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DHOFAR FACE SUWAIQ IN HM'S CUP FINAL
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Pope, Sistani meet in Najaf, plead for peace



A handout image released by the press office of Iraqi Prime Minister on Friday shows Prime Minister Mustafa al Kadhemi receiving Pope Francis upon his arrival in Baghdad

Baghdad, Iraq - Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani, one of Shiite Islam's top clerics, told Pope Francis in a historic meeting in Iraq on Saturday that the country's Christians should live in 'peace'.

The meeting, on the second day of the first-ever papal visit to Iraq, marked a landmark moment in modern religious history and in terms of Francis's efforts to deepen interfaith dialogue.

Pope Francis later addressed

the rich spectrum of Iraq's religious communities at Ur, traditional birthplace of the Prophet Abraham, a central figure in the Christian, Jewish and Muslim faiths, where he made an impassioned plea for 'unity'.

The 84-year-old pontiff's trip to Iraq is an effort to both reassure the country's ancient but dwindling Christian community and expand his dialogue with other faiths.

His meeting with the grand ayatollah in Najaf lasted 50 minutes, and Sistani's office put out a statement shortly afterwards thanking Francis for visiting the holy city.

Sistani, 90, "affirmed his concern that Christian citizens should live like all Iraqis in peace and security, and with their full constitutional rights", it said.

Sistani is extremely reclusive and rarely grants meetings but

made an exception to host Francis. The pontiff had landed earlier at Najaf airport, where posters featured a famous saying by Ali, the fourth caliph and the Prophet Mohammed's relative, who is buried in the holy city. "People are of two kinds, either your brothers in faith or your equals in humanity," read the banners.

Francis then headed straight to the desert site of the ancient city of Ur, where Abraham is be-

lieved to have been born in the second millennium BC.

"It all started from here," Francis said, after hearing from representatives of Iraq's diverse religious communities.

There were Yazidis, whose ancestral heartland of Sinjar was ravaged by the Islamic State group in 2014, as well as Mandaeans, Kakais, Bahais and Zoroastrians.

AFP

Saudi-Qatar border open for Omani trucks

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Businesses operating in logistics and transportation will now be able to enter Qatar via Saudi Arabia's Al Salwa land border, Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) has announced.

In a statement, OCCI said, 'The chamber has received a letter from the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology confirming that customs at the Saudi Salwa border is ready to receive Omani commercial trucks.'

Saudi customs at the Salwa border crossing with Qatar resumed operations on January 9. A coronavirus health centre has also been set up at Salwa.



Visitors show their documents to Saudi customs officials at the Salwa crossing on January 10, 2021 (AFP)

Trade links with Qatar reopened following Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt formally restoring ties with Doha after more than three years of a boycott. The resumption of ties was announced at a historic GCC summit in Alula, Saudi Arabia, on January 5.

MoL detects 180 fake Omanisation cases

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Labour (MoL) has detected as many as 180 cases of fake Omanisation. In a statement, it said, 'The ministry has registered 180 cases of fake Omanisation which were perpetrated to avail facilities provided to private sector establishments. Through these violations, these institutions were able to obtain more than 660 permits to hire non-Omani workers.'

The MoL urged all private sector establishments, companies

and citizens to cooperate in its efforts to curb this practice that affects the national economy.

The ministry has expedited the Omanisation process in recent months with a target to offer 32,267 jobs this year, including 7,602 opportunities in the government sector.

Twelve sectors are being targeted to appoint jobseekers and to achieve Oman Vision 2040. The work plan for 2021 aims to develop human capital through training projects following the replacement of residents in Omani job categories.

Omani sculptor wins global recognition

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Following certification from International Sculpture Symposium Alliance (ISSA), sculptor Ali al Jabri is now counted among a stellar group of artists. Jabri is the first Omani sculptor to receive the recognition - one in a hundred certified sculptors from around the world.

Currently comprising 104 members from 49 countries and five continents, ISSA's symposium membership across the world is ever-growing. Each year, ISSA holds almost 30 symposiums.

In recognition of Jabri, Liu Yang, secretary general of ISSA, said, "He is the only certified sculptor from Oman. He has built monuments in more than five countries, which is a great achievement, and let the world know more about Oman."

The secretary general described the artists with the certification as international influencers. "Only when there are monumental sculptures in at least five countries are they certified. Currently, a little over 100 sculptors from all over the world have been certified."

Speaking to *Muscat Daily*, Jabri, founder of Sohart House, said, "I am proud to have obtained the international certificate from ISSA. We have organised seven international sculptors' camps in Oman. This



Ali al Jabri

certificate helps us participate in international exhibitions and gain experience."

Additionally, Jabri recently participated in an initiative of ISSA where artists from 100 countries showed their solidarity to the fight against the pandemic by displaying their personal protection equipment. "They stood united to show their support to the fight against the virus. These professional sculptors usually wear their masks to protect themselves from the dust generated by their work. During the ongoing pandemic, their mask symbolise their support and determination to fight COVID-19."

The 18th International Sculptors Camp, a weeklong event held in Wadi al Jizzi, Sohar, was scheduled to end on Friday.

"This time around, only residents and local Omani sculptors are attending due to the pandemic. This year, the camp will focus on wall sculpture and relief sculpture," Jabri said prior to the camp.

Oman improves its economic freedom ranking by 5 places; seventh in MENA

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman has improved its economic freedom ranking by five places, making its economy the 71st freest in the 2021 Index of Economic Freedom compiled by The Heritage Foundation. Its overall score has increased by 1.0 point to 64.6, primarily because of an increase in monetary freedom.

Oman is ranked seventh among 14 countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, and its overall score is above the regional and world averages.

Oman's economy is ranked in the moderately free category this year as it has been since 1996, according to index report. 'Greater economic freedom would help the government to diversify the economy away from dependence on oil. To achieve this goal, the government would have to cut its spending sharply and make a concerted effort to reduce debt,' it stated.

According to the index, starting a business and dealing with construction permits in Oman have become less costly. 'Labour force participation has increased. Efforts to increase transparency and streamline the investment framework are ongoing.'

Launched in 1995, the index evaluates countries in four broad policy areas that affect economic



INDEX RANK AND SCORE IN MENA		
1	UAE	76.9
2	Israel	73.8
3	Qatar	72.0
4	Bahrain	69.9
5	Saudi Arabia	66.0
6	Jordan	64.6
7	Oman	64.6
8	Kuwait	64.1
9	Morocco	63.3
10	Tunisia	56.6

freedom: rule of law; government size; regulatory efficiency; and open markets.

Countries are ranked based on 12 specific categories: property rights, judicial effectiveness, government integrity, tax burden, government spending, fiscal health, business freedom, labour

freedom, monetary freedom, trade freedom, investment freedom and financial freedom. Scores in these categories are averaged to create an overall economic freedom score.

While Oman scores high in the tax burden (97.7) and monetary freedom (85.8) cate-

gories, it ranks poorly in fiscal health (12.2).

In MENA, the UAE is ranked first followed by Israel, Qatar, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Oman, Kuwait, Morocco and Tunisia making the top ten.

According to a press statement released by The Heritage Foundation, global economic freedom is at a record high of 61.6 for the second year in a row despite the uncertainty of a global pandemic. Singapore remained in the top spot as the world's most-free economy, "while the US recorded its worst score and ranking ever (20th), a result of

out-of-control spending and a loss of confidence by Americans in the even-handed rule of law'.

In the top five, Singapore is followed by New Zealand, Australia, Switzerland and Ireland.

Hong Kong, which was ranked second for the first time in the history of the index in 2020 after ranking first for 25 years, was displaced from the 2021 index - 'partly a consequence of Beijing's growing control over the city's economy'.

The index found a world economy that, as a whole, continues to be 'moderately free' but cautions that the overall global economic outlook remains challenging, particularly in many developing countries and emerging markets because of the lingering impact of the pandemic.

"Regrettably, some of the policy measures undertaken or planned by governments around the world in response to the global health crisis run the risk of undermining economic freedom and, thus, long-term economic growth and prosperity," note index editors Terry Miller, Anthony Kim and James Roberts.

"Policymakers cannot simply spend their way back to prosperity after the toll that public health responses have taken on local economies. For a meaningful economic recovery, economic freedom must not be curtailed by extended government emergency powers."

'COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective'

Shaddad al Musalmi
Muscat

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, it has become increasingly clear that widespread vaccination is essential to contain it. Many community members are eager to get vaccinated, even as others are hesitant despite the assurances from the authorities and medical experts about vaccine's safety.

While it may be natural to question if the brand new vaccines, developed at an unprecedented speed, are effective and safe, it must be noted that the overall effectiveness of the COVID-19 vaccines has been reported in the range of 70 per cent to 95 per cent, which is well above the average effectiveness of other vaccines.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), ensuring the safety and quality of vaccines is one of its highest priorities. 'WHO works closely with national authorities to ensure that global norms and standards are developed and implemented to assess the quality, safety and efficacy of vaccines,' it said.

The process of developing COVID-19 vaccines has been fast-tracked while maintaining the highest standards. According to the WHO, given the urgent need to stop the pandemic, pauses between steps, often needed to secure funding, have been shortened, or eliminated, and in some cases, steps are being carried out in parallel to accelerate the process, wherever it is safe to do so.

H E Dr Ahmed Mohammed al Sa'eedi, Minister of Health, informed last week that there are many reports disseminated socially of alleged side effects which are baseless and cannot be scientifically corroborated.

"Some countries began to register a downtrend in mortality and infections, as well as hospitalisation and admissions in intensive care units because of the vaccines," he said.

"Do not trust social media rumours on vaccines. Vaccinations are better than treatment drugs because they prevent infections. Some people still do not trust the Oxford-AstraZeneca

MoH denies death related to COVID-19 vaccine

Muscat - The Ministry of Health (MoH) has denied social media rumours about the death of a person due to COVID-19 vaccine.

The ministry confirmed that no side effects were recorded in the national campaign for immunisation against COVID-9. The ministry has urged all to pay no heed to rumours, and to obtain information from official sources only, stressing that it will take legal action against rumour-mongers.

vaccine and insist on the Pfizer-BioNTech shots. Neither of the vaccines has serious complications. The vaccines that are brought to Oman are thoroughly checked and have proved to be effective and safe."

According to the WHO, COVID-19 vaccine developers have issued a joint pledge not to seek government approval for their vaccines until they've been proved to be safe and effective.

The impact of COVID-19 vaccines on the pandemic will depend on several factors. These include the effectiveness of the vaccines; how quickly they are approved, manufactured and delivered; the development of variants; and how many people get vaccinated.

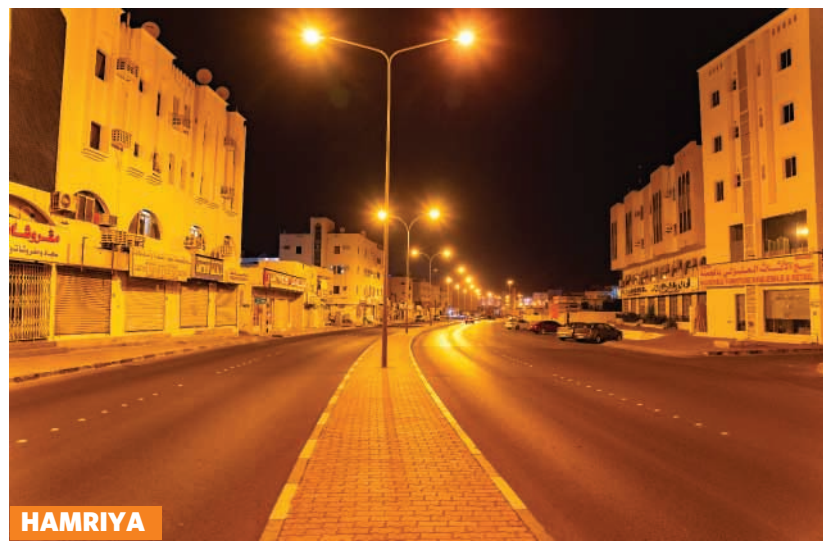
While trials have shown several COVID-19 vaccines to have high levels of efficacy, like all other vaccines, COVID-19 vaccines will not be 100 per cent effective. WHO is working to help ensure that approved vaccines are as effective as possible, so they can have the greatest impact on the pandemic. Dr Salim Hamdan al Tamimi, senior paediatric consultant at Sultan Qaboos University Hospital, noted that no serious side effects have been associated with any COVID-19 vaccine and that, when such cases occur, these are very rare.

@shaddadm

FINES FOR VIOLATING DECISION ON CLOSURE OF BUSINESSES



MUTTRAH SOUQ



HAMRIYA



RUWI HIGH STREET

Muscat Municipality has warned that anyone violating the provisions of the Supreme Committee decision on closure of commercial establishments will be fined RO300 and RO1,000 if the same offence is repeated, apart from the closure of the activity. All commercial activities have been suspended between 8pm and 5am until March 20 (Syed Fasiuddin)

MoH launches national survey on TB awareness

Muscat - With an aim to reduce incidence of tuberculosis (TB) to less than one in a million by 2035, the Ministry of Health (MoH) launched a national survey on community awareness, attitudes and practices related to the disease on Wednesday.

The survey will sample citizens and residents randomly from across all governorates. Survey participant will receive a five-minute phone call when a set of questions will be asked. The questions relate to certain general information about the participant, what they know about TB, and their attitudes, practices and behaviours related to the disease. The survey will identify the most important gaps in information that are reflected in the attitudes and practices of the community towards TB, and



use the survey results to raise the level of community awareness so that everyone becomes partners in the task of eliminating the disease in the country.

TB is still considered one of the deadliest infectious diseases in the world. Oman has low incidence of TB with less than ten per million people (8/1,000,000 in 2019).

The sultanate aims to reach the TB pre-elimination stage; incidence will be reduced to less than one in a million by 2035.

This will be achieved by reducing incidence by 90 per cent and reducing mortality to 95 per cent compared to the year 2015 through the sultanate's national strategy for the elimination of TB to be implemented in stages.

The objectives of the strategy to eliminate TB in Oman are dependent on several factors, including the level of community awareness of the disease. MoH, represented by the Directorate General of Disease Surveillance & Control, in collaboration with the concerned authorities, plans to conduct the national survey of community awareness, attitudes and practices related to TB. The survey will attempt to spread correct information and practices and stop the spread of misinformation by approaching and understanding the community.

KNOW THE LAW



Producing, publishing pornography content criminal offences

Producing, showcasing, publishing, distributing, selling or importing materials and content related to pornography are highly punishable acts.

"The offence is punishable by imprisonment for a period that exceeds one year along with a fine up to RO1,000 (or either of the two). The sentence shall be increased to imprisonment for period of up to three years and a fine of RO5,000 if the content involves or engages a minor who has not reached the age of 18 years," Public Prosecution said.

The rules have been in place to curb the menace in the online world. They apply to anyone who uses the Internet or Information Technology to obtain juvenile pornographic materials.

Embassy organises webinar on waste management practices in Nepal, Oman

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Embassy of Nepal in Muscat organised a webinar on Wednesday titled 'Scientific Waste Management: Practices in Nepal and Oman' between six metropolitan cities of Nepal and the officials of be'ah company of Oman on Zoom.

Welcoming the guests and participants H E Sarmila Parajuli Dhakal, Ambassador of Nepal, appreciated the successful efforts of Oman in the waste management sector as she went on highlighting the importance of the programme that sought to enhance the waste management efficiency through exchange of ideas and knowledge.

