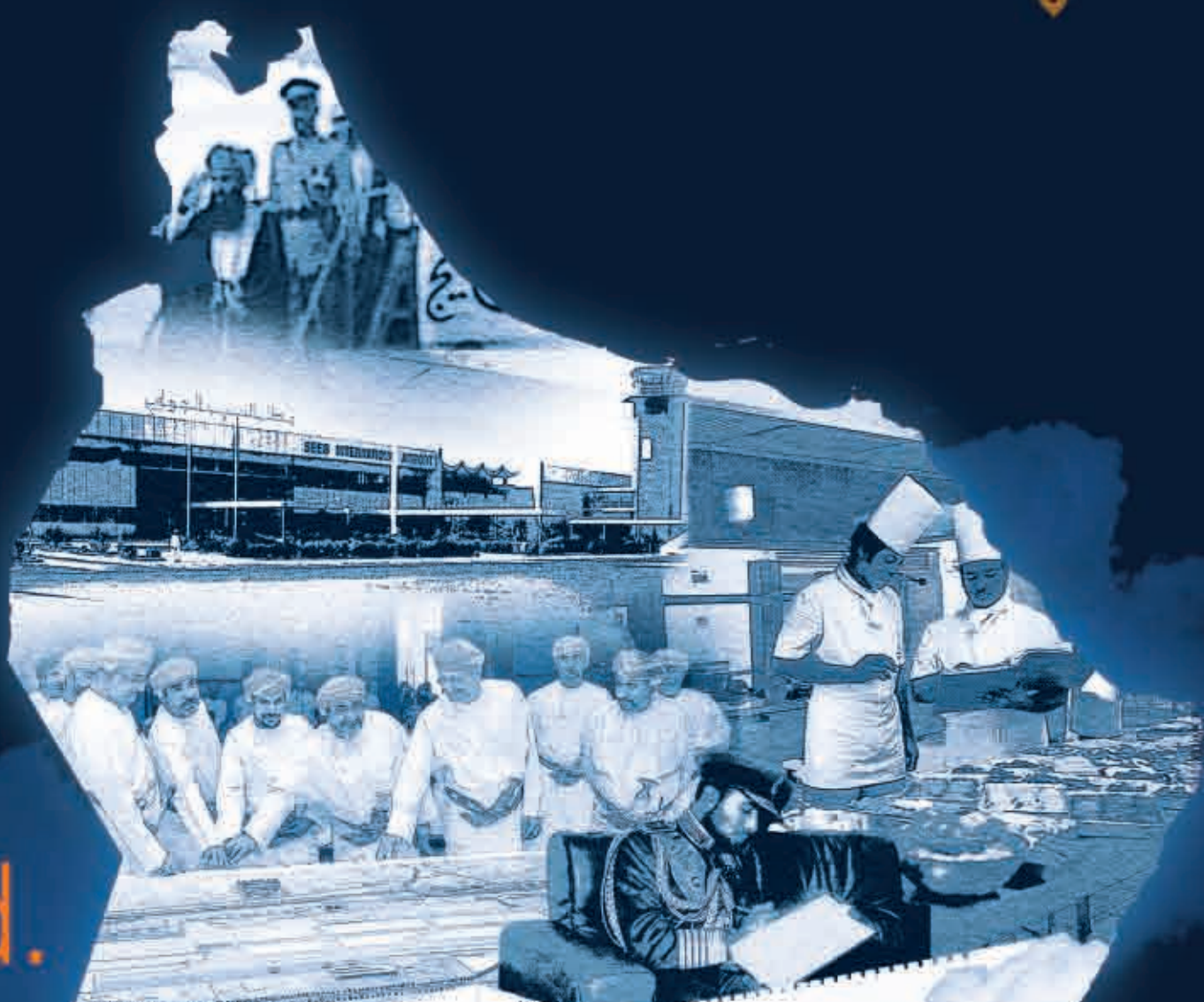
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Warm greetings to
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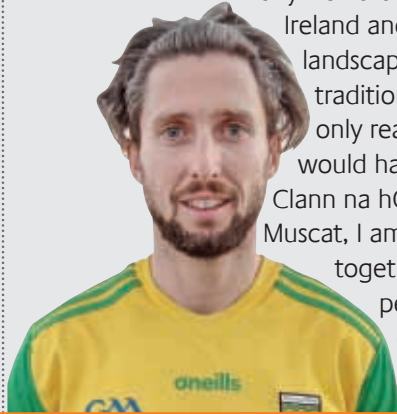
Ana Valerio
PORTUGAL

Muitos parabéns Omã!
Congratulations Oman!
Oman has been our home for a few years. We are happy here and grateful that we are able to live in such a beautiful country. We love its mountains, beaches, the incredible ocean and its warm and welcoming people.



Darren Ashmore
REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

The Irish and Omani people are both friendly because we grow up in a culture that is laid back and relaxed. The warm, friendly people of Oman make their country a home away from home for the many Irish that reside here in the country. Ireland and Oman share unforgettable landscapes and are countries steeped in tradition and natural beauty. Perhaps our only real difference is the weather, but we would happily swap! As chairperson of Clann na hOman GAA (Football) Club here in Muscat, I am proud to share the Irish culture of togetherness and community with the people of Oman as well as the many other different nationalities that come to play our national sport.



Ana-Maria Oancea
ROMANIA

Congratulations on your 50th anniversary. I wish you a happy and prosperous New Era! Stay blessed! Stay brilliant, dear Oman!
I am lucky to live in such an amazing and beautiful country, full of kind and caring people. My Omani experience made me understand life in a way I had never expected. Oman is a very special place to feel existence as a miracle; a miracle invading your soul and your mind, making you better and better. Feel the peace, feel the kindness, live the tolerance and the optimism... this is how I define Oman. Having lived here, I have learnt that I will always love my Romania. Romania is my soul forever, but I will always love Oman. Oman is in my soul forever!



2020-21 Omantel League season from December 17

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The 2020-2021 Omantel League football season will kick-off on December 17 while the OFA First Division League will begin two days later, the Oman Football Association (OFA) announced on Tuesday.

The revised schedule of the domestic season, which includes the OFA First Division League, was revealed by Said Othman al Balushi, the OFA general secretary and the CEO at a press meet held at the OFA headquarter.

Speaking to the mediapersons, Balushi said that the Omantel League season will conclude on May 20, 2021 while the First Division League



Said Othman al Balushi (right) and Sheikh Shabib al Hosni on Tuesday

will finish on April 28, 2021.

Balushi said that the revised schedule was released after the OFA board received the recommendations from the OFA Competitions Committee.

Sheikh Shabib al Hosni, the

OFA assistant secretary general and in-charge of Oman leagues, said that there would be 'no cancellation of the three age-group (U16, U19, U21) leagues' but a 'decision on the youth leagues' calendar' will

be made only in January.

It may be recalled that the OFA had announced in September that the 2020-2021 season will kick-off in December with Omantel League to start on December 3.

However, few of the clubs held a meeting with the OFA chairman, Sheikh Salim al Wahaibi, recently seeking a postponement of the Omantel and First Division leagues.

The 2019-20 domestic season was delayed due to the suspension of the sporting activities for more than five months and concluded recently.

Seeb Club emerged as the Omantel League champion after the conclusion of the final round on October 31 while Nizwa

edged past Al Ittihad in the final of the First Division on November 3.

Along with Nizwa and Ittihad, the third team to gain promotion to the Omantel League was Al Mussanah. The three teams relegated from the 2019-20 Omantel League were Mirbat, Al Arouba and Oman.

The OFA is still to announce the date of the 2019-20 HM's Cup final between Dhofar and Al Arouba from while the next season's HM's Cup matches will begin from January.

Hosni also confirmed that all Omantel League games will be held only at sports complexes and there will be strict adherence to the COVID-19 safety protocols.

Sketch International, Al Hail-B, Mazoon Up secure victories

LOCAL CRICKET

Ali Asger Saifee struck a solid 92 off just 57 balls to guide Sketch International to a narrow two-run victory over Sam Royals in an Oman Cricket E Division T20 match at Al Amerat on Friday. Batting first, Sketch International posted 198 for seven with other contributions coming from Mohammed Ghafoor (31) and Yusuf Patanwala (28).

In their chase, Sam Royals were on course with Pramod Kumar (64) and Arjun Rajesh (59) hitting half-centuries but Sketch managed to restrict their rivals to 196 for four.

In other matches of the same division, Mazoon Up recorded a thumping eight-wicket win over Landmark Group and Mohammed Ali's half-century led OCT Al Hail-B to a nine-wicket win over OCT Al Nahdha.

BRIEF SCORES

E Division: Sketch International 198-7 (Ali Asger 92, Ghafoor 31, Patanwala 28; Abraham Kochumon 3-38, Ravi Vijith 2-21) beat Sam Royals 196-4 (Pramod Kumar 64, Arjun Rajesh 59, Venmadathiyl Shahas 31 n.o.).

E Division: Landmark Group 100 all out in 16.5 overs (Hemant Magar 18; Moosa Mujeeb 2-17, Ashfakh Purayil 2-19) lost to Mazoon Up 101-2 in 12.1 overs (Mohammed Bilawal 43).

E Division: OCT Al Nahdha 131-4 (Nadil al Balushi 34, Nathar Pashambeh 28, Abdullah al Balushi 26; Samir Mohamed 2-18, Asim Abdul Qadeer 2-27) lost to OCT Al Hail-B 132-1 in 16.3 overs (Ali 62, Ghulam Ahmed 60).

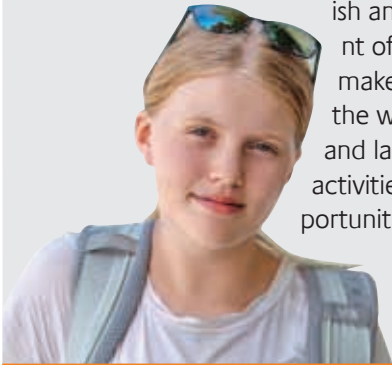
Saefer Group of Companies extends heartiest congratulations to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq Al Said and the people of Oman on the Occasion of 50th National Day.