Chiribabu Maharjan, mayor of Lalitpur metropolitan city, reflected on the role of such programmes in contributing to the

knowledge enhancement and capacity development of participants and thanked the Embassy of Nepal for hosting the webinar.

Bijaya Kumar Sarawagi, mayor of Birgunj metropolitan city, shed light on the necessity of waste management and acknowledged that the webinar

management efforts should be made from minimising wastes at the sources to proper handling until settling at the deposition sites," he said.

Khamis al Siyabi, department head - Municipal Solid Waste Operations, be'ah, highlighted the overall aspects of waste

metropolitan city, Rajeeb Singh, Environment Division, Birgunj metropolitan city, Birat Ghimire, Bharatpur metropolitan city and Sabina Gautam, section officer, Pokhara metropolitan city elaborately talked about the practices of their respective municipalities in the sector of waste management.

The Ambassador of Nepal concluded the webinar with overall feedback accumulated from the presentations. She thanked the participants for their enthusiastic involvement in the webinar and encouraged all the municipalities to continue with their efforts to achieve 'zero waste' target.

"It's never too late to learn best waste management practices and those who already have started can march towards zero waste," H E Sarmila said in her concluding remarks.

It's never too late to learn best waste management practices and those who already have started can march towards zero waste

H E SARMILA PARAJULI DHAKAL

was the first collaborative effort in waste management.

Speaking at the opening session, vice president, Strategic Development, be'ah, Sheikh Mohammed Sulaiman al Harthy said that waste management is a combined effort of government and community. "Effective man-

agement in Oman.

From the Nepali side, Hari Kumar Shrestha, chief, Environment Management Department, Kathmandu metropolitan city, Pradip Kumar Amatya, Environment Division, Lalitpur metropolitan city, Ghanashyam Kafley, Environment Division, Biratnagar

International Women's Day Package

Package Includes:

- PAP Smear
- Thyroid Stimulating Hormone
- Anaemia test
- CBC/Hb test
- Breast examination including teaching for self-screening
- Consultation with Gynaecologist

OMR40

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Sultanate, UK hold key talks on defence matters



Muscat - An official session of talks between H H Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, and Ben Wallace, UK Secretary of State for Defence, was held at the Ministry of Defence in Al Murtafa Camp on Thursday.

H H Sayyid Shihab welcomed the British guest and his accompanying delegation, wishing them a pleasant stay in the sultanate. On his turn, the guest expressed his thanks for the warm welcome and hospitality extended to him and his accompanying delegation.

Wallace underscored the advanced, centuries-old relations between Oman and the United

The UK defence secretary and his delegation arrived in Oman on Wednesday night and had a series of meetings with high-level Omani officials on Thursday and Friday

Kingdom. He also stressed the importance of upgrading these relations to serve the common interest of both countries.

The session explored areas of existing cooperation between the defence ministries in the two countries and means of enhancing these. The two sides also exchanged views on various other matters of common concern.

The session was attended by

Dr Mohammed Nasser al Zaabi, secretary general at the Ministry of Defence, UK's ambassador to the sultanate and the defence attaché at the UK embassy in Muscat.

UK defence secretary meets H E Nu'mani

The UK defence secretary and his delegation arrived in Oman on Wednesday night and had a

series of meetings with high-level Omani officials on Thursday and Friday.

During his visit, Wallace met H E Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Nu'amani, Minister of Royal Office, on Thursday. H E Gen Nu'amani laid emphasis on the advanced relations between the sultanate and the UK.

He also underscored the constant progress made in these relations under the leaderships of the two countries.

The UK minister also visited Vice Admiral Abdullah Khamis al Ra'eesi, Chief of Staff of the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF), on Thursday.

ONA

Trail runner promotes sport among women

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Trail running is no mean feat and covering 50km under nine hours is a rare achievement for a sportswoman in the sultanate. Suad al Nasibi, a student and an adventure enthusiast, completed the 50km trail and won the recently organised Himam Trail Run in Dakhliyah.

The trail began at Bait al Rundaydah in Birkat al Mauz, proceeding to Seeq Village in Jebel Akhdar, and returning to the starting point. Suad won the first place in the women's category by covering the distance under nine hours.

The inaugural Himam Trail Run, with the local Golden Tulip Hotel as its Gold Sponsor, was an initiative under the umbrella of Nizwa Club. The run aimed to provide a competitive atmosphere for all, where experienced runners attempted personal best timings and podium places.

Speaking to *Muscat Daily*, Suad said, "I have gained experience on how to pace the 50km race and that has been a big learning for me. Now, I don't go too fast at the beginning and slow down towards the finish. I maintain a balance between going at a fast pace and slowing down. It is a very big achievement for me to successfully cover the 50km distance in under nine hours."

The ongoing pandemic affected her preparations, but with determination and persistence, she found a way around it, Suad said.

"I trained daily running 5-15km in preparation for the race," she said.



(Supplied photos)



I did this to improve my level compared to last year and to support Omani women who are interested in trail running; I would like to inspire them with my efforts

SUAD AL NASIBI

"I did this for multiple reasons. First of all, to improve my level compared to last year. Second, to support Omani women who are interested in trail running; I would like to inspire them with my efforts. But most Omani women don't practise any sport, so we are trying to educate them."

In 2018, Suad started adventure sports, exploring Oman's nature and hiking.

"In 2019, I participated in the Al Mouj Marathon and got 50th place after covering 21km in two hours and ten minutes."

She added, "I dedicate my victory to Omani women and invite them to practise sports. I will continue to represent the sultanate in local and international competitions to promote Oman as a tourist destination and raise high the sultanate's flag."

Dates complex in Nizwa to start production by year end

Our Correspondent
Muscat

As part of its efforts to help the sultanate achieve self-sufficiency in food security, Nakheel Oman Development Company (NODC) has announced that its Dates Industrial Complex in Nizwa will start production by the end of this year.

"The complex will have an annual capacity of 50,000 tonnes. It will be one of the largest date processing plants in the world which will be a major shift for this sector in the sultanate," said Ali al Araiimi, general manager, NODC.

He added, "Nakheel Oman recently exported its first shipment of Zaad dates to India."

NODC's complex in Nizwa will be dedicated to post-harvesting operations (fumigation, warehousing, sorting and packaging) and other related manufacturing activities in accordance with the



(Supplied photo)

highest industry standards.

NODC is a partnership of the Diwan of Royal Court (represented by the Directorate General of the One Million Date Palms Plantation Project) and Oman National Investments Development Company (Tanmia).

NODC is the main off-taker of the dates, as well as the palm waste harvested from 11 farms distributed across six governorates that form part of the One Million Date Palms Plantation Project.

Another company, Oman Dates Production and Packing Company, which was established in 2018, has invested in a project to establish an integrated factory in Barka and six collection centres in different governorates.

NODC will purchase date products from farmers, process, package and sell these in local markets besides export.

The cost of the complex is RO28mn in the first stage and estimated to reach RO75mn in the final stage.

Illegal firewood seized in North Batinah

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Environment Authority, with the Royal Oman Police, has thwarted an attempt to smuggle a consignment of firewood in North Batinah governorate.

The Environment Authority said, "The authority, in cooperation with the Royal Oman Police, foiled an attempt to smuggle a consignment of firewood from the Port of Sohar in North Batinah governorate. The act is in contravention of the regulations governing logging and charcoal operations issued by Resolution



(Supplied photo)

No 65/2017. Legal procedures have been initiated against the violators.'

Laws of the sultanate prohibit illegal cutting of trees.

According to Article 2 of the law, it is forbidden to export firewood and charcoal. Anyone who violates this will be fined no less than RO200 and not more than RO1,000. The fine is doubled if the violation is repeated.

The law also prohibits logging activities or burning wood without permission from the Environment Authority.

People who violate this will be fined not less than RO50 and not exceeding RO500. The fine is doubled when the violation is repeated.

Tender Announcement

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

Tender No.	Description	Tender Fee (Nonrefundable)	Tender Purchase deadline	Clarification deadline	Tender Submission Date
PDHA/2021/02/05	Leasing Vehicles for Al Maha	100.000	11.03.2021	15.03.2021	18.03.2021

Bank Name & Account Number Bank Muscat (0319005687760012)

The Conditions:

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

Expats arrested for violating marine fishing law in Dhofar

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources (MAFWR) has arrested some expatriates for violating provisions of the Marine Fishing Law and Protection of Living Aquatic Resources in Dhofar.

The ministry said, 'The fisheries control team in Dhofar governorate registered offences of fishing for abalone off-season in the wilayat of Sadah. The team also arrested some expatriates



working on fishing vessels without licences.' MAFWR has urged fishermen to abide by the marine fishing law.

KR Eshraqa donates two buses to women's association in Ibra

Muscat - As part of its ongoing commitment to empower Omani women and develop local communities, Eshraqa, Khimji Ramdas' (KR) social development arm, recently presented two buses to Omani Women's Association in Ibra.

As per a statement, the delivery of buses was held under the patronage of H E Sheikh Rashid bin Ahmed al Shamsi, Undersecretary in the Ministry of Social Development, in the presence of Sheikh Khalaf bin Salim al Ishaqi, Wali of Ibra, Anil Khimji, director, Khimji Ramdas, along with officials from the Department of Social Development in Ibra.

Commenting on the initiative, Khimji said, "Women and children are the anchors of society. At KR, we are deeply committed to building self-reliant communities and work closely with volunteer organisations such as the Omani Women's Association on women empowerment projects to help improve society at all levels. We are glad to support the Ibra Omani Women's Association with their transportation needs by donating buses that will support their entrepreneurship goals."

Expressing his appreciation for the initiative, H E Shamsi said, "We would like to express our



(Supplied photo)

gratitude to KR Eshraqa for this great gesture. As always, we have witnessed from them outstanding efforts aimed towards empowering Omani women. These buses will facilitate the transportation of the association's members as well as supporting them to carry out their activities inside and outside the city. We wish the association and its members more success. We also thank Eshraqa once again for their support toward

developing local communities through their programmes which focus on education, health, community well-being and training."

Hamed Mohammed al Mushaiqri, manager of Department of Social Development, Ibra, said, "We want to express our appreciation to KR Eshraqa for their contributions to empowering local communities and in particular, Ibra Omani Women's Association by providing these buses as well as sup-

porting the association's activities. This initiative will boost the association's efforts made toward local women in Ibra. We look forward to seeing such gestures from the private sector that will support the communities and enhance the quality of people's life."

Intisar bint Salim al Maskari, admin member of Ibra Omani Women's Association, said, "On behalf of Ibra Omani Women's Association, I would like to thank

Khimji Ramdas' Eshraqa for its valuable gesture. Eshraqa delivered a plethora of initiatives aimed at supporting all segments of society. These buses will certainly enhance the productivity of the association's members. Furthermore, it will facilitate the association's various activities."

Eshraqa works towards improving the local community by focusing on four main pillars - education, health, community well-being and training.



VOLVO RECALL CAMPAIGN



Recall Date: 07/03/2021
Campaign Type: Mechanical & Safety
Campaign Segment: Front Wiper Nut Retighten
Product Description: XC60

Model	Year of Production	From	To	Total Number of Vehicles
XC60	2018-2020	YV110AUZ0J1041303	YV110AUZXL1494282	57

Description: Volvo Cars investigations have identified that the front windshield wiper arm fixation nut has been assembled with low torque. This may cause unusual noise if the windshield wiper arm should come in contact with the edge of the hood. It might also cause reduced or no wiping function.

Action: To remedy the concerned vehicles Volvo Cars Oman needs to re-torque the nut holding the front windshield wiper arm in position.

For More Information: Please contact your authorized Volvo retailer for an appointment without delay. This procedure will be completed at no cost and can take up to 1 hour to complete, however due to service scheduling your Volvo retailer may require your vehicle for a longer period.

Contact Details: Call :- +968 71557760/+968 24131747/+968 24131700

Over 1,200 home businesses registered

Muscat - The number of household business activities that were registered at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion

during 2020 reached 1,241.

The ministry pointed out that the businesses, which can be practised by citizens in their homes, are considered as small

projects that can be expanded and improved via opening shops and SME enterprises and can contribute to the country's Gross Domestic Product.

Free home delivery & timely service

HOTLINES

24-hour pharmacies

Scientific Pharmacy: Qurm
24566601, Ruwi 24702850
Muscat Pharmacy: Ruwi
24702542, Salalah 23291635
Al Hashar Pharmacy: Ruwi
24783334

Hospitals and Clinics

Al Hayat International Hospital, Al Ghubra-
22004000, 94267068 / 97049520
94442000 (Emergency)
Al Raffah Hospital: Muscat -
24618900/1/2/3
Sohar - 26704639/49/50
Apollo Hospital Muscat, Hamriya: 24787766, 24782666, 24787780
Abeer Hospital, Ruwi, Muscat 24770800, 90999335, 90999334 (Emergency)
Starcare Hospital: 24557200
Emergency number: 24558333
Dr Harub's Clinic: 24563217, 2456381, 99254940 (Emergency)
Emirates Medical Center: 24604540
KIMS Oman Hospital: 24760105
Lama Polyclinic: CBD 24799077, 24788881, 24788577, 24707566, 24799655, Al Khuwair 24478817, 24478818, Sohar 26751128

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Oil marketing firms' profits hit hard by virus

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman's all three oil marketing companies - Oman Oil Marketing Company (OOMCO), Shell Oman Marketing Company and Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Company - have reported sharp declines in their profits for 2020, mainly due to the COVID-19 pandemic which caused a major slump in fuel consumption and demand.

The sultanate's largest oil marketing company OOMCO's net profit for the year ended December 31, 2020 fell 83 per cent to RO957,000 compared to RO5.62mn net profit reported in the previous year. The company's group turnover dropped more than 24 per cent to RO442.39mn in 2020 against RO583.51mn recorded in 2019.

The closure of many commercial activities, lockdowns and movement restrictions to curb the spread of the virus last year resulted in a dramatic reduction in sales volume of petrol, diesel and aviation fuel in Oman.

'The COVID-19 pandemic and associated consumer behaviour have negatively impacted the economic activity, thereby resulting in lower demand for fuel products and services,' OOMCO said in its yearly report submitted to the Muscat Securities Market (MSM). The company said it is closely monitoring the situation to manage the potential business disruption on its operations, financial performance and will take appropriate required actions.

OOMCO said its retail business continued to exhibit growth in 2020 as the company added



(Muscat Daily)

eight new service stations. The aviation fuel business, OOMCO said, was deeply affected by the closure of the Muscat International Airport from March 2020 till October 2020.

Shell Oman reported a 76.5 per cent drop in net profit for the

year ended December 31, 2020 at RO2.58mn compared to RO10.98mn earned in the previous year. The company's sales revenue dropped by 30 per cent to RO367.09mn in 2020 against RO524.82mn in 2019.

'2020 was a year of unprece-

ented challenges driven by decline in oil prices and the COVID-19 pandemic. This translated into a sharp decline in demand largely resulting from decreased business activity and restrictions imposed to reduce the spread of the disease,' Shell Oman said in

The pandemic and associated consumer behaviour have negatively impacted the economic activity, thereby resulting in lower demand for fuel products

OOMCO

its yearly report.

Much of the uncertainty of 2020, Shell Oman said, is expected to continue into 2021, with the speed of economic recovery, both domestically and globally, remaining unclear.