Alexandra (Sasha) Maximova RUSSIA

Being six years old when moving to a country with such unique people and culture was quite difficult. The biggest challenge was the language barrier. Not knowing a single word in any language but Russian, I had to start grade 1. Describing it as 'hard' would be an understatement. Slowly I started to learn English and that was when the world in front of me opened up. I was able to make friends with people from all over the world, learn about their cultures and languages and start all kinds of new activities. In my time here, I got more opportunities than I could have ever asked for. Living here has been such a lovely and welcome experience that I couldn't be more thankful.



Ivana Hadzic SERBIA

I came to Oman six years ago, exactly on November 18. Having three small children at that time, facing a different culture and climate in the beginning was challenging to adapt but as time passed by, I realised the advantages of living in Oman and being open minded to embrace the changes. The stress free and easy-going life, and the pleasant Omani people quickly enthralled me. The beauty of this country with its sun-kissed sand dunes, untouched beaches and multicultural environment enrich everyone's life. The small Serbian community in Oman gratefully and proudly contributes to the further development of this country and celebrates the 50th National Day like its own.



Lubos Kunc SLOVAKIA

On the occasion of the 50th National Day, I would like to greet all the people of Oman and wish many years of further development. I also wish for the friendly ties among all citizens and residents of Oman to further develop regardless of their origin, nationalities or religion and they continue to help each other. As an expat who came to this country only a few years ago and still discovering its beauty, friendliness and hospitality of the local people, I would like to congratulate all Omanis on the occasion of the National Day, a celebration of growth and development. Never let any opportunity go, be humble and work hard for your dreams.



Djokovic off to a flying start

ATP FINALS

London, UK - Novak Djokovic produced a masterclass on Monday to launch his campaign for a record-equalling sixth title at the ATP Finals as Daniil Medvedev outfought former champion Alexander Zverev.

The world No 1 crushed Argentine eighth seed Diego Schwartzman 6-3, 6-2 in the opening round-robin match in Group Tokyo 1970 before Russia's Medvedev triumphed 6-3, 6-4.

Djokovic, who has already sealed the year-end No 1 spot for a record-equalling sixth time, is aiming to match the absent Roger Federer, who holds the record of six ATP Finals wins.

The Serbian, 33, has enjoyed another sparkling season despite the coronavirus interruption, winning four titles including the Australian Open.



Novak Djokovic in action against Diego Schwartzman on Monday

He came into the match at an empty O2 Arena with a 5-0 record against the diminutive Schwartzman but the debutant started impressively, breaking Djokovic in the third game.

However, the top seed broke back immediately and took his game up a notch, breaking again and converting his first set point

with a powerful serve down the T. Two more breaks in the second set were enough to take Djokovic to a comfortable win against his outclassed opponent.

The Serbian admitted he had started slowly but said he was pleased with his game as the match wore on.

"In the second set I started

swinging through the ball a bit more, bit less hesitation from both corners and I was very pleased with the way I played in the second set especially," he said.

Empty stands

The five-time champion said he was missing the fans, who usually pack the cavernous O2 Arena for the elite eight-man event.

"I've been playing the ATP Finals in this arena for many years and I've been blessed to experience some incredible matches and atmospheres and it feels very strange to play in front of empty stands," he said.

The evening contest between Medvedev and Zverev was a rematch of last week's Paris Masters final, where the Russian came out on top. Both players struggled to hold serve in an in-

tense start to the contest on Monday.

The Russian fourth seed said his win at the Paris Masters had given him confidence, describing Monday's battle as exhausting.

"The intensity of the match was one of the most I had in my career so actually second set for both of us was easier to make some winners because we were both tired so we couldn't run any more," he said.

"There were some amazing rallies. I'm happy that I came out on top of this battle."

World No 2 Rafael Nadal, chasing his first ATP Finals crown, won his first match in Group London 2020 on Sunday, along with US Open Dominic Thiem. The O2 Arena is hosting the ATP Finals for the 12th and final season before the event moves to Turin next year.

AFP

Coronavirus vaccine not mandatory for athletes at Tokyo Games: Bach

Tokyo, Japan - Athletes won't be required to take a coronavirus vaccine to compete at the Tokyo Olympics, IOC chief Thomas Bach said on Tuesday, adding that mandatory shots would be 'going too far'. Bach, who is in Tokyo to bolster confidence in the pandemic-postponed event, said taking a vaccine would be a 'free decision' for athletes and others involved in the Games.

"There are too many issues to consider. This is a question of private health," the IOC president said, during a tour of the Olympic Village. "It is a question also of (the) health conditions of each and every person. It's a question of availability."

However, the IOC will 'appeal' to athletes and others to be vaccinated, Bach added, calling it a 'sign of respect' for other competitors and the Japanese hosts.



Thomas Bach, IOC chief

Tokyo 2020 was put back by a year to start next July because of the coronavirus, becoming the first Olympics to be rescheduled in peacetime. Bach and Japanese organisers have sounded a confident note that the event will go ahead - buoyed by recent positive vaccine trials and a successful international gymnastics event in Tokyo this month.

AFP



Warmest congratulations to HIS MAJESTY SULTAN HAITHAM BIN TARIK and the people of Oman on the occasion of the 50th National Day





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Thian Combrinck
SOUTH AFRICA

For many South Africans, Oman is a road less travelled. I first arrived in this majestic country 11 years ago and was immediately struck by the one thing that separates Oman from other countries - its people. That is what I share with friends and strangers when I answer the question: "So what is Oman like?" And then there is that other astounding aspect of the sultanate that runs in parallel with its people, namely the visionary leadership within the country. Even though Oman may be a road less travelled, it is most definitely a road worth travelling - with friendly and engaging citizens and filled with soulful experiences. This is attested by my fellow South Africans who came, who saw and who stayed.



Thushari Dassanayake
SRI LANKA

The Sri Lankan community in Oman conveys its warm wishes for the 50th National Day of Oman. May god bless His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik with good health and a long life. As a Sri Lankan having lived in Oman for the past 30 years, it has been a blessing to see this extraordinary country develop and provide a safe and harmonious society for many others like us. It has been a tough and challenging year for all in this country following the insoluble demise of our beloved leader the Late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said who paved the way for the prosperity of the sultanate over the many years of his great leadership. We are very grateful for it and may his soul rest in peace.



Denis Babel
SWITZERLAND

On Oman's 50th National Day, I congratulate the Late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said for his vision, achievements and wisdom to elevate Oman to its current national and international recognition which is continued by his wise and enlightened successor His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik. We moved here ten years ago and since then, we have been enjoying Oman's unique quality of life. Its safe environment, the natural beauty of its diversified landscapes, its history, and its welcoming and friendly people are qualities that we, Swiss people, share with the Omanis. Our two countries are guided by the same neutrality goals.



Seeb Club players and officials celebrate with the 2019-2020 Omantel League winner's shield at the Seeb Sports Stadium after defeating Saham in the concluding round of the top-flight league on October 31

SEEB'S SUCCESS STORY

Seeb's coronation as 2019-2020 Omantel League champion ended their 44-year domestic league title drought. Terming the success 'perfectly timed', the club's chief H H Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, said the 'victory is a gift to the club's fans on the 50th National Day'

Ashok Purohit
Muscat

Amid the roars of 'Seebawi, Seebawi, Seebawi', Seeb Club players celebrated writing a new chapter in their club's history as they ended a wait of more than four decades on October 31.

It was the coronation of Seeb as the domestic league champions for the first time since the club's inception in 1972. The timing of the glorious achievement [2019-2020 Omantel League title] could not have been better as the sultanate celebrates its 50th National Day.

Hours after the title triumph was achieved, as Seeb defeated Saham 2-0 in the concluding round to lift the Omantel League crown at an empty Seeb Sports Stadium, the club's chairman, H H Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, said, "We are deserving winners and the success is perfectly timed. The victory is a gift to our club fans on the 50th National Day. I congratulate our players, coaching staff, and board members, who have worked hard to bring home the title that we have been missing for the past four decades."

Seeb's crowning moment and the success story is a testimony to the club's policies that have set an example of good governance and allround success.

Though the journey has been a rollercoaster, Seeb Club, today, serves as a role model for the other clubs in the sultanate.

Seeb was established after the merger of four clubs - Watan, Butolah, Hilal and Fida - in Seeb area.

The club has been patronised by the Royal Family from the

start. His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik al Said served as the club's honorary president at and was also a board member in the seventies.

Since 1982, H H Sayyid Shihab has been the chairman and under his leadership, the club's emphasis on multi-sports have been the foundation of their allround excellence.

Unlike many other clubs in Oman, where football is the only priority, H H Sayyid Shihab believes that the bedrock for any club's success has to be equal focus on multi-sports activities.

Be it hockey, which in the seventies was the most popular sport in Oman, or indoor sports like basketball, volleyball, handball or table tennis, Seeb have won accolades aplenty.

Their focus on young sports persons led to club achieve success in various age-group competitions over the years.

Seeb's giant strides in promoting sports and youth activities have been often acknowledged by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth (MCSY). The His Majesty's Cup for Youth, is an award instituted by the MCSY, to honour the best club in the sultanate.

The trophy symbolises overall supremacy of the club in the sultanate and Seeb have won the coveted trophy a record 12 times since the award was instituted in 1998.

The latest Omantel League title under Portuguese coach Bruno Pereira, underscores the football team's recent resurgence, having once been a force to reckon with. Seeb have achieved a record hat-trick of His



H H Sayyid Shihab proudly holds the HM's Cup for Youth and hockey trophies

The secret of the club's success is the plan and strategy charted out by our chairman, H H Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said

YOUSUF AL WAHAIBI

Majesty's Cup Football Championship titles in the late nineties (1996, '97, '98), one of the only three clubs to have recorded the feat.