Al Maha Petroleum also

posted a 75 per cent fall in 2020 net profit at RO863,000 compared to RO3.4mn reported in 2019. The company's sales revenue during the year 2020 dropped by 28 per cent to RO333.8mn from RO465.9mn in the previous year.

'The decline in sales is mainly attributed to the reduction in economic activities and fall in demand due to the strict measures introduced by the government to contain the pandemic,' Al Maha Petroleum said in its yearly report.

In light of the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and sharp declines in profitability, the boards of directors of all three oil marketing firms - OOMCO, Shell Oman and Al Maha Petroleum - have proposed not to distribute any dividend for the year 2020.

Oil prices surge to highest level in nearly two years

New York, US - Oil prices closed on Friday at their highest levels in nearly two years, after producers agreed to increase supply from April by a smaller amount than expected.

A barrel of North Sea Brent Crude (for May delivery) rose 3.9 per cent in London to US\$69.36, its highest closing price since April 2019. In New York, the barrel price of West Texas Intermediate for April delivery climbed 3.5 per cent to US\$66.09, its highest closing level in 22 months.

After a videoconference, the OPEC groups of oil producers and its allies decided to extend output cuts enacted at the pandemic's outset into April, while the production boost they did approve amounted to only a third of what observers had predicted.

While tensions had been expected between oil heavyweights Russia and Saudi Arabia over the way forward, the video-conference meeting was wrapped up in less than three hours with an agreement to extend the majority of production cuts into April.

A statement released after the ministerial-level talks said the only exceptions to this are Russia and Kazakhstan, which will 'be allowed to increase production by 130,000 and 20,000 barrels per day respectively'.

Speaking at a press conference after the meeting, Saudi Energy Minister Prince Abdelaziz bin Salman insisted the bloc would be 'not furious, not fast' when it comes to relaxing the cuts.

Saudi Arabia will extend its additional voluntary cuts of 1mn barrels per day (bpd) for the



month of April.

The 150,000 bpd increase, agreed by OPEC and their Russia-led allies, is much less than the 500,000 bpd boost some market observers had predicted.

Oil prices surged more than 5 per cent by the end of the meeting on Thursday, reaching levels not since early January 2020, before dialing back slightly.

'Today's decision is clearly a positive outcome for oil prices,' said analyst Fawad Razaqada at Thinkmarkets. 'With [coronavirus] vaccinations well underway across important regions of the world, travel demand should keep prices supported for the next few months,' he added.

'OPEC+ took the market by surprise when it decided to roll over its quota, saying rather than anticipate a demand recovery, the group would wait to see it actually recover,' said Ann-Louise Hittle from the Wood Mackenzie consultancy.

The new decision means OPEC+ has decided on cuts totalling almost 7mn bpd for April,

after 7.05mn bpd for March and 7.125mn bpd in February.

The so-called OPEC+ group sharply cut output last year to counter a sudden plunge in prices caused by the coronavirus pandemic, but it agreed to gradually increase supply in January.

Now that vaccination campaigns are underway and demand from top oil importer China has bounced back to pre-pandemic levels, Moscow was said to be keener to turn on the taps again with Riyadh supporting the status quo.

At the start of the closed-door meeting, Prince Abdelaziz had said, 'At the risk of sounding like a stuck record - I would once again urge caution and vigilance' in the face of continuing global economic uncertainty.

For his part, Russian Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak said that while market conditions 'underscore the need to remain vigilant... we can say with careful optimism that the situation is starting to improve'.

AFP

Aramco chief says oil sector job losses expected post-COVID

Ankara, Turkey - Certain oil sector jobs will be lost in the post-pandemic era, raising big concerns for the sector, the head of the Saudi national oil company Saudi Aramco said recently.

COVID-19 had exposed 'harsh realities' for the world, in particular its huge impact on small and medium-sized businesses, and more so on employment, Amin Nasser said.

Nasser's remarks came during a virtual CERAWEEK panel, moderated by Daniel Yergin, vice chairman of IHS Markit, and with the participation of Michael Wirth, CEO of Chevron.



Amin Nasser

'We were faced with the biggest crisis in a century, but our industry is used to challenging situations. We sharpened our focus on resilience, which gave

us the ability to respond quickly,' Nasser was quoted as saying in a company statement.

'My big worry over the long term is a jobless recovery when certain jobs are not going to return,' he said.

In response to a question on the position of oil markets, Nasser expressed optimism and said that 'China and East Asia are seeing strong demand. India is also picking up to pre-pandemic levels. There is an impact in the West and the US, but with the rapid deployment of vaccines, we are seeing good cause for optimism.'

Anadolu Agency

شركة زجاج مجان ش.م.ع
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REPORT OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Dear Shareholders,
On behalf of the Board of Directors, I welcome you to the 25th Annual General Meeting of your Company to present and discuss the Annual Report and Audited Financial Statements for the year ended on 31 December 2020.

That the year 2020 has been a challenging year worldwide with the Covid-19 would be an understatement. The world has never seen any disruption like this in terms of scale and magnitude in the recent past. The world continues to grapple with the Covid-19, although hopes are on the horizon with the vaccination rollout. We pray to the Almighty one for a better and healthy world in the coming months and years.

Financial Results and Company Performance:
Strategy during 2020:-
The company also started feeling the impact from Covid-19 from February onwards in terms of disruption in raw material supplies and lockdowns in various of its export markets. The entire focus was to keep the company fully operational while taking proper precautions for Covid-19 as per best practices.

Despite the challenging circumstances, the company could grow its revenue by 11%, backed by improvement in pricing 5% and volume growth of 6%. The productivity of the plant improved by 3% compared to 2019. **The company's 2020 sales and production were the highest achieved by the company in its history.** The company's exports comprised 88% of its total revenues.

I want to take this opportunity to extend a deep appreciation for the entire team of Majan Glass for this achievement, given the challenging circumstances.

However, the company had to take a significant hit in expenses in importing raw material from non-traditional sources and shipping costs. Exports to profitable markets like the UK also suffered because of the lockdown, which did not enable the company to realise the budgeted overall sales pricing.

The Management conservatively estimates the bottom-line impact due to Covid-19 to be in the range of 820 K OMR and that the financial results do not fully reflect the improvement in operational parameters given the Covid-19 impact

Performance Highlights:-
Sales Revenue recorded at RO 12.139 Million versus RO 10.916 Million during the year 2019, an overall sales increase by 11%.

For the year 2020, production Volume was 393 million of Empty Glass Containers against the output of 338 million during the year 2019 (increase in Production by 16%).

Earnings before Interest, Depreciation, Tax, and Amortization (EBIDTA)
The recurring Earnings before Interest, Depreciation, Tax, and Amortization EBIDTA is RO 564K for the period ended 31 December 2020 against EBIDTA of RO 1.287 MN same period last year. The company received RO 340K during 2019 as an Insurance claim on account of Rain damage in 2018. An increase in Raw Material and Freight rates due to COVID primarily contributed to a reduction in EBIDTA for the current year, which has resulted in the final EBIDTA Earnings before Interest, Depreciation, Tax, and Amortization for the period ending 31 December 2020 to an amount of RO 564K as against EBIDTA of RO 1.287K in the same period in the previous year.

Net Loss before tax for the year is RO 1.180 MN as against a Loss before tax of RO 715K in the previous year, 2019

After-tax for the current year, net Loss is RO 1.047 MN against Loss after tax of RO 608K for the same period in the previous year 2019. Due to the Outbreak of COVID 19, our business was affected by changes in country and product mix, given lockdowns in certain export markets, and increased operational expenses like increased Raw material prices and freight due to the closure of cross country borders. The Management made the best efforts to mitigate the impact by selling to markets not majorly impacted by lockdowns, which resulted in higher shipping and selling expenses. The Management conservatively estimates the Loss of OMR 820K on account of COVID impact for the period ended 31 December 2020

Dividend
After considering the financial performance and taking account of the company's cash flow requirements for various capital expenditures envisaged in 2021, your directors do not recommend any dividend for the financial year ended 31 December 2020.

Future Outlook:-
I am happy to mention we are cautiously optimistic about the year 2021 with a good order booking/forecasts from customers to secure almost its total manufacturing capacity for 2021. We expect operational improvements to continue, including increased output and increased efficiency.

The company is focussing on growing its presence in the food category (Bottles and Jars)

The company is also focusing on consolidating its product/customer/geographic mix to make itself more future resilient to offset the challenges in many Middle East economies, the introduction of local VAT.

Corporate Social Responsibility:-
The company believes that giving back to society is extremely important. We provide monetary and intangible support and guidance to the organizations that are dedicated to improving the quality of life for the concerned people in the society and will continue to do so.

Internal Control:-
The Management regularly reviews the effectiveness of internal controls in discussion with the Audit Committee, Statutory Auditors, and External Internal Auditor, in line with the approved company policy and the charter. The company presently has an External Internal Audit agency, which keeps on reviewing internal controls in various areas of operations under the Audit Committee's guidance. The Board of Directors is pleased to inform the shareholders that, in their opinion, adequate and effective internal control systems are in place.

Omanisation :
The company is committed to recruiting and providing training to Omani employees to enable them to undertake responsibilities in various Operations and Administration areas. The company had an Omanization percentage of around 36 %; however, the Omanization rate at the end of 31 December 2020 was 38%. The company has been organizing various training programs (On the Job and Off the Job) to increase employees' knowledge on different relevant areas of operation.

Acknowledgments:-
On behalf of the Board of Directors and Management of the Company, we thank His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq bin Taimur for his leadership and vision- God protect him, to work for Oman and its dear people for a brighter and more prosperous future. The company also acknowledges the continuous support and commitment from its Shareholders, Customers, Suppliers, Bankers, and the Management & the Employees' constant efforts.

Ali Mohammed Said Tabuk
Chairman
Dated: 21 February 2021

Statement of Comprehensive Income for the year ended on 31st December 2020 (AUDITED):

	For the year ended 31st December 2020 RO '000s	For the year ended 31st December 2019 RO '000s
INCOME		
Sales	12,139	10,916
Cost of Sales	(10,530)	(9,579)
	1,609	1,336
Damage losses	-	-
Other income	128	415
	1,737	1,751
Expenses		
General and administration expenses	(937)	(951)
Selling and distribution	(1,406)	(978)
Depreciation	(39)	(33)
Depreciation on Right of use asset	(101)	(101)
Amortisation	(6)	(6)
	(2,489)	(2,069)
Loss from operations	(753)	(318)
Finance cost	(427)	(397)
Loss for the year Before Taxation	(1,180)	(715)
Taxation	133	106
Net Loss for the year	(1,047)	(608)

Statement of Financial Position as at 31st December 2020 (AUDITED):

	31st December 2020 RO '000s	31st December 2019 RO '000s
ASSETS:		
Non-current Assets		
Property, Plant & Equipment	4,167	4,915
Intangible asset	3	9
Right of use assets	274	376
Deferred taxation	934	801
Total non-current assets	5,379	6,101
Current Assets		
Inventories	4,058	3,831
Accounts & other receivables	1,695	2,104
Prepayments	101	102
Bank balances & cash	463	683
Total current assets	6,317	6,720
Total Assets	11,696	12,821
Current Liabilities		
Current portion of term loan	955	553
Current portion of Lease rent payables	100	88
Bank borrowings	1,474	1,941
Accounts & other payables	3,269	2,353
Total current liabilities	5,799	4,934
Non-current Liabilities		
Employees' end of service payables	311	297
Non-current portion of Lease rent payables	178	278
Non-current portion of term loan	2,210	3,067
Total non-current liabilities	2,699	3,642
Total Liabilities	8,498	8,576
Net Assets	3,198	4,245
Shareholders' equity		
Share capital	4,202	4,202
Legal reserve	1,273	1,273
Retained earnings	(2,278)	(1,231)
Total shareholders' equity	3,198	4,245

Notes:
1. All amounts are in RO '000s.
2. Previous year figures are regrouped /rearranged wherever required.
3. The complete Financial statements of the Company would be made available to any shareholder or interested party on request in Arabic or in English within 7 days from the date of request. The request applications can be sent on the above mentioned address.

MARKET ANALYSIS - OMAN

Financial, industrial stocks pull MSM higher

The benchmark index of the Muscat Securities Market (MSM) ended the week up by 1.41 per cent, supported by the Financial and Industrial indices, which rose by 2.38 per cent and 2.04 per cent, respectively.

The Services index, however, declined by 0.35 per cent. The MSM Shariah index was higher by 0.29 per cent.

Local news

► H E Sultan bin Salim al Habsi, Minister of Finance and chairman of the board of directors of the Capital Market Authority (CMA), issued a decision approving the regulation for public joint stock companies which covers all regulatory aspects related to public joint stock companies focusing on providing legislative framework for all their operations and activities. The decision states the regulation shall have effect on the day following its publication in the Official Gazette except the provisions related to appointment of the internal auditors and legal advisers which will be affected after six months.

► Oman recorded nearly 8 per cent year-on-year increase in the country's budget deficit in January 2021, mainly due to reduced oil production and lower oil prices during the month. The sultanate's budget deficit widened to RO370.8mn in the first month of this year against RO344.4mn recorded in January 2020, an increase of

7.7 per cent, the Ministry of Finance (MoF) said last week. 'In January 2021, the state's general budget recorded a decline in public spending and revenue, with an increase in deficit as compared to the same period of 2020,' the MoF said.

► ONEIC, in line with its strategic approach to enhance the electronic collection channels, has entered into agreement with a government entity pertaining to the collection of some of its fees via electronic payment channels. It is expected that the agreement shall take effect during March 2021.

► Oman Ceramic in its annual report announced that emerging market opportunities available in Qatar market on account of FIFA 2022 is most likely to provide the company with much needed impetus to both top and bottom line of the company.

The company also announced that it is all set to increase its presence in Pakistan market by expanding its presence in all geographical and market segments across the country during the year.

► Al Maha Marketing announced that it has received a letter of intent for the supply of aviation fuel to Oman Air to the extent of 50 per cent of their total fuel requirement at Muscat International Airport for two years starting from March 1, 2021 to February 28, 2023.

► Oman Oil Marketing dis-



closed that it has received a letter of intent to supply jet fuel to Oman Air at Muscat International Airport with a volumes of 50 per cent commencing March 1, 2021 for a period of 2 years. The company further announced that it has signed a memorandum of understanding with O-Taxi, Oman's on demand transportation service, to provide more than 1800 O-Taxi drivers with access to a range of exclusive benefits and features when refueling and shopping at OOMCO service stations across the sultanate.

The deal is the latest in a string of partnerships OOMCO has secured, as it continues to build on its reputation for providing high-quality fuel services,

while being the most customer-centric fuel marketer in the region.

► Oman's government is transferring its stake in one of the Middle East's largest oil blocks to a newly-established energy firm as the cash-strapped sultanate looks to use the asset to raise debt. State-controlled Energy Development Oman will hold the country's 60 per cent ownership of Block 6, according to a royal decree published last week. The stake is being moved from another government company, Petroleum Development Oman. Block 6, off Oman's coast, has a production capacity of 650,000 barrels a day. Royal Dutch Shell Plc holds 34 per

cent, while Total SE owns 4 per cent.