The other clubs that have achieved are record HM's Cup nine-time winners Fanja and five-time champions Ahli-Sidab. Besides the three titles, Seeb was twice HM's Cup runner-up (2003, 2005) and came closest to winning the domestic league in the 1994-95 season, when they finished runner-up.

Seeb youth teams (U16 and U19) have won national titles on several occasions and the club have been regarded as a powerhouse in hockey too.

Seeb won HM's Cup hockey crowns on seven occasions and have also claimed the National Hockey League crown on three occasions.

The club's honours list

extends to table tennis, basketball, handball and volleyball with the club winning several national titles in these sports disciplines.

Seeb's 2019-20 top-flight



A file photo of Seeb fans cheering their football team in March 2020

domestic league campaign saw them taste defeat just once in the 26 rounds they played.

H H Sayyid Shihab lauded the character of the players during the title-winning season as they faced many challenges due to disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The club had returned to the top-flight in the 2018-19 season, and in their first year since gaining promotion, the club have achieved their long-cherished dream.

Seeb had been relegated from the top-flight in the 2014-15 season and after spending three years in the OFA First Division, the club's fairytale comeback ended on a glorious note.

Speaking about the success, Yousuf al Wahaibi, the club's vice-chairman, said, "The habit of winning titles for Seeb Club has not come easy. We have had a tough and long journey and we are glad to see our efforts bear fruit. To have won the prestigious

His Majesty's Cup for Youth on 12 occasions, including two long streaks (five times in a row and four back-to-back titles) is an illustrious record that we are very proud of and a reflection of our overall progress."

Wahaibi added, "The secret of the club's success is the plan and strategy charted out by our chairman, H H Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said. The club offers a total of 11 sports disciplines and every year, we manage to grab a trophy in one or more sports that we take part in at the national level."

And it is just not the success on the field that makes Seeb stand out but also the smooth administration that is ensuring a strong legacy of the club.

From infrastructure development on the club premises, which includes a shopping mall, to no-deficit club's budget, Seeb have set a high benchmark.

Wahaibi said, "Our aim is to reduce the dependence on grants from the government and make the club self-reliant. We are one of the first clubs to have a successful private-public partnership project when we completed Grand Bazar Seeb."

Spread over 10,000sqm, Grand Bazar Seeb is a mall that has boosted the club's financial well-being and is a pioneering initiative with nearly 300 outlets.

Having won the Omantel League title, Seeb have ended their 44-year wait since the top-flight league began in 1976.

As Oman celebrates the 50th National Day, Seeb's success story is a good example to follow for many other clubs in the sultanate.



Seeb Club captain Saud al Farsi (second from right) receives the 2019-20 Omantel League winner's shield


Nasser Hassan
SUDAN

Oman is an exotic destination filled with stunning landscapes coupled with kind souls. As a lover of the outdoors, Oman's golden desert, majestic mountains, historic forts, long white beaches and scenic wadis always take my breath away. Needless to say, what captures my heart the most is having the chance to speak and meet daily with wonderful Omanis. With its warm culture, rich history and deep-rooted traditions, Oman is an amazing place to start and raise a family. It is a place where people's capabilities and talents are nurtured, but most importantly, it is a place where kindness and being helpful to others is a virtue that is passed down from one generation to another.


Nebi Ozdemir
TURKEY

Congratulations on the 50th National Day of Oman! I wish the people of Oman all the best on this beautiful and joyful day. The moment I arrived in Oman, I knew that this place had so many things to offer. From its beautiful nature, friendly people, rich heritage and culture, I must say Oman is definitely unique. Meeting a lot of Omani people from the community and at work, I could say that they are very welcoming. They greet everyone with a smile and are very hospitable. I also admire the fact that they are very proud of their country and are united. The natural beauty of Oman makes it magical.


Kwanchanok Khuntitudsakul
THAILAND

Yin dee duay ka! Congratulations! When someone asks me about living in Oman, I have no better way to describe it than by saying that I call it my second home. Coming from the energetic city of Bangkok, I fell easily for Muscat for its contrasting serenity. It's not only the beauty of Oman's natural wonders and amazing cities but also the warm Omani people that altogether make this country such a wonderful place to be in. They are friendly, always eager to help anyone in need, and ready to make visitors and expatriates like me feel like a part of their larger family. As a Thai person living in Oman, I will always be grateful for this opportunity and the friendship that I've received. Shukran!



Algeria book berth in AFCON

AFRICA CUP OF NATIONS

Johannesburg, South Africa - Manchester City winger Riyad Mahrez scored as title-holders Algeria drew 2-2 in Zimbabwe Monday and became the third country to book a place at the 2021 Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON).

Cameroon qualify automatically as hosts while Senegal secured a spot on Sunday by winning in Guinea-Bissau thanks to a Sadio Mane goal.

Andy Delort and captain Mahrez gave the Desert Foxes a two-goal advantage in Harare that was halved just before half-time when Knowledge Musona netted.

Algeria coach Djamel Belmadi took off Delort and Mahrez as he made five second-half substitutions within 12 minutes, but the bold move backfired when Prince Dube equalised eight minutes from time.

Drawing ended the perfect three-win record Algeria took into a match played behind closed doors because of the coronavirus, but it guaranteed



Riyad Mahrez of Algeria celebrate after scoring against Zimbabwe

them a top-two finish in a section including Zambia and Botswana.

Zambia, hoping for a resurgence under Serb coach Milutin 'Micho' Sredojevic, suffered a blow to hopes of accompanying Algeria from Group H when they fell 1-0 away to Botswana.

Mosha Gaolaolwe scored what proved the only goal in Francistown after just six minutes and it lifted Botswana to third, one point behind Zimbabwe.

This was the third loss in four group matches for 2012 African champions Zambia, who will host Algeria and visit Zimbabwe during the final two matchdays next March.

Uganda suffered a shock loss 0-1 away to South Sudan and Burkina Faso drew 0-0 in Malawi to miss out on chances to qualify from Group A.

Uganda-born Tito Okello condemned his country of birth to a first defeat in the section when

he converted a first-half penalty in a qualifier marred by two red cards.

South Sudan win

Khalid Aucho got a straight red to leave Uganda with ten men for an hour while South Sudan substitute Abdallah Musa was yellow-carded twice and sent off during 15 minutes on the pitch.

Making the victory more memorable for South Sudan was the fact that they had to play the 'home' fixture in Kenya because the national stadium in Juba is being renovated.

Late goals from Percy Tau and Themba Zwane earned South Africa a 4-2 Group C win in Port Elizabeth over Sao Tome e Principe, who led, trailed and equalised before collapsing when reduced to ten men.

Sao Tome, who are 110 places behind South Africa in the world rankings, lost Ivonaldo Mendes nine minutes from time when he was red-carded following a second caution with the sides level.

The minnows held on for six minutes before Belgium-based

Tau gave South Africa the lead for the second time in the see-saw struggle and Zwane put the outcome beyond doubt.

Victory took South Africa to nine points, equal with Ghana but behind on head-to-head records. Sudan are the other contenders for a top-two place.

Gambia regained first place in Group D from Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang-captained Gabon after winning the top-of-the-table clash 2-1 in Bakau.

Modou Barrow and Musa Barrow scored to put the Scorpions in control until a late goal from Bruno Ecuele Manga created a tense finish.

Cameroon are part of the qualifying competition to gain match practice and increased their Group F lead to six points after a 2-0 win in Mozambique with Vincent Aboubakar among the scorers.

In Manzini, eSwatini were eliminated and Congo Brazzaville strengthened a grip on second place behind Senegal after a 0-0 draw.

AFP

Paine, Labuschagne in mass airlift of cricketers

Sydney, Australia - A mass airlift of Australia, Australia A and Big Bash League (BBL) players into New South Wales has been successfully completed to avoid Cricket Australia (CA) having its summer plans severely disrupted by border restrictions imposed on South Australia due to a developing coronavirus outbreak in the state.

While the number of new cases in SA dipped promisingly to five on Tuesday after 14 on Monday that were traced to an outbreak in Adelaide's northern suburbs, CA and the BBL clubs moved rapidly to ensure all players left the affected state and also Queensland, Western Australia and Tasmania after all three state governments imposed quarantine restrictions on SA.

These moves, including a charter flight specifically to transport all players and staff from the Adelaide Strikers to

a training camp in Coffs Harbour, will allow for Australia players to prepare freely for the looming white-ball series against India, plus Australia A players preparing for warm-up games against Virat Kohli's touring side and also the Strikers and other SA-based BBL players ahead of the tournament's scheduled early-December start in Hobart.

This meant rushed farewells to family and friends for the likes of Test captain Tim Paine, Matthew Wade, Marnus Labuschagne, Travis Head and Cameron Green, but ensured smooth progression of the summer even if the SA outbreak continues to grow.

SA's border remains open to NSW and Victoria, and CA maintains that Adelaide Oval will host the first Test of the summer against India from December 17 onwards.

Cricinfo



NZ skipper Kane Williamson (left) and Trent Boult

Kiwi skipper, Boult rested for West Indies T20I series

Wellington, New Zealand - New Zealand captain Kane Williamson and pace spearhead Trent Boult will miss the upcoming Twenty20 series against the West Indies to concentrate on Test matches, selectors said on Tuesday.

However, the Black Caps have added an exciting element to the 13-man T20 squad in the form of South African-born debutant Devon Conway, the stand-out domestic batsman in recent seasons. Coach Gary Stead said Williamson and Boult were sitting out the three T20s - beginning on November 27 - to keep them fresh for the two

Tests against the Windies.