► Oman's unemployment rate stood at 3.0 per cent in January 2021 compared to 2.9 per cent in December 2020. Unemployment amongst female stood at 10.2 per cent while the same amongst male stood at 1.3 per cent in January 2021. Amongst the age group, 15-24 recorded the highest unemployment at 15.6 per cent, followed by 6.5 per cent for the age group 25-29 and 2.1 per cent for the age group 30-34. In terms of unemployment by educational status, highest was at 54.4 per cent for the people with higher diploma.

GCC markets

GCC records net foreign out-

flows of US\$192mn in February 2021; year to date 2021 inflows stand at US\$1.14bn. Except Saudi Arabia, almost all countries witnessed outflows in the month of February 2021. Saudi Arabia recorded net foreign inflows of US\$91mn in February after recording net foreign inflows of US\$510mn in January 2021.

Saudi-listed banks reported a 2 per cent decrease year-on-year in aggregate net profit before Zakat and tax to SAR5.15bn in January 2021, data from the Saudi Central Bank showed. The sector's aggregate earnings fell by 23 per cent to SAR38.7bn in 2020, compared to SAR50.32bn a year earlier. The data covers 11 listed banks and some foreign banks operating in Saudi Arabia.

Kuwaiti government has proposed new amendments to the country's public debt law, including capping borrowing to maximum 60 per cent of gross domestic product, Reuters quoted the head of a parliamentary finance committee as saying. Kuwait is facing a liquidity squeeze because of a standoff between government and parliament over the public debt law.

The Bahraini government will present a bill in parliament in the next few months to allow the Future Generations reserve fund to take higher deductions from oil sales, the state news agency cited Finance and Econ-

omy Minister as saying. The deductions will help to replace money withdrawn from the fund to support the general budget as part of efforts to tackle the coronavirus outbreak, the minister said.

Recommendation

Global stocks saw more selling than buying as selected sectors showed more notable weakness. As investors re-establish their expectations of a world where fiscal policy becomes more influential than monetary policy, a shift away from growth stocks seems to have begun.

Another wave of worry building inside the stock market is rising interest rates and inflation, which weighed on investor sentiment.

Some of the GCC equity markets, other than Kuwait, Qatar, Oman and DFM, ended February 2021 in the positive territory, while the S&P GCC Composite index continued its upward trend, ending the month 3 per cent higher. All markets, except Oman and Bahrain, are higher than March 2020 levels.

We believe that growth trend will continue as valuations remain attractive.

We believe that higher oil prices and its consequent support to GCC economies will continue to support the market. We advise investors to invest in banking, petrochemical and infrastructure stocks.

By special arrangement with U Capital

China says wants economy to grow over 6% this year

Beijing, China - China's leaders said on Friday they had set a target for GDP to grow more than 6 per cent this year, as the world's second largest economy surges out of a pandemic-induced slump.

The global growth powerhouse stuttered in 2020, logging its slowest expansion in four decades as strict virus containment measures at home collided with a freeze in international trade.

The slowdown raised doubts about the Communist Party's ability to deliver on its pledge of continued prosperity in return for unquestioned political power.

But with the coronavirus largely brought under control domestically, analysts expect a strong comeback, with some suggesting the economy could expand by as much as nine per cent this year.

Beijing usually sets a target it feels it can exceed. It did not set



People commute during the morning rush hour in the financial district in Beijing, China on Thursday (AFP)

one at all last year.

Announcing the figure at the start of the annual legislative session, Premier Li Keqiang said the government had 'taken into account the recovery of economic activity'.

The target of over 6 percent also dovetails with future goals, Li said, and these include reform, innovation, and 'high-quality development'.

Authorities say they want to create 11mn new urban jobs this year, and keep urban unemployment around 5.5 per cent.

Outside observers caution that China's unemployment figures may not tell the whole story, with many people across the vast nation involved in the informal workforce.

Analysts had widely predicted the continued global uncertainty

would make it tricky for China to set a GDP target again this year, and greeted the 6 per cent figure as deliberately cautious.

"The bar is set too low... [it's] as if there is no target," ING chief economist for Greater China Iris Pang told AFP.

This could be because Beijing does not want to slash its growth target next year, when distortions from the pandemic subsided, added Nomura chief China economist Lu Ting.

Leaders also did not specify a growth target in its new five-year plan draft published on Friday, as is its usual custom, only saying it would be 'maintained within a reasonable range'.

The post-COVID economic rebound saw China's GDP growth recorded at about 2 per cent last year, which made it the only major economy to post positive figures in a year lost to the virus.

AFP

VW brand doubles sales targets for EVs

Berlin, Germany - The flagship VW brand of German automobile giant Volkswagen said it hoped electric vehicles (EVs) would account for 70 per cent of its European sales by 2030, doubling its previous target in the face of ever stricter legislation.

"We are stepping up the pace. In the coming years, we will change Volkswagen as never before," said CEO Ralf Brandstatter in a statement.

All-electric vehicles would exceed 70 per cent of VW's sales volumes in Europe and 50 per



cent in the US and China by 2030, said the carmaker.

It added that it was eyeing an operating return on sales of at

least 6 per cent from 2023 as it reduced fixed and material costs.

The efforts are part of a strategy which has seen the VW group invest more than €30bn into e-mobility in order to comply with stricter environmental rules in the EU.

In order to achieve the new goals, VW said it would bring out at least one new battery-powered model each year between now and 2030.

VW's all-electric ID.3 became the second best-selling car in Eu-

rope last December, and the brand has US e-mobility pioneer Tesla in its sights with its 2021 ID.4 SUV model.

Tesla has upped the pressure on major German carmakers such as VW in recent years with its plans to open a manufacturing plant just outside Berlin next July.

VW remains 'ahead of most of the competition in e-mobility' and could catch Tesla in terms of global sales volumes of EVs by 2022, said Frank Schwoppe, analyst at NordLB bank.

AFP

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Notice for Annual Ordinary and Extra Ordinary General Meeting for Majan Glass Company SAOG

The Board of Directors of **MAJAN GLASS (the "Company")** has the pleasure to invite the shareholders to attend the Annual General Meeting, which will be held at 05:00 PM on 22/03/2021, via the electronic platform to hold general meetings which can be assessed through the website of Muscat Clearing & Depository Company (www.mcd.gov.om). If the quorum requirement for holding the Annual General Meeting is not fulfilled, a second Annual General Meeting shall be held at 05:00PM on 29/03/2021, to discuss the following agendas:

Extra Ordinary Agendas:

- To discuss and approve amending article (6) of the articles of association of the Company which relates to the board of directors' composition (as attached).

Ordinary Agendas Annual:

- To consider and approve the Board of Director's Report for the financial year ended 31 December 2020.
- To consider and approve the Corporate Governance Report for the financial year ended 31 December 2020.
- To consider the Auditor's Report and to approve the Financial Statements (Balance Sheet and Profit and Loss Account) of the Company for the financial year ended 31 December 2020.
- To consider the amounts allocated and spent for the company's social responsibilities for the year ended on 31/12/2020 (as per the Annexure).
- To consider and approve an amount of RO 500/- for Corporate Social Responsibility programs, for the year ending on 31/12/2021.
- To approve the sitting fees to the Board of Directors' meetings and its sub-committees for the previous financial year ended 31/12/2020, and to determine the sitting fees for the next fiscal year ending on 31/12/2021 (Annexure A).
- To consider and approve the transactions entered into by the Company with related parties during the fiscal year ended on 31/12/ 2020. (Annexure B)
- To consider and approve the transactions the Company will enter into with related parties during the financial year ending on 31/12/2021. (Annexure B)
- The appointment of the Statutory Auditor for the Company for the financial year ending 31/12/2021 and determine their fees.
- To elect a new Board of Directors for the Company from amongst Shareholders or non-shareholders.

Any person who wishes to be nominated to the Board of Directors of the Company is required to fill in a Director's Nomination Form. Such a form can be obtained from the Company. The completed Form should be delivered to the Company at least five (5) days prior to the date of the Annual Ordinary General Meeting of the Company (no later than the end of the business hours on Tuesday, 16 March 2021). The candidate must satisfy the company's board membership requirements.

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

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

For further information, please contact on telephone No 98082098 or email: fc@majanglass.com

Chairman	Legal Advisor	External Auditor
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ACCA re-accredits Bank Muscat

Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the sultanate, in line with its vision 'To serve you better, everyday' and its crucial role in developing Omani human resources, has announced that it has been successfully re-accredited by the UK-based Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA) as an ACCA Approved Employer.

This accreditation is given to formally recognised partners of ACCA, and rewards organisations which support ACCA qualifications and ensure that the highest standards are met in providing a working environment that supports ACCA members and trainees. Today, a number of bank employees have various ACCA-related qualifications.

Expressing his happiness at the bank's continued demonstration of leadership in developing human resources, Said Salim al Aufi, group deputy general manager - Human Resources, Bank Muscat, said, "The bank has been an ACCA Approved Employer from 2007 onwards and we are very happy to continue meeting and surpassing all the benchmarks needed for maintaining this internationally recognised certification. As a dream employer for Omani youth, the bank has been providing training to its employees and empower-



Said Salim al Aufi

ing them to grow further in their careers.

"The ACCA Approved Employer programme is used by organisations globally to demonstrate commitment to best practices. All our existing and potential employees will be reassured of the excellent human resources development opportunities offered by the bank because of the ACCA reaccreditation as well as many other recognitions and accolades received previously."

Bank Muscat has been recognised by ACCA from 2007 onwards and has supported many employees in gaining ACCA certification and excel in their roles at the bank. It is currently providing scholarships for four bachelor's degree holders to complete their Chartered Certified Accountant course from ACCA through the College of Banking

and Financial Studies.

Through its training partners, Bank Muscat ensures all efforts are made to support and enable them to excel during the training programme. Bank Muscat has always attached great importance to national initiatives for human resources development. From the moment employees join the bank, suitable training and development opportunities are provided to build their skills and familiarize them with work-related processes and procedures.

The bank's Jadara Academy, which is accredited by the Global Association of Corporate Universities and Academics, provides a comprehensive platform and framework for all staff learning and development programmes. In 2020, the Jadara Academy organised training programmes where as many as 17,907 training seats covering 20,418 man days were availed by the bank's employees.

Bank Muscat's HR practices focus on creating, nurturing and supporting people to meet the ambitious growth plans of the bank. Recognising that highly motivated employees are the foundation of the bank's success, it makes all efforts to ensure that employees are well trained, motivated and offered excellent and well rewarded opportunities during their employment at the bank.

Cloud Acropolis appoints new CEO in major step

Cloud Acropolis (The Cloud Data Company LLC) has appointed Khaled Salman al Balushi as the new CEO of the company in a major step towards asserting Cloud Acropolis future growth targets and expansion of services in the data hosting industry and cloud solutions.

As one of the very few wholly private, fully Omani data centres in the sultanate, Cloud Acropolis is uniquely positioned to serve the specific needs of the local and international market, whether it is an up and rising tech startups that requires competitive offerings with direct access to local support or government entities and state owned enterprises that have specific requirements.

Balushi commented on the new appointment and said, "I am greatly privileged and honoured to have been shortlisted and finally appointed with the responsibility of steering the next phase of growth for Cloud Acropolis. Being fortunate to have served for both the biggest international players in cloud solutions and data hosting as well as local



Khaled Salman al Balushi

emerging players, I can say that we have a niche to serve here, and in the coming months we can expect to see cloud acropolis expand."

Data centres around the world have experienced a paradigm shift in recent years as their function evolved from the straight forward function of keeping the web running by hosting the data that populates websites and other web services, to offering highly sophisticated tech services and solutions as more and more functions migrate from software running on the user end to the cloud. A majority of software solutions nowadays operate on a SaaS

(Software as a Service) business model where instead of purchasing a software in a one lifetime licenses as a standalone product, the SaaS model turns it into a monthly or yearly subscription which makes it instantly affordable to most with lesser or sometimes no upfront implementation costs and requirements. An additional benefit is always accessing the latest version of the service.

As the SaaS model propagates personal and business tech solutions so does the eventual migration of software to the cloud, a good example of how word processing software is slowly migrating towards a cloud only solution from its previous local one, this in turn makes it ever more important for data centers and cloud solution providers to stay on top of the emergent trends and market needs.

Cloud Acropolis is an Omani company headquartered in the sultanate that provides cloud hosting services, data management and protection. It currently serves a diverse segment of customers.

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SUMMARY OF ASSETS AND LIABILITIES OF UNIMONI EXCHANGE LLC					
AS ON 31st DECEMBER 2020					
ASSETS	Amount in RO '000		LIABILITIES	Amount in RO '000	
	31.12.2020	31.12.2019		31.12.2020	31.12.2019
1. Cash in Hand	3,541	7,023	1. Capital & Reserves	15,518	16,265
2. Deposits with Central bank of Oman	190	190	2. Borrowings from Banks	-	-
3. Precious Metals	-	-	3. Balances due to Branches	-	-
4. Balances due from Banks	9,515	6,636	4. Balances due to Money Changers	14	127
5. Balances due from Branches	-	-	5. Loans and Advances payable	-	-
6. Balances due from Money Changers	1,735	104	6. Cheques and Drafts issued and outstanding	196	307
7. Cheques and Drafts purchased	-	-	7. Other Liabilities	3,247	3,890
8. Loans and Advances	-	-			
9. Investments	-	-			
10.Fixed Assets	1,112	1,267			
11.Other Assets	2,882	5,369			
TOTAL	18,975	20,589	TOTAL	18,975	20,589



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Al Maha Ceramics SAOG

PO Box 482, Postal Code 322, Falaj Al Qabail, Sohar, Oman. Tel: 26752322/23
Fax: 26752177, Email: info@almahaceramics.com, web: www.almahaceramics.com

Invitation for the Annual Ordinary General Meeting of Shareholders

The Board of Directors of Al Maha Ceramics S.A.O.G is pleased to invite the shareholders to attend the Ordinary Annual General Meeting to be held at 5.00 pm on 22nd, March 2021 via the electronic platform for general meetings which may be accessed through Muscat Clearing and Depository's website (www.mcd.gov.om). In the event that the quorum to convene the Annual General Meeting is not complete, the second general meeting will be convened at 5.00 pm on 25th, March 2021, to discuss the following agenda:-

- To consider and approve the Board of Directors' Report on the activities of the Company and its financial status for the financial year ended on 31 December 2020.
- To consider and approve the Board of Directors' Report on the organization and management of the Company for the financial year ended on 31 December 2020.
- To consider the Auditor's Report on the financial statements of the Company for the financial year ended on 31 December 2020.
- To consider and approve the proposal to distribute cash dividends (by the date of AGM) for the financial year ended on 31 December 2020 at the rate of 23 % of the share capital (23 Baizas for each share).
- To approve the sitting fees paid to the Board of Directors and Board Sub-Committees for the financial year ended on 31 December 2020 and to determine their sitting fees for the next financial year.
- To consider and approve the proposal to distribute remuneration fees of an amount of RO 33,300 (Omani Rial Thirty Three Thousand Three Hundred) for the year ended on 31 December 2020.
- To notify the general assembly of the related party transactions entered into by the Company during the financial year ended on 31 December 2020.
- To consider and approve the related party transactions which will be entered into by the Company during the financial year ending on 31 December 2021.
- To brief the general assembly of the contributions made to support community services during the financial year ended on 31 December 2020.
- To consider and approve the proposal to allocate RO 15,000 (Omani Rial Fifteen Thousand) to support community services for the financial year ending on 31 December 2021.
- To elect members of the Board of Directors of the Company (comprising shareholders or non-shareholders). Anyone who wishes to stand as a candidate shall complete the form prepared for this purpose and submit it to the Company at least five working days prior to the Annual General Meeting which is on 16th, March 2021. Forms submitted after this date will not be accepted.
- Appointment of statutory auditors for the company for the financial year ending 31 December 2021 and specify their fees.