T20 squad: Tim Southee (capt), Hamish Bennett, Devon Conway, Lockie Ferguson, Martin Guptill, Kyle Jamieson, Daryl Mitchell, Jimmy Neesham, Glenn Phillips, Mitchell Santner, Ish Sodhi, Tim Seifert, Ross Taylor. (Doug Bracewell, Scott Kuggeleijn and Mark Chapman replace Jamieson, Southee and Taylor in game three).

Tests: Kane Williamson (capt), Tom Blundell, Trent Boult, Colin de Grandhomme, Jamieson, Tom Latham, Henry Nicholls, Ajaz Patel, Southee, Taylor, Neil Wagner, BJ Watling, Will Young. AFP






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Eric Liou
TAIWAN

Guo qing kuai le, guo yun chang long! Happy National Day, the country (Oman) will be prosperous! I came to Oman for work four years ago. Before I came, I'd thought the hottest thing in Oman is the summer heat, but I was wrong. After landing here, I soon realised that the thing hotter than the heat is the hospitality of the Omani people. Anywhere I went, I was always welcomed by the local people. I was invited for a cup of tea in the city, I was invited for lunch or dinner in the suburb. I was even invited for a treat of fruits grown by a local farmer. You can feel the friendliness everywhere in Oman. I am truly blessed to work here, and I know God will bless Oman and its people.



Stuart Steele
UNITED KINGDOM

Felicitations to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and the Omani nation on their 50th National Day. From the day my family arrived in Oman at the beginning of 1982, we felt we had come to a very special country. The warmth, friendliness and hospitality of the Omani people was immediately evident. Our family feeling of being at home in Oman has not changed over the many years of living and working here. To such an extent that my grandson who was born here, is still proud to call himself an Omani despite being British and now living in Australia!



Ivan Proskura
UKRAINE

Being a swimming coach, I frequently travel to Doha and Dubai taking my swimmers to competitions. But each time I am back in Muscat, I tell myself I am home. I see plenty of historical architecture and natural beauty in the country. Oman has a variety of beaches from wild and natural to comfortable meeting modern civilisation needs. The Gulf of Oman has a massive variety of fish – a haven for fishermen. The people of Oman are very friendly; even when policemen talk to you, they have a smile on their face. In my opinion, the social benefits, especially for youth, are the best in the world. To me, Oman is the No 1 country in the Middle East!



CHILDREN'S PUBLIC LIBRARY

DELIVERING KNOWLEDGE TO ALL

On the occasion of Oman's 50th National Day, Rashid al Kiyumi, CEO of the Children's Public Library underlines the role of the library in shaping young minds to inculcate an insatiable thirst for knowledge

In the heart of Muscat, in the vicinity of popular locales like Shatti al Qurm and Qurum Natural Park, the Oman Children's Museum is nestled in a spot where the beauty of nature interweaves with science to give visiting children a space to revel in observation and imagination.

On November 13, 2017, in conjunction with Oman's National Day celebrations, the library opened its doors to welcome young readers and explorers, to become the sultanate's first specialised children's library under the slogan 'Knowledge is a right for all' within its spacious 9000sqm building that is built to accommodate more than 1000 visitors.

The library enjoys the great distinction of being one that had been opened under the auspices of HM Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, who had then been Minister of Heritage and Culture.

"The Children's Public Library was established to provide an environment suitable for reading, characterised by tranquility and beauty and equipped with modern furniture suitable for different age groups present

inside the library to maintain their safety. It also provides all the needs of children, including information sources and services, which meet their demands and preferences while contributing to the development of their mental abilities as well as their linguistic, artistic, scientific and social skills," says Rashid al Kiyumi, CEO, Children's Public Library.

The Library directs its focus of interest to children of 3-17 years, in addition to parents and those interested in children's literature and childcare. The facilities include reading halls, a Braille Corner, Kid's Area, Programmes Room, and Electronic Information Sources Hall and an Innovation Corner.

As knowledge is a right for all, the library is also equipped to serve people with special needs - those who suffer from hearing, visual, and motor impairments as well as learning difficulties.

To ensure easy access to the library building, it has escalators and elevators, easily accessible shelves, seats and tables designed to suit everyone, tools for people with sensory impairments, and a set of accessible



The Children's Public Library was established to provide an environment suitable for reading, characterised by tranquility and beauty for different age groups

RASHID AL KIYUMI

tools, equipment and aids. These include electronic information resources, large printed/picture books for shared reading sessions, books and stories tackling disability issues, and digital stories.

The Library also embraces a treasure of science and knowledge of twenty thousand titles for an informative paper source of interactive books, large-sized books and three-dimensional books. The sources printed in Arabic reach the percentage of 65%, while sources printed in English make up the remaining 35%. In addition, books written in Braille and other foreign languages are available.

The library, with the help of information specialists (mainly Sultan Qaboos University's graduates) responds to all questions and inquiries of library users, provide them with the required information, direct them easily and smoothly and train them to use devices and services correctly.

The Programmes Room is equipped with all facilities for holding events and activities, the innovation corner encourages children and visitors to create, innovate and learn

more about digital solutions programmes developed for children. Workshops are also held in each of these departments regularly.