Pursuant to the Articles of Association of the Company and the Rules for Convening General Meetings of Public Joint Stock Companies via Electronic Means issued by the Capital Market Authority, we would like to bring your attention to the following:

- Only juristic persons shall have the right to appoint a proxy to attend the Annual Ordinary General Meeting and vote on their behalf via electronic means, provided that this natural person has an investor number in the Muscat Clearing and Depository Company.
- Voting on any of the items on the agenda shall commence no more than three days before the date of the general meeting and until the voting process ends on the day of the meeting. If a shareholder's balance is increased or decreased, the voting process will be cancelled, and the shareholder must cast his vote again on the day of the general meeting.

If you have any queries please call (Mrs. Etab Al Mamari) on phone No. 2675 2322

Chairman

Auditors

Legal Advisor



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Al Maha Ceramics SAOG

PO Box 482, Postal Code 322, Falaj Al Qabail, Sohar, Oman. Tel: 26752322/23
Fax: 26752177. Email: info@almahaceramics.com, web: ww.almahaceramics.com

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Dear Shareholders,

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I am pleased to present the results of Al Maha Ceramics SAOG for the financial year ended 31st December, 2020.

Company's Performance:

Your company has achieved a revenue of RO 9.010 million in this year over the previous year's revenue of RO 7.440 million, an increase of 21.10%

Profit before tax for the year is RO 1.794 million as compared to RO 1.190 million in the previous year, an increase of 50.83%.

Net profit after tax for the year is RO 1.524 million as compared to RO 1.011 million in the previous year, an increase of 50.73% which is mainly due to increase in sales volume, better price realization and cost improvement initiatives.

Your Company complies with the Omanisation requirements and invests in continuous training and improvement programs to enhance the skills of our human resources.

Dividend:

The Board of Directors is pleased to recommend a cash dividend of 23 Bz per Share (2019: 15 Bz per Share) for the year ending 31st December, 2020 subject to approval of shareholders at the Annual General Meeting.

Future Outlook:

Your company has effectively managed the multi-dimensional challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic and overall economic scenario by registering growth in the company's operations. Market situation is expected to be challenging in Oman as well as in the region. Your company will continue to explore opportunities for value-based technology and business synergies. There is continuous endeavor to explore new and untapped markets regionally and globally. Your company has maintained the Saudi Arabian Standards Organization (SASO) and ISO accreditations.

It gives us immense pleasure to inform that your company has been conferred with 'HM Sultan's Award for Industrial Excellence 2020', this is the third most prestigious award in last one year and others being "Oman Most trusted brand" and "Superbrands".

Thanks and Appreciation

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I would like to extend my sincere thanks and appreciation to our honourable shareholders, customers, banks and suppliers for their support during the year. Also, thankful to the executive management and all employees of the company for their sincere efforts, and we look forward for achieving better results in the years to come.

On behalf of the Board of Directors and employees, we pray to Almighty Allah to bless His Majesty with long life, health and grant him success to pursue the march of goodness and development for the prosperity of Oman and its people.

For Al Maha Ceramics SAOG

Masoud Humaid Malik Al Harthy
Chairman

Note: The complete accounts of Al Maha Ceramics SAOG will be delivered to any shareholder or the interested party, who request them at the above address, in either Arabic or English as requested, within 7 days of receipt of such request.

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2020

	2020 RO	2019 RO
ASSETS		
Non-current assets		
Property, plant and equipment	6,906,960	7,647,622
Investment property	225,000	225,000
Right-of-use assets	464,109	491,900
	<u>7,596,069</u>	<u>8,364,522</u>
Current assets		
Inventories	1,515,101	1,892,529
Trade and other receivables	2,221,170	2,195,880
Cash and bank balances	1,751,544	350,086
	<u>5,487,815</u>	<u>4,438,495</u>
Total assets	<u>13,083,884</u>	<u>12,803,017</u>
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES		
Equity		
Share capital	5,500,000	5,500,000
Share premium	88,199	88,199
Legal reserve	1,833,333	1,697,533
	<u>2,878,405</u>	<u>2,314,894</u>
Total equity	<u>10,299,937</u>	<u>9,600,626</u>
Liabilities		
Non-current liabilities		
Non-current portion of lease liabilities	423,667	416,366
Employees' end of service benefits	260,879	252,026
Deferred tax liability	319,611	348,950
	<u>1,004,157</u>	<u>1,017,342</u>
Current liabilities		
Current portion of lease liabilities	59,692	85,807
Bank borrowings	-	500,000
Trade and other payables	1,420,552	1,411,142
Income tax payable	299,546	188,100
	<u>1,779,790</u>	<u>2,185,049</u>
Total liabilities	<u>2,783,947</u>	<u>3,202,391</u>
Total equity and liabilities	<u>13,083,884</u>	<u>12,803,017</u>
Net assets per share	<u>0.187</u>	<u>0.175</u>

Statement of comprehensive income for the year ended 31 December 2020

	2020 RO	2019 RO
Revenue	9,009,838	7,440,084
Cost of sales	(5,912,913)	(5,111,354)
Gross profit	3,096,925	2,328,730
Other income	45,935	54,192
Selling and distribution expenses	(717,238)	(651,862)
General and administrative expenses	(540,265)	(488,926)
Allowance for expected credit loss (net)	(46,386)	(8,235)
Profit from operations	1,838,971	1,233,899
Finance charges	(44,473)	(54,668)
Realised gain on sale of investments at fair value through profit or loss	-	10,547
Profit for the year before taxation	1,794,498	1,189,778
Income tax	(270,197)	(178,466)
Net profit and total comprehensive income for the year	1,524,311	1,011,312
Basic and diluted earnings per share	0.028	0.018

BAIC Oman announces attractive offer on A115 hatchback, X65 and X35 models

Gulf Great Sands LLC, the exclusive importer of BAIC in Oman, has announced an attractive offer on a range of BAIC vehicles, including A115 hatchback, X65 and X35 as part of its exclusive new year promotion for the benefit its customers. BAIC’s ‘New Year’ promotion, which has already begun will go on till March 10.

The offer is available on A115 hatchback (1.5lt, 4 AT, 111hp) , X65 crossover (2.0lt, 6AT, 2wd) and X35 crossover (1.5lt, 4AT, 111hp). The starting price of A115 hatchback is RO2,999, X65 is RO4,999 and X35 is RO4,599 excluding of the assured cash gift.

One of China’s top three auto groups, BAIC boasts of 60 years of engineering expertise. The company, which was established in 1958, has eight major production bases and a cumulative output of 12mn cars.

Part of the Bahwan International Group Holding Company (BIGH), Gulf Great Sands LLC (GGS) is an exclusive distributor of BAIC and many other reputed international automotive brands in Oman.

BAIC is extending an all-en-



compassing deal along with competitive prices across its range. It includes assured cash gift, gift, free first year registration, free first year insurance (Oman and UAE), three years or 50,000km free service package (PMS). The offers are subject to terms and conditions and are applicable on vehicle purchased for personal use only.

A GGS LLC spokesperson said, “Our promotion boasts of a host of benefits for customers purchasing BAIC’s innovative models. BAIC’s hatchback and crossover have been impressing automobile enthusiasts in Oman.

By announcing the promotion which offers great benefits and value propositions, we want to ensure an exclusive ownership experience for our customers. We want to emphasise our commitment to provide the best in customer satisfaction.”

Assured cash gift
The assured cash gift amount for A115 hatchback is RO950, X35 is RO1,250 and X65 Basic and X65 Comfort is RO1,600.

Free first year registration
Customers buying A115 hatchback, X65 and X35 will be of-

fered free first year registration on purchase of BAIC vehicles. Applicable on private registrations, not applicable on commercial registrations.

Free first year insurance
BAIC patrons buying A115 hatchback, X65 and X35 can enjoy benefits such as free first year insurance (Oman and UAE).

Free service package (PMS)
A115 hatchback and X65 will be offered one year/10,000km Periodic Maintenance Service and X65 will be offered 3 years or

50,000km Periodic Maintenance Service. This excludes battery, wear and tear parts. Offer includes only 10,000km service intervals.

BAIC A115
The A115 hatchback is equipped with 1.5lt engine delivering a net power of 111 hp, four speed automatic transmission with 14-inch alloy wheels.

The stylish all-new BAIC A115 hatchback is spacious to suit multiple driving environments yet very affordable to own.

The cage-type body, stamped steel doors, dual airbags and ABS

all contribute to its superior safety. The flying wing design upper grill resonates with the trapezoidal designs lower grill..

BAIC X65 crossover
As the first crossover based on SAAB technologies, X65 combines space of a MPV and comfort of a sedan. BAIC X65 comfort ensures excellent performance with 2.0lt 174 Hp Turbo Engine, new generation AISIN 6 Speed Automatic transmission with Smart Paddle Shift.

X65 Comfort has Smart Equipment’s like Machine Cut Alloy wheels, Panoramic Sun-

roof, Leather Seats, Power driver seat, Rear View camera, Smart Key and push button start all of which provide customer with enjoyable driving experience.

X65 comfort inherits the European Safety Standards due to which it meets the five-star NCAP rating and is equipped with safety features like ABS, EBD, ESP, Curtain Airbags, Bluetooth, TPMS, Rear view camera and Parking sensors.

BAIC X35 crossover
Blending comfort and technology, the all-new crossover BAIC X35 has an impressive presence.

The all-new BAIC X35 Crossover, powered by a 1.5lt engine is a perfect choice for the youth and small families in Oman. BAIC X35 has an aggressive wide body SUV Exterior Styling, Luxury Class- Spacious Interiors and therefore meant for everyone in the family.

For more information and to book test drives, call BAIC Oman Toll free number 80050800, WhatsApp on 79005800 or visit our showroom in Wattayah.



شركة التغليف المحدودة (ش.م.ع.ع.)

Packaging Co Ltd. (SAOG)

CHAIRMAN’S REPORT

On behalf of the Board of Directors, we present the Chairman’s Report of “Packaging Company Limited (SAOG)” for the year ended on 31st December 2020

Year 2020 ended with revenue of RO.8,886,709 and net Profit (after tax) of RO.323,764 as against revenue of RO.9,743,043 and net Profit of RO.166,729 (after tax) in the previous year 2019. The profit before depreciation is RO.808,225 (after tax) for the year 2020 compared to profit before depreciation of RO.707,194 (after tax) in the previous year 2019.

The paper prices started increasing in the third quarter of 2020 and also competition has become severe from Oman & UAE suppliers, this will have impact on our profitability of the company in the year 2021.

We would like to take this opportunity to express our sincere thanks to all of you for the patience and confidence reposed in the company. We also thank the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and the Muscat Securities Market for their supports.

The Board of Directors express their loyalty to His Majesty Haitham Bin Tariq Bin Taimur and look forward to his able leadership and growth oriented policies for the development of Sultanate of Oman.

Chairman of the Board of Directors

OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 31ST DECEMBER 2020.

	2020 RO	2019 RO
ASSETS		
NON-CURRENT ASSET		
Property, plant and equipment	4,989,072	5,434,159
CURRENT ASSETS		
Inventories	2,064,424	2,547,002
Trade and other receivables	3,098,606	3,049,804
Other assets	139,190	10,823
Cash and cash equivalent	30,869	284,480
	5,333,089	5,892,109
TOTAL ASSETS	10,322,161	11,326,268
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES		
MEMBERS’ FUNDS		
Share capital	3,000,000	3,000,000
Share premium	90,811	90,811
Legal reserve	514,292	481,916
General reserve	53,378	53,378
Revaluation reserve	649,245	649,245
Accumulated profits	365,157	73,769
Equity funds	4,672,883	4,349,119
NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Long term bank borrowing	—	92,974
Deferred tax liability	260,688	251,763
Staff end of service gratuity	115,065	93,431
	375,753	438,168
CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Short term bank borrowings	2,682,547	4,072,072
Trade and other payables	2,354,363	2,291,921
Contract liability	14,141	6,288
Loan from a related party	100,000	93,700
Amount due to a related party	74,000	75,000
Current tax payable	48,474	—
	5,273,525	6,538,981
TOTAL EQUITY AND LIABILITIES	10,322,161	11,326,268

STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER

	2020 RO	2019 RO
REVENUE	8,886,709	9,743,043
Cost of sales	(7,644,631)	(8,414,758)
GROSS PROFIT	1,242,078	1,328,285
Other operating income	351,700	122,808
Depreciation	(10,416)	(15,078)
Allowance for expected credit losses	(36,779)	(15,000)
General and administration expenses	(611,333)	(609,444)
Selling and distribution expenses	(412,357)	(425,189)
PROFIT FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES	522,893	386,382
Finance costs	(141,733)	(190,028)
NET PROFIT FOR THE YEAR BEFORE TAX	381,160	196,354
Income tax expense for current year	(57,399)	(29,625)
NET PROFIT FOR THE YEAR AFTER TAX	323,764	166,729
Other comprehensive income:		
Items that will not be reclassified subsequently to profit or loss: (net of tax)		
Loss on revaluation of freehold land	—	(200,000)
Deferred tax release on revaluation decrease	—	12,637
Other comprehensive income/(loss) for the year	—	(187,363)
TOTAL COMPREHENSIVE INCOME/ (LOSS) FOR THE YEAR	323,764	20,634
Basic earnings per share	0.108	0.056

Note: The Complete accounts will be sent by mail to any shareholder who request them either in Arabic or English within 7 days of the receipt of the request at the company’s address at PO Box No 2818, Ruwi, Postal Code 112, Sultanate of Oman.

Gulf Air to trial IATA Travel Pass app

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) is partnering with Gulf Air, the national carrier of Bahrain, to trial IATA Travel Pass – a mobile app to help passengers easily and securely manage their travel in line with any government requirements for COVID-19 testing or vaccine information.

Gulf Air joins a growing number of carriers to participate in a trial of IATA Travel Pass to help pave the way for the re-establishment of global connectivity while managing the risks of



Capt Waleed al Alawi

COVID-19. Gulf Air passengers will be able to create a ‘digital passport’ allowing them to

match their travel itineraries with the COVID-19 health requirements of their destination country and validate compliance. During the trial, the service will be available to Gulf Air’s customers travelling on select routes to and from Bahrain.

“Gulf Air is proud to partner with IATA to trial IATA Travel Pass to simplify and enhance compliance with COVID-19 health requirements and ensure passengers can fly with confidence. IATA Travel Pass acts as a ‘digital passport’ enabling trav-

ellers to securely and effortlessly navigate their travel plans, knowing that their verified travel credential is based on the latest COVID-19 information, strict data privacy regulations and entry rules for their destination,” said Capt Waleed Abdulhameed al Alawi, Gulf Air’s acting chief executive officer.

“We are proud to work with Gulf Air to trial IATA Travel Pass. This is an important step in enabling international travel during the pandemic,” said Nick Careen, IATA senior VP.

Purshottam Kanji Women’s Day contest

On the occasion of International Women’s Day, Purshottam Kanji Exchange, Oman’s first financial institution, is organising a special competition with the ‘Life in Oman Online’ Facebook page.

Who is the woman who has influenced, or attracted you in your life? Post a comment on the Life in Oman Online Facebook page related to Women’s Day

post (see the first post on the page). The competition runs until March 15 .

Women are always a source of strength, support and care in the life of any person. At the same time today they have come to all the important areas of the world. So there will definitely be a woman who has influenced the life of every person.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, they responded very positively to all crises.

Supin James, general manager, Purshottam Kanji Exchange, and Binoy Simon Varghese, head of Operations, said that the next era is a time when women are coming to critical positions, so everyone can talk about the influential women

in their lives. The popularity of the competition, which was earlier linked to the Life in Oman Online page, prompted the competition to be held on Women’s Day as well. Everyone in Oman can participate in this competition. Experiences can be written in any language. Contestants must like the Life in Oman Online Facebook page.

AHF OFFICIAL VISITS SPORTS MUSEUM



Dato Sree Tayyab Ikram, CEO/secretary general - Asian Hockey Federation (AHF), visited SAS Naqvi Sports, Olympics and Hockey Museum. He was accompanied by top hockey officials. He was greeted and honoured by S A S Naqvi, former technical advisor Oman Olympic Committee and national hockey coach of India and Oman, and Golaf Rehman, museum curator

Myanmar protests continue as UN urged to hear ‘pleas’

Yangon, Myanmar - Anti-coup demonstrators returned to the streets of Myanmar on Saturday, a day after a United Nations envoy urged the Security Council to hear the nation’s ‘desperate pleas’ and take swift action to restore democracy.

The country has been in turmoil since a February 1 putsch ousted civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi from power, triggering a massive uprising from hundreds of thousands angered to be returned to military rule.

Security forces have escalated an increasingly brutal crackdown on demonstrators - killing more than 50 people since the coup - but protesters rallied again on Saturday.

From the dusty roads of northern Lashio - where young protesters stared down police behind homemade shields - to central Loikaw city in view of Myanmar’s eastern mountains, demonstrators continued to march for democracy.

“Our revolution must win,” chanted protesters in Loikaw, who included civil servants such as teachers in their green and white uniforms.

The country’s vital sectors have been crippled by an ongoing ‘Civil Disobedience Movement’ - a campaign urging civil servants to boycott working under a military regime.

The impact has been felt at every level of the national infrastructure, with shuttered hospitals, empty ministry offices, and banks unable to operate.

On Saturday, state-run media announced that if civil servants continued to boycott work, ‘they will be fired’ with immediate effect from March 8. But protesters in Myanmar’s commercial hub of Yangon continued to defy



Police beat a protester as they detain him during a demonstration against the military coup, in Yangon on Saturday (AFP)

authorities, gathering especially in San Chaung - a once-buzzing township with cafes, restaurants and bars that has emerged as a hotspot for unrest.

Security forces fired tear gas and stun grenades in the morning, scattering protesters, and removed their makeshift barricades with bulldozers.

Activist Maung Saungkha said the movement would persist - even as security forces continued to step up their enforcement tactics - as many remember the repression under the previous junta.

“In our past revolutions, we never won... this time we must fight to win,” he told AFP.

‘The repression must stop’

The generals have shown no sign of heeding calls for restraint despite mounting international pressure, including targeted sanctions by Western powers.

The United Nations Security Council on Friday heard from UN special envoy on Myanmar Christine Schraner Burgener, who warned against any moves to grant legitimacy to the junta.

“The hope they have placed in the United Nations and its membership is waning and I have heard directly the desperate pleas - from mothers, students and the elderly,” she said.

“Your unity is needed more

than ever on Myanmar... The repression must stop.”

But diplomats said the Security Council was unlikely to approve any international measures against the junta, and the session ended without any statement.

Condemnation against Myanmar’s military has largely been unanimous, but veto-wielding China is still regarded as a key obstacle in getting consensus.

Chinese Ambassador Zhang Jun said his country did not want to see instability in Myanmar. But ‘the messages and measures of the international community should be conducive for the parties to bridge differences and resolve problems’, he said.

Suu Kyi still detained

More than 50 people have been killed since the coup, with Wednesday being the bloodiest day with a death toll of at least 38, according to the UN.

Memorials were held on Friday for three killed in Yangon’s North Okkalapa, with hundreds of mourners holding up a three-finger salute as the coffins were carried through the funeral home.

The junta has denied responsibility for loss of life in the protests, with state media on Friday saying ‘death cases due to small firearms are not associated with the security forces’.

AFP



This file photo shows Huthi supporters protesting against the blockade on their country imposed by the Saudi coalition, in Sanaa on February 26 (AFP)

Fighting kills 90 in 24 hours in Yemen’s Marib

Dubai, UAE - Fierce fighting between Yemeni pro-government forces and Iran-backed Huthi rebels has killed at least 90 combatants on both sides in the past 24 hours, government military sources said on Saturday.

The Shiite rebels launched an offensive last month to seize Marib, the last stronghold in northern Yemen of pro-government forces who are backed by a Saudi-led military coalition.

The clashes in the oil-rich province left 32 dead among government forces and loyalist tribes, while 58 Huthi rebels were killed in coalition air strikes, the sources told AFP.

They said heavy clashes broke out on six fronts as government forces were able to counter attacks by the Huthis who managed to advance only on the Kassara front northwest of Marib city. The fighting also left dozens of people wounded, the sources added.

The loss of Marib would be a huge blow for the Yemeni government, but would also threaten catastrophe for civilians, including hundreds of thousands of displaced people sheltering in desolate camps in the surrounding desert.

Charities blast British aid cut

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Monday urged the Huthis to halt their offensive in Marib, as he announced US\$191mn in aid at a donors’ conference.

The United Nations had sought to raise US\$3.85bn from more than 100 governments and donors, but only US\$1.7bn was offered, with UK planning to slash aid.

Over 100 charities including Oxfam and Save the Children hit out on Saturday at UK’s plans to cut humanitarian aid by half to Yemen, saying it would ‘destroy’ London’s image abroad.

Britain pledged £87mn for Yemen at an international donors’ conference this week, about half the amount it offered last year. The move, which has been condemned across Britain’s political spectrum.

‘History will not judge this nation kindly if the Government chooses to step away from the people in Yemen and thus destroy the UK’s global reputation as a country that steps up to help those most in need’, the 101 signatories wrote in an open letter.

AFP

UK faces difficult post-Brexit era under PM: French envoy

Paris, France - Britain faces a tough challenge to retain global influence after its departure from the EU under a prime minister who has a well-known reputation for ‘lying’, France’s former ambassador to the UK told Agence France-Presse in an interview.

Sylvie Bermann, who was ambassador to London from 2014-2017 and witnessed the 2016 Brexit referendum at first hand, has raised some eyebrows in the UK with some decidedly undiplomatic comments in her book *Goodbye Britannia* published in French in January.

She professes her love for the ‘dynamic, traditional and modern’ London, the squirrels and foxes in its parks and streets, British culture and the country’s sense of humour.

But in the book she also makes no attempt to hide a deep frustration with much of its political class and in particular those who led the country to Brexit, calling Prime Minister Boris Johnson an ‘unrepentant liar’.

“Why, when you are very dynamic and successful and influential in the EU, why do you decide to leave?” Bermann, who also served as ambassador to Moscow and Beijing, told AFP at her home in the heart of Paris.

“It will be more difficult. And there will be need for much more efforts (by the UK) to have a true influence in the world.”

She said that this will be particularly hard in the geopolitical context of the ‘Cold War’ between the United States and China, with the two protagonists



A file photo of former French ambassador to the UK Sylvie Bermann (AFP)

looking to the EU rather the UK.

“There is a triangular (China-EU-US) relationship and it is harder for the United Kingdom to play a role,” she said.

She said Britain’s much touted ‘special relationship’ with the United States ‘is above all special for the British’ rather than the United States.

“The United States often used the British as a bridge or relay with the EU. Obviously it is a role that is now lost.”

On top of this, there are difficulties in trade relations, as shown by Britain’s threat this week to break the terms of the Brexit withdrawal treaty by unilaterally delaying checks on food going to Northern Ireland.

“These are consequences of the choice made in the referendum,” she said.

Bermann acknowledged that in the fight against COVID-19, ‘the British vaccination campaign is better than the European one. Bravo for that’ with far more people given the jab than in big EU

member states. But she added, “This is not totally due to Brexit as the vaccine orders were made while the UK was still subject to European rules.”

In her book, Bermann says David Cameron, the laid-back ex-premier who called the Brexit referendum, ‘will forever be responsible for Brexit’, but adds it would also ‘probably never have happened’ if Brexit had not been championed by Johnson.

‘Boris Johnson... is a man who uses insults towards the European Union, starting with the French who he did not hesitate to call ‘turds’. He is above all an unrepentant liar,’ she wrote in the book.

“I am surprised everyone made a fuss as I said he was lying because it is well-documented, of course,” she told AFP, referring to how he had created a ‘euro myth’ with sometimes fabulous tales in his stint as Brussels correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph*.

AFP

Missile strikes on Syria oil refineries kill 4

Beirut, Lebanon - Missile strikes on makeshift oil refineries in northern Syria killed four people and injured more than 20 others, a war monitor said on Saturday.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said a series of strikes launched from Russian warships and by allied Syrian government forces hit the makeshift refineries in Aleppo province on Friday night, causing a massive blaze in the area controlled by Turkey and its Syrian rebel proxies.

The Britain-based monitor ‘documented the deaths of four people, while 24 others sustained various injuries and burns’ in the attacks near the town of Jarablus.

At least one Syrian rebel was among the dead, said Observatory head Rami Abdul Rahman. Rescue workers spent hours trying to extinguish the fire which spread to about 30 oil tankers, according to the war monitor.

Oil installations in Turkey-controlled parts of Aleppo have come under repeated attack in



Members of the Syrian Civil Defence extinguish a fire which reportedly erupted after a bombardment of makeshift oil refining installations in the Tarhin area, in the north of Aleppo province on Friday (AFP)

recent months although Moscow and the Syrian regime have not claimed responsibility.

The Observatory reported two such missile attacks last month.

In January, unidentified drones also hit oil refineries in Turkish-held areas of Aleppo, causing a large fire, according to the Observatory.

Kurds return 12 kids to Yazidi mothers

Syria’s Kurds have handed back 12 children of alleged Islamic State members to their mothers from Iraq’s Yazidi minority, a Kurdish official said on Friday.

“The children, aged two to five, were all born to Yazidi mothers and fathered by IS members. They were handed

over to their mothers [on Thursday],” said Syrian Kurdish official Zeyneb Saroukhan.

Dozens of Yazidi women and girls survived sex slavery at the hands of IS extremists in Syria and have since returned to Iraq, but many were forced to leave their children behind or risk being shunned by their community.

AFP



OMAN CRICKET CLUB (OCC)

POSTPONEMENT OF OMAN CRICKET ANNUAL GENERAL BODY MEETING

The Board of Management of the Oman Cricket Club wish to inform the Annual General Meeting of the Club scheduled to be held on Tuesday 30th March 2021 is postponed till further notice as per the directive of Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth.

Secretary of the Club
Chairman of the Board of Directors

No major reform even after Floyd killing

Minneapolis, US - George Floyd's death at the hands of a white police officer last year was a gut punch that sparked sometimes violent nationwide protests over brutality against people of colour in America and a national reckoning over race relations.

Nine months later, the US has not undertaken any radical overhaul of its police forces, but is instead taking incremental and localised steps to better tackle excess force and racism in the ranks of its law enforcement agencies.

Floyd's death by asphyxiation as a white police officer knelt on his neck for almost nine minutes last May in Minneapolis sent shock waves around the country.

But what remains of this extraordinary mobilisation, as the trial opens of Derek Chauvin, the former police officer accused of Floyd's murder?

A substantive debate

The main shift has been one of perception: While the Black minority in America had for years denounced police violence, the majority of Americans, in particular white people, had retained a lofty image of police officers.

"It's culturally accepted in America that police will commit violence. And the assumption is that they're committing violence, because they're faced with violence," said Kate Levine, a professor at the Cardozo School of Law at Yeshiva University in New York. "I think some of that assumption is being upset by video, and protests and narratives about people who are killed by the police who are no way violent," she said.



This video grab (left) shows Derek Chauvin restraining George Floyd that resulted in the latter's death by asphyxiation on May 25, 2020; this file photo (right) shows demonstrators lie down on a highway blocking traffic, as protests triggered by the death of Floyd, continue in Washington, DC on June 23, 2020 (AFP)



"[With Floyd's death,] people who historically have not had to think about it, have to think about it. They're uncomfortable with that," said Tracie Keese, a Black ex-police officer who co-founded the Center For Policing Equity.

Hot takes

Since June last year, there have been nationwide calls for radical reforms, including the idea of 'defunding the police'. That means redirecting some funds from police departments to social serv-

ices tasks like dealing with people who have mental health issues.

In order to calm things down, Keese said certain measures had been quickly adopted: Some cities banned police choke holds, and others made police disciplinary records accessible to the public or beefed-up police training. The US House of Representatives adopted a bill tackling the sweeping immunity that police officers enjoy from prosecution.

More broadly, the United

States embarked on a re-examination of its own history, resulting in numerous statues of historical figures with links to slavery being taken down.

Stalled efforts

But in the middle of last year's electoral campaign, the debate inevitably took on a political hue. As crime rates soared in big cities due to the coronavirus pandemic, then-president Donald Trump sought to portray himself as guarantor of law and order and

accused Democrats of weakness.

Set against that backdrop, radical reforms were shelved. In Minneapolis, where Floyd was killed, 'there was a brief moment of them attempting something and they've done nothing', said Levine.

In New York, billion-dollar cuts to the police budget that were decided upon in June have been significantly reduced and spread over time.

As for federal reform, that was buried by the Senate. And on the

ground, the situation has not changed: Around 1,000 people were killed by the police in 2020, 28 per cent of them African-Americans, who make up only 12 percent of the population.

Grand juries and other local decision makers dropped prosecutions of officers blamed for the deaths of unarmed African-Americans such as Breonna Taylor, who was shot dead in her Kentucky apartment, or Daniel Prude, who suffocated in police custody while suffering from a

mental health episode in New York state.

"[Despite everything,] leadership nationally, locally, understands that you serve at the pleasure of your community," said Keese, "and a large segment of a specific community is saying this is not acceptable to us."

President Joe Biden, elected with the support of a majority of African-Americans, has promised that the fight against racism will be one of his priorities.

AFP



Supporters of Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan outside the National Assembly during the vote of confidence, in Islamabad on Saturday (AFP)

Pakistani PM survives trust vote after losing a seat

Islamabad, Pakistan - Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan survived a vote of confidence by the country's parliament on Saturday, days after his party lost a key Senate seat to an opposition candidate.

Ruling party and opposition activists clashed briefly outside the parliament ahead of the vote, with local TV channels showing a shoe being thrown at former interior minister Ahsan Iqbal.

Khan secured 178 votes in the 340-seat National Assembly through an open ballot, boycotted by the main opposition parties, the Pakistan Muslim League and Pakistan Peoples Party.

The vote followed the contentious results of Wednesday's election to Pakistan's Senate, whose members are chosen by provincial parliaments and lawmakers from the lower house.

In a sign of growing ruptures within his ruling Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party, Khan's foreign minister lost his seat to an opposition candidate, suggesting some members of the party had switched their loyalty.