The Braille Corner is supervised by a professional and specialised team that helps all library visitors and provides introductory tours for visitors, educational institutions or interested groups.

The library is usually open from Sunday to Thursday, from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm, and on Saturday from 10:30 am to 5:30 pm. However, in compliance with a resolution of the Supreme Committee, due to the current pandemic, the library is currently kept closed.

The library's enriching materials are nevertheless shared electronically (via Zoom). Workshops, such as Hakawati for Children, Yoga Workshop, Scratch programming, Spoon Dolls, Who went to the school, Stop Motion, etc, were held during this period after popularising them on social media.

"With all these efforts and more, the Children's Public Library is moving forward to achieve its mission and vision - to deliver knowledge to all because 'knowledge is a right for all'," Kiyumi reiterates.



Five floors of knowledge for young minds



The unveiling ceremony by HM Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, as Minister of Heritage and Culture in November 2017



Volunteers guide young children via workshops and demonstrations



Les Bonde
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

My salute to Oman and may everyone in the sultanate continue to share the blessings of the glorious Renaissance and celebrate the 50th National Day!
In a troubled world, Oman provides a wonderful neighbour to all and a wonderful home to so many. May we always serve His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik with pride and share the beauty of the sea, mountains and deserts with all visitors as friends. I am honoured to have lived the last decade in Oman and look forward to many more years. As an American, I am honoured and proud of the strong and strategic relationship between the sultanate and the US.



Marvarov Mirjavohir
UZBEKISTAN

Salom! I have lived in Oman since I was six years old back in 2009. Ever since, I have watched Oman grow and prosper. I saw how Oman went from small towns and buildings to constructing massive malls and modern buildings, improving the infrastructure, while not forgetting its tradition. Over the years, I was able to explore many beautiful parts of Oman, from its grandiose sand dunes and rocky mountains to its traditional lifestyle. Oman really has a wonderful tradition and very friendly people who you feel comfortable communicating with. Ever since I started living in Oman, I haven't complained much about life. I was able to finish all 12 grades of school and have lived almost all my life here.



Alejandra Estrada
VENEZUELA

Since I arrived, I have loved the impeccable capital city of Muscat as I got to know the friendly, relaxed and hospitable people. It reminds me of my country as well, as Oman has many beautiful natural places. In particular, I have appreciated the long stretches of coastline and sands full of rich colours. I have also enjoyed the fresh juices at every corner. These details remind me of my country but it is a unique version because there is no country in the world where I've felt so safe and secure like Oman. I swapped years of studying law and other opportunities to be a Spanish tour guide here to enjoy every day of my life in a place I call 'a corner of paradise on earth'.



ROYAL OPERA HOUSE MUSCAT A BEACON OF CREATIVITY

Nasser al Taae, Advisor to the Board of Directors, Royal Opera House Muscat (ROHM), examines how the majestic architecture of ROHM stands as a catalyst to the supreme patronage of arts in the sultanate

Since the dawn of the Omani renaissance in 1970, the wise leadership of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said (may God have mercy on His soul in peace) has given special importance to the arts. This generous patronage was evident in many of the achievements that culminated in the dazzling global opening of the Royal Opera House Muscat (ROHM) in October 2011 and followed by the complementary addition, Royal Opera: House of Musical Arts (HOMA) in January 2019.

In no time, ROHM became a beacon of creativity, brilliance, and a celebration of the noble mission of Oman's cultural diplomacy, utilising art as a vehicle to celebrate human achievements to promote collaboration and peace between nations.

The visions of the His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said (may God rest his soul in peace) were associated with the development and growth of modern Oman by constructing cultural and artistic edifices, and establishing enlightened pillars and foundations upon which the building of the modern state is based. As Oman extends its arm to

the global world, music and the arts take centrestage in bringing people together.

The majestic architecture of the ROHM and HOMA stand as a catalyst to the supreme patronage of the arts in the sultanate, affirming the highness of the Late Sultan's vision of the arts and its role in raising generations on the values of sophistication, beauty, and civilised communication. They are the edifice of a unique architecture that is grounded in Omani and Islamic architecture, but with modern and sophisticated marble, machinery, and acoustics that is unmatched in the world.

The venues are supported by state of the art programmes that showcase the best operas, ballets, symphonic repertoire and World Music from all over the globe.

With their marvellous architectural design and noble missions, ROHM and HOMA represent the crowning achievements of 50 years of development in Oman and they are built to last yet another 50 years and beyond in our glorious march towards knowledge, enlightenment, celebration of the arts, and prosperity.



 **ROHM has become a celebration of the noble mission of Oman's cultural diplomacy, utilising art as a vehicle to celebrate human achievements**

NASSER AL TAAE



The grand interiors are supported by state-of-the-art technology



The majestic foyer of the opera house



The edifice of ROHM is an iconic sight after dusk



A 'must' visit for tourist to Muscat

Heartiest congratulations to
His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik
and the people of Oman on the
occasion of the 50th National Day
of the Renaissance!

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