Khan - who came to power in

2018 after a fiery campaign vowing to clean up corruption - accused the opposition of horse-trading and buying some of his party's parliamentarians in a bid to ward off graft investigations.

Speaking following the confidence vote, the prime minister accused the opposition parties of 'plundering national wealth' during their times in office.

"This was a decade of darkness used by the two parties to ruin national institutions," he added.

Addressing party workers outside the parliament, senior opposition leader and former Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi denounced the vote as 'illegal and unconstitutional'.

"People are being deceived by this government," he said.

Since taking office, Khan has struggled to stabilise an economy hit by soaring inflation, a depreciating rupee and ballooning deficits.

He has blamed the opposition's mismanagement in power for the country's mounting fiscal woes.

AFP

Pandemic risks undoing gains for women: Merkel

Berlin, Germany - German Chancellor Angela Merkel warned on Saturday that the pandemic risked rolling back progress made on gender equality, as women take on the lion's share of childcare in lockdown and are more likely to work in at-risk jobs.

"We have to make sure that the pandemic does not lead us to fall back into old gender patterns we thought we had overcome," Merkel said in a video message ahead of International Women's Day on March 8.

Women have been disproportionately affected by the health crisis, she said, while being underrepresented in decision-making positions.

"Once again it's more often women who have to master the balancing act between home-schooling, childcare and their own jobs," said the veteran leader.

Women also outnumber men



German Chancellor Angela Merkel (centre) leaves the Reichstag building, the seat of the German lower house of parliament Bundestag, in Berlin on Thursday (AFP)

in care professions at a time when those jobs are 'particularly challenging'.

"More than 75 per cent of those working in the health sector are women, from doctor's of-

fices and hospitals, to labs and pharmacies," Merkel said - yet women account for barely 30 per cent of management positions in those areas.

"It cannot be that women are

to a large extent carrying our society yet at the same time are not equally involved in important political, economic and societal decisions," she added.

Merkel welcomed recent leg-

islation requiring listed German companies to include more women on their executive boards. But she said more should be done to support women, including through expanding childcare facilities and equal pay.

"Women must finally earn the same as men," she said.

Germany has one of the European Union's largest gender pay gaps, with women earning on average 19 per cent less than men in 2019 - partly because many German women work part-time.

The gap narrows to six per cent when comparing men and women in the same jobs.

Merkel's warnings were echoed in the EU's annual report on gender equality released earlier this week.

The study found that the pandemic 'has exacerbated existing inequalities between women and men in almost all areas of life'.

AFP

Out for a spin: Mars rover Perseverance travels 6m

Washington, US - The Mars rover Perseverance has successfully conducted its first test drive on the Red Planet, the US space agency NASA said on Friday.

The six-wheeled rover travelled about 6.5m in 33 minutes on Thursday, NASA said.

It drove four meters forward, turned in place 150 degrees to the left, and then backed up 2.5m, leaving tire tracks in the Martian dust.

"This was our first chance to 'kick the tires' and take Perseverance out for a spin," said Anaïs Zarifian, Perseverance mobility test bed engineer at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, California.

Zarifian said the test drive went 'incredibly well' and represented a 'huge milestone for the



This image captured while NASA's Perseverance rover drove on Mars for the first time on Thursday (AFP)

mission and the mobility team'.

"We're going to do some longer drives," she added. "This is just the beginning."

NASA engineers said they were studying possible routes for longer rover voyages on the sur-

face of Mars.

The rover can cover 200m per Martian day, which is slightly longer than a day on Earth.

And it goes five times faster than Curiosity, its predecessor, which is still functioning eight

years after landing on Mars.

Perseverance deputy mission manager Robert Hogg said engineers were also preparing for the first flight of a helicopter drone carried by the rover.

Hogg said the rover team was working out flight zones and hoped to conduct the first flight in late spring or early summer.

He said the mission had not experienced any major problems so far. "It's all just minor stuff," he said. "Everything we've tried has worked beautifully."

Perseverance was launched on July 30, 2020 and landed on the surface of Mars on February 18 on a mission to search for signs of past life on the Red Planet.

The rover's primary mission will last just over two years but it is likely to remain operational

well beyond that.

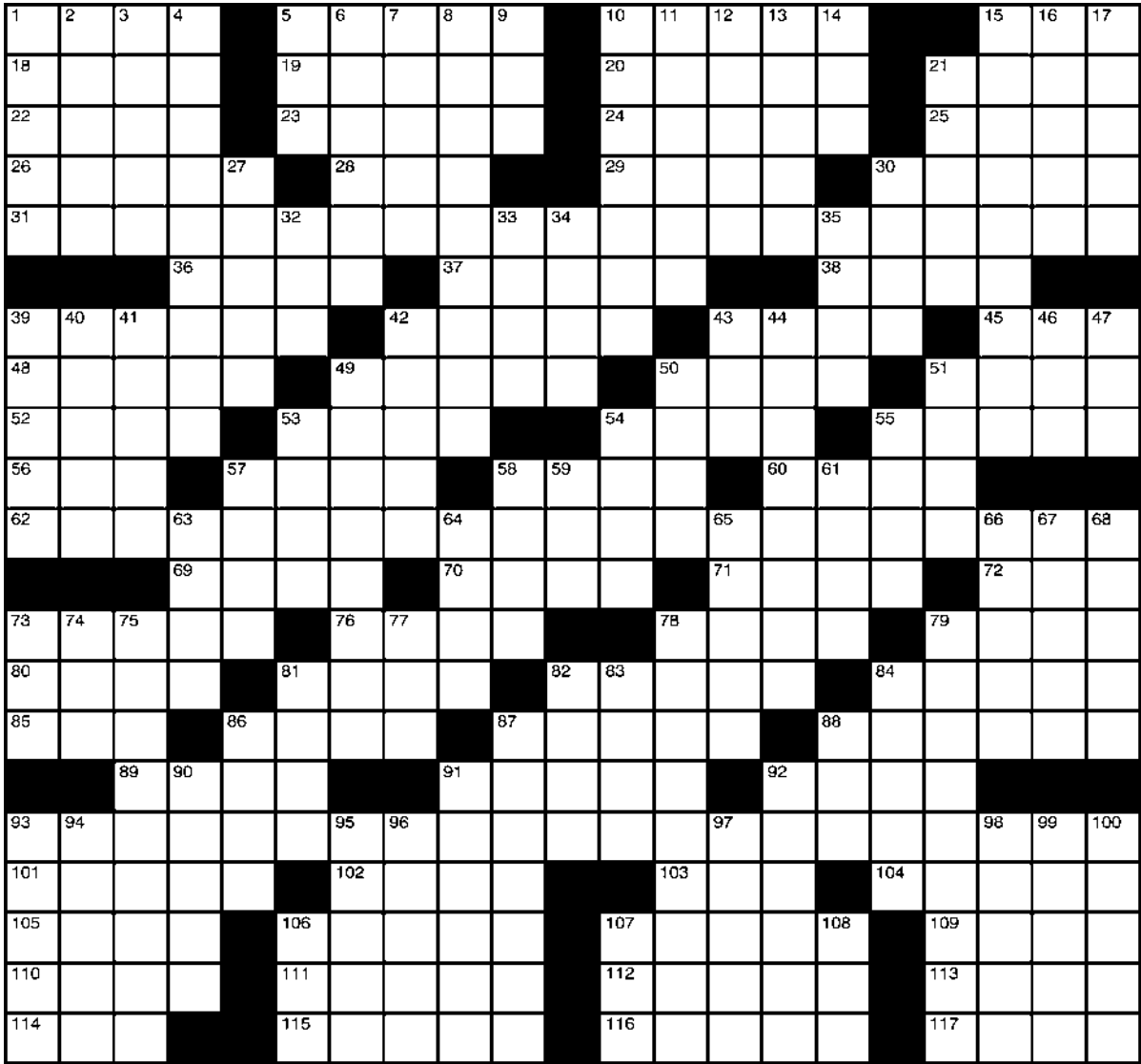
Over the coming years, Perseverance will attempt to collect 30 rock and soil samples in sealed tubes to be sent back to Earth sometime in the 2030s for analysis.

About the size of an SUV, the craft weighs a ton, is equipped with a 213cm long robotic arm, has 19 cameras, two microphones and a suite of cutting-edge instruments.

So far it has sent back more than 7,000 photographs, including one of a light brown rock that was used to test a device called SuperCam: An ultra-sophisticated French-made camera the size of a shoe box that can shoot a laser beam at rocks up to 7m away to analyse their makeup.

AFP

DAILY CROSSWORD



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ACROSS

- 1 Scottish headgear
- 5 Aphorism
- 10 Wine holders
- 15 ___-been
- 18 Move by small degrees
- 19 Site of the Blue Grotto
- 20 A void space
- 21 George III's prime minister
- 22 My treat
- 23 Team of three
- 24 Oracular
- 25 Taj Mahal city
- 26 Craft
- 28 Also- ___
- 29 Sometimes once
- 30 Code of morals
- 31 Uncompahgre's gold road
- 36 Incandescence
- 37 ___ Club
- 38 Icon Parks
- 39 Reach
- 42 Comedian Bill
- 43 Springs or soda fountains
- 45 Native of Bangkok
- 48 Apothecary weight units
- 49 Carrie Bradshaw's fave?
- 50 __ mieux: Fr.
- 51 Ash Wednesday to

Easter

- 52 Type of devil?
- 53 To-do
- 54 ___ avis: L.
- 55 Merits
- 56 Your Spanish uncle
- 57 Embellish
- 58 Status quo
- 60 Dervish dancing
- 62 Via world's longest hiking path
- 69 Consumes
- 70 "Grey's Anatomy" Eric
- 71 Wildebeests
- 72 ___ Lippo Lippi
- 73 Helen's abductor
- 76 Attend
- 78 Croquet and tennis
- 79 Frost
- 80 Word with coat or time
- 81 Crocus bulb
- 82 Pianist André
- 84 Inclined
- 85 Nancy Pelosi: abbr.
- 86 Unpolished
- 87 Obsession
- 88 Sometimes before totter
- 89 Roman way
- 91 Wore
- 92 Neighborhood
- 93 Via road from Shenandoahs to the Smokies

- 101 Central theme
 - 102 Quod ___ demonstrandum
 - 103 Inner city lyrics?
 - 104 Tempt into danger
 - 105 British machine gun
 - 106 Questionable
 - 107 ___ beaver
 - 109 This, in Barcelona
 - 110 Flap and shot
 - 111 More inevitable
 - 112 Polyester film trade name
 - 113 Asian fry
 - 114 Yds. and yds.
 - 115 Air and police
 - 116 Consumers
 - 117 "As ___ on TV"
- DOWN**
- 1 Road across the High Sierras
 - 2 Per ___
 - 3 Last century's second year
 - 4 Swindler's ploy
 - 5 Perform
 - 6 Evolution's defender
 - 7 About the bees
 - 8 Yellowstone's scenic drive
 - 9 Vow, in Stuttgart
 - 10 Coke vs. Pepsi
 - 11 Pineapple
 - 12 Procure
 - 13 Dumpling
 - 14 Wall Street agcy.

- 15 Flood threat
- 16 Roman courtyards
- 17 Actor Keach
- 21 "___ of righteousness"
- 27 Island of N.Y. Bay
- 30 Selves
- 32 Particle
- 33 France and Belgium river
- 34 Scientists' workshops
- 35 Khomeini's realm
- 39 Enlarge
- 40 Orient Express, et al.
- 41 Gypsy's trump
- 42 Noisy chewing
- 43 Knight's title
- 44 Bard and blue
- 46 Curry of the news
- 47 ___ a boy!
- 49 Hit or miss
- 50 Ball
- 51 Cougar's digs
- 53 Campus club
- 54 Paper or pudding
- 55 Newts at terrestrial stage
- 57 Cambric and green
- 58 Axillary
- 59 Saint, in Madrid or Rome
- 61 One for Claudius
- 63 Scion
- 64 Sandler or Savage
- 65 ___ kick

- 66 Underway
- 67 Dancer Castle
- 68 ___ than you think
- 73 School
- 74 Hail, to Caesar
- 75 Court case transfers
- 77 With now or long
- 78 Flat tropical fish
- 79 One of Triple Crown stakes
- 81 Bridle
- 82 Oasis
- 83 A wink and ___
- 84 Baron and Viscount
- 86 The Great Coral one
- 87 Church's noble army
- 88 Sung with la-la
- 90 Attenuates
- 91 Led
- 92 Show
- 93 Early three-player card game
- 94 Air-defense org.
- 95 Tropical myrtle
- 96 Archer's deadly ammunition
- 97 Ern
- 98 Pipe or paper
- 99 Bandleader Shaw
- 100 Hanker for
- 106 Red letters
- 107 Large cursorial bird
- 108 Amtrak and CPR

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

The charm you have today has no bounds. You'll be making people smile left and right whether you're trying to or not. Obviously, this is a great day to make the most of your interpersonal connections. People will have an incredibly hard time saying no to you right now. If you're looking for an introduction to a new cutie or powerful business contact, ask away!



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

Today, things could seem topsy-turvy when the people who usually don't see things your way suddenly agree with everything you say. And the people you can always trust to be in your corner are now questioning your suggestions! Have you changed or has everyone else? Odds are you're the one who's coming around to a new way of thinking.



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

It's easy to stay true to your life goals right now because you're having so much fun pursuing them! Who knew that working toward your dream could involve so much laughter and friendship? Just because there's a smile on your face doesn't mean you're not working, so don't you dare feel guilty for having such a good time when some of your friends are struggling.



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

Don't be surprised if you're bored with stuff. Your soul is looking for more stimulation, but the right way to satisfy it isn't to go out into the world in search of an adventure. It may seem counterintuitive, but the best way to satisfy your restlessness is to spend as much of your day alone as possible. It's a good day to spend on yourself in any way you want.



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

Any impulse buys you make today might provide you with a few hours of fun, but you can forget about any long-lasting value, so make sure you don't spend a lot of money on them. If lasting enjoyment is what you're after, you don't have to spend any money at all to get it. Taking a walk with a friend or talking to a favorite relative is free, and it's going to fill you with a calm.



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

This is going to be a very good detail-planning day for you. Your mind is crystal clear, and your day should be free of any major distractions. If you need to take care of any future travel arrangements, this is the right time to do it. Everyone you need to talk to will be available, your preferred dates will be available and maybe even an upgrade waiting for you.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

Keep your head on straight. Upcoming plans could be causing you to get a bit distracted right now, but it's important for you to stay focused. Keep you mind on that little square in the calendar marked with today's date. Avoid thinking about what you'll be doing in a few days' time. It won't be easy at first, but with all the activity this afternoon, you will soon have your mind occupied.



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

Right about the time you think that today's going to be a boring day full of regular sights and sounds, you could get involved in a lovely little flirting match! It might be a cutie you've had your eye on, or it might be the person you've been seeing for quite a while. But it might also be a total stranger you'll never see again. Either way, have some fun! Don't take things too seriously.



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

Rather than be intimidated by a certain smarty-pants, why not pick their brain and learn something new? You also have ideas to offer, and a strong intellectual connection with someone else could be just what you need to add some zing to your day. Open up and share just a little bit more. You have the brains to take the conversation in all the right directions, so trust that.



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

Your brain is getting active right now, so much so that a few of your ideas could be colliding into each other! Don't be surprised if the gossip going on around you bores you to tears. You want stimulation! To get it, you might have to strike out on your own and search for a unique experience that gives your brain the challenge it wants. Visit an art gallery, museum or any other place.



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

Today one of your relationships could reach a crossroads, although you might not have an awareness of it until you've already gone one way and they've gone the other. Don't let this growing sense of emotional distance make you lose hope, though. Sometimes people have to go off in their own direction to find what they need. This could be a temporary separation.



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

Relationship issues might be on your mind today, especially when you see problems arise in a partnership you've always admired. Their tensions could cause you start to wonder if they can hit a rocky patch, what about you? It's fine to think about it, but don't let it cloud all your thinking today. Just because things could go wrong doesn't mean that they will go wrong.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

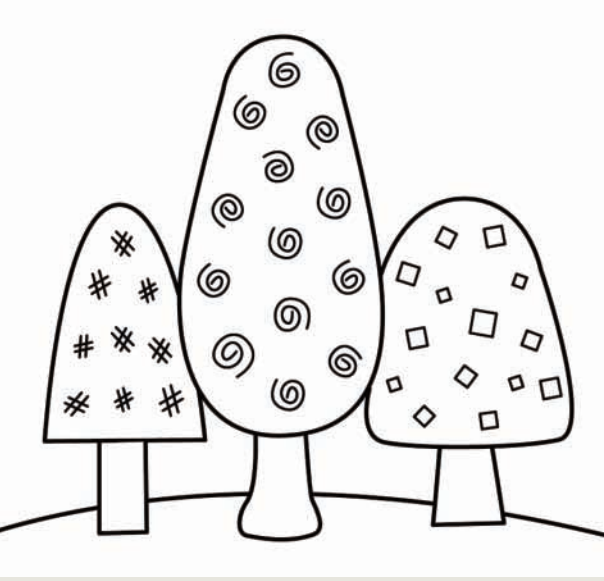
1. To produce sound it is necessary that
- a. the source should execute longitudinal vibrations
 - b. the source should execute transverse vibrations
 - c. the source may execute any type of vibrations
 - d. the vibrations of source are not necessary

2. The UN library is known by the name of
- a. Nation's library
 - b. U Thant library
 - c. Hammarskjöld library
 - d. Trygve Lie library

3. The theory of inheritance of acquired character was propounded by
- a. Charles Darwin
 - b. Gregor Mendel
 - c. J B Lamarck
 - d. Weismann

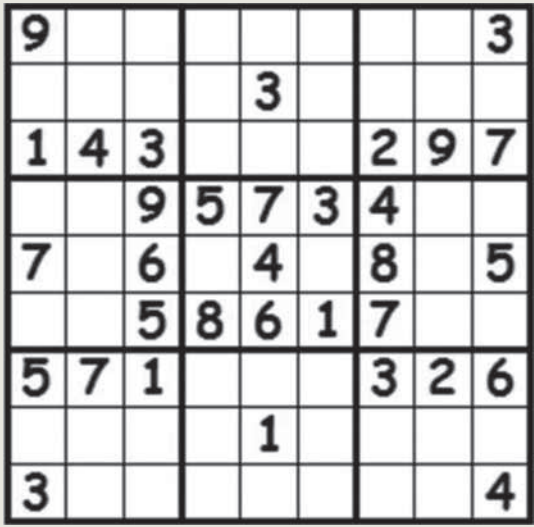
Answers: 1. c, 2. c, 3. c

KIDS COLOURING



DO YOU SUDOKU?

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



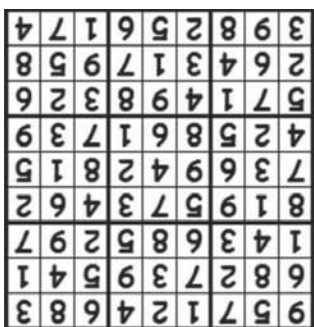
BOGGLER

N	T	W	O
O	I	T	G
B	D	G	L
D	H	O	Y

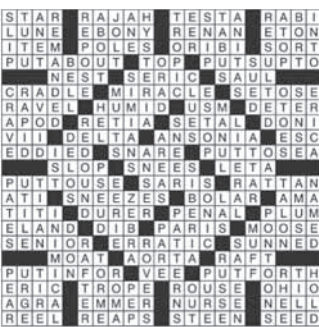
Each game will present you with a matrix filled with letters. The objective is to form words by linking adjacent letters - to the left, right, on top, bottom, or diagonal to each other. The Boggles Classic game uses a 4 x 4 matrix. Words are valued at one point for each letter in excess of two letters.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

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER



DAILY CROSSWORD ANSWERS (MARCH 04)



WORD BUILDER

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

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





Living with Art ART IS A LIFE COMPANION

Juliette Lotthe de Thomson reflects on her creation of faces from around the world

Hubert Vaz

Juliette Lotthé de Thomson, French artist in Oman, is more comfortable creating a series of paintings on a common theme that she feels strongly about rather than making stand-alone canvasses that convey a story on their own. However, she believes that art is a life companion, especially during difficult times.

Juliette, whose solo exhibition - Invitation Au Voyage - was on at the Art & Soul Gallery, in Water Front Mall, Shatti al Qurm for the past fortnight, was thrilled about an exciting two weeks. "It was my third solo exhibition, and this one in a brand new gallery, a brand new mall, an extraordinary place overlooking the sea. The whole event was decided quite quickly, so thanks to the professional staff of the gallery who were able to pull it in just a few days," she said.

Reflecting on her efforts, Juliette said, "The first step was selecting the paintings to show, and I was a bit sorry bit not to have anymore Omani pieces - they are the ones that sell quickly - but many pieces about the world, faces from around the world, and with all the travel restrictions, we thought this would be a perfect theme. 'Invitation au voyage' is what it means, an invitation to travel, at home for now, a bit like the new concept of 'staycations'."

An accomplished artist who loves to paint on various media, including wood and linen canvas, in addition to more classic canvases, Juliette asserts that often she works by series, and that's why she groups her paintings by themes, like praying mills, puppets, masks, etc.

The tough part was not having a proper opening, due to COVID-19, she said, adding,



"A vernissage is such a special time, there is a true festive side both for the public and for the artist. But I was absolutely stunned by the number of visitors, from all over the world, expats and locals. And families with children, the younger were able to enjoy, too. At the moment, not many cultural outlets are open, so a visit to a gallery is a good idea."

Interaction and introspection

Juliette says, the part she enjoys the most is sharing with visitors as it gives her an opportunity to note which paintings are liked the best and why. Some also shared their own art with her while she also got to meet many

young aspiring artists and listen to their paths and life stories.

"There are many talented, young women and men here, it's quite incredible. They are very unique in what they do and explore new artistic paths. Very impressive, indeed! I loved being able to encourage the youngest visitors to pursue their passion, and work hard towards their goals. Art is a life companion, especially in difficult times, like the one we are living right now. You are never bored and never alone, and art helps relieve the stress and anxiety," she told Muscat Daily.

The exhibition which concluded yesterday included a series of 8 paintings of African

“There are many talented, young women and men here, it's quite incredible. They are very unique in what they do and explore new artistic paths. Very impressive, indeed!”
JULIETTE LOTTHÉ DE THOMSON

slaves brought by the Portuguese from Angola to Brazil to work in coffee plantations. Alberto Henschel - German/Brazilian official crown photographer - took (black and white) pictures of those slaves, deliberately not wanting to show their condition but rather having them pose in the most classic way of portrait photography of that time (late mid 19th century). His approach was evidently innovative and groundbreaking, and was the starting point for her work, she said, pointing out that the background of each painting depicted representations of coffee plants, botanicals prints of the same era, as a reminder of the reality of their condition.

About naming a series, Juliette says the task is the same as naming a child. "You want to do that right, you want the name to reflect in part what you are and what the child brings. What he/she is and what he/she might be. It's about closing the chapter of that 'pregnancy', those paintings the artist has carried

in him/her for months or years, opening the door of the after, letting go, knowing that the work now exists. It's a christening, it's like opening up a fizzy beverage on the hull of a boat and watching it go onto the wild ocean."

This series on display was named 'Lei Aurea' (the golden law), the law that, 132 years ago, abolished slavery in Brazil in a statement comprising just 18 words. One of the shortest laws in history, yet one of the most meaningful ever," she observed.

Juliette, who has lived in Oman for over 22 years and has created many series of paintings with Omani themes says these are the ones that get sold the fastest as they are in high demand in the sultanate. She hopes to continue doing these, alongside various other themes, as long as she is in Oman, she says.

Till I'm empty...

About her obsession with creating series, Juliette asserts, "I tend to paint series, rather than stand alone pieces, because once I have an idea or a project in my mind, I research it fully, and I become so invested in it that I can't get rid of it in just one painting. I paint on the same subject or theme until I feel that I'm 'empty', that I have given all I wanted to give about it. It might take weeks or even months when I paint on a particular subject. Then I'm done and I do a piece to 'clean my head' - something more technical or just a still life. Sometimes, months or years after finishing a series, I go back for a last one."

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ART BEATS SERIES

DREAM COME TRUE

Episode 3 features Mahnoush Abbasgholy

Hubert Vaz

Everyone has their own dream and their own vision. When you believe that you can one day make your dream a reality, you can do it with your hard work, says Mahnoush Abbasgholy, an Iranian artist currently living in Muscat. Mahnoush had an ambitious dream as a teenager of painting for palaces and huge hotels, so as to make art not just the focal point of her life but also an instrument of connecting with people globally.

In the third episode of a new video series called Art Beats shot by Studio.t, Mahnoush disclosed that she not just harboured this dream from an early age but also worked her way towards it. However, nobody, including her family, believed that she would some day achieve this, she said, adding, "The only person who believed in

me was myself."

This series, sponsored by Purshottam Kanji exchange and Oman Avenues Mall, has Muscat Daily as the print partner and Knowledge Oman as the Knowledge partner. The idea behind the initiative is to interview various artists in Oman to provide budding artists as well as art enthusiasts in Oman with an outline about the challenges and scope of art as a new age medium of expression. Paintings donated by the artists will be later auctioned and the proceeds will go towards supporting the initiatives of Oman Cancer Association.

Hosted by Ibrahim Gailani, a self-taught contemporary artist of Iraqi and Pakistani descent living in Muscat, Art Beats has embarked on a unique journey and the participating artists have not only begun sharing nuances of their artistic encounters but also gaining insights for their own future endeavours. Founder of Art Retreat, Gailani is a well known name in artistic circles in Oman and has exhibited in the Middle-East,

Europe and North America.

In Dubai, Mahnoush came in touch with a company that valued her talent and supported her by providing her access to prestigious projects wherein she could demonstrate her prowess with the paintbrush. Though she set out in Dubai carrying two paintings in her hand and trying to sell them, she ultimately got commissioned to take on prestigious work for wealthy clients in mansions and palaces around the world.

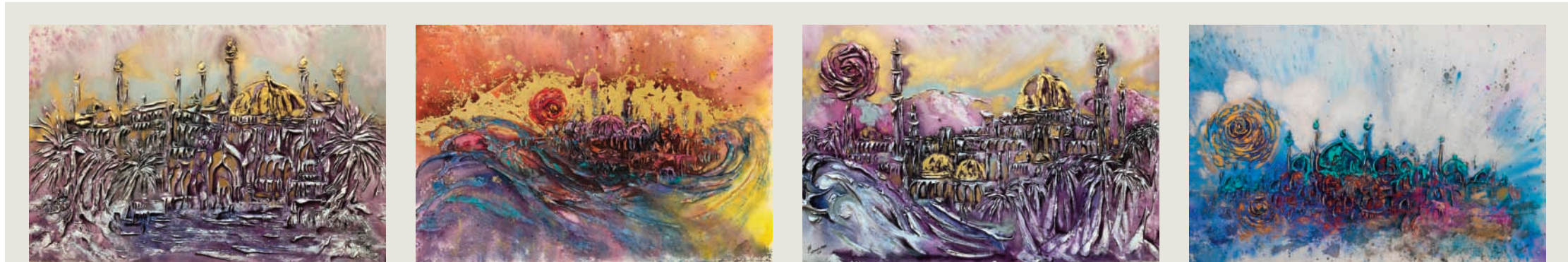
Working long hours on custom-made paintings for high-profile clients, Mahnoush admits that she always was focused and undeterred by any hurdles around her. What mattered was delivering as per the trust shown in her...and on time! Over the years, she has particularly excelled in portraits.

"There is a key for any success in your life. First of all, you have to know your stuff, and what you want from this life. Everyone has their own gifts. You've got to find out what gift you have got from God and you have to

work hard on it. If you do that, you can meet success," says Mahnoush, asserting that it was not a cakewalk for her all through, rather a journey of sincerity, dedication and hard work.

In Oman, Mahnoush has created several paintings of landscapes, monuments as well as realistic portraits of the late HM Sultan Qaboos bin Said and the current His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, besides other prominent personalities. She has her own unique way of bringing feeling to a painting with her dexterous strokes and breathing life into it with keen attention to details.

When asked by Gailani about how she conjured up magic into her work, especially the portraits of the royalty in Oman, such that they appear truly real, Mahnoush quipped, "A good cook never reveals the secrets about ingredients used." He, however, rounded up the conversation saying, "You can't know how she gets this, but what you can do is, buy it!"



Hard work, all the way

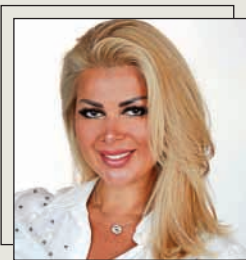
Mahnoush Abbasgholy describes herself as a mixed-media artist, with a modern, abstract style. Her preferred medium is acrylic on canvas, incorporating her signature silver and gold leaf, bringing an extra feeling of depth and movement to her paintings.

As her primary source of inspiration, Abbasgholy quotes a need to share her experiences and the things she has seen during her global travels. Her passion comes from self-improvement, curiosity for the

world and a hunger for perfection.

Born in 1979 in Tehran, Iran, Mahnoush was fond of art and dreamed to become an accomplished artist as a teenager. She fervently pursued her dream and excelled in her artistic skills for six years in Dubai before coming to Oman three years ago.

Following the completion of her studies in Fine arts at the university of Tehran, was invited to Dubai by JC Maclean to assist in the final stages of the Ibn Buttuta Mall project. Her unique style made her the



perfect artist to complete the Tunisian Court as well as elements of the Egypt Court, and it can still be seen here today.

While working for Al Khawas Group in Dubai, she honed her skills as a commercial artist, working on hotel artwork and bespoke pieces for luxury restaurants and villas such as Ascott Hotels, Al Mankhool hotels and Bridgestone to name a few. She also worked on freelance projects for top-end brands Shangri-La and Grand Hyatt. She then flew to San Francisco to ex-

hibit her paintings in an exhibition at a local gallery, and continued her travels to Brazil and Europe where she worked on a range of high-end private projects, creating bespoke pieces for boutique hotels, top-range restaurants and private houses.

In 2017, Mahnoush moved to Muscat where she still lives today. Her paintings of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, displayed at the Opera Galleria in a special 2018 Omani National Day exhibition had propelled her to instant fame in Oman.



Seeb players celebrate with the trophy after defeating Al Kamil W'al Wafi in the final of the Ministry's Shield Volleyball Championship at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex recently

Three-in-a-row for Seeb

Ashok Purohit
Muscat

MINISTRY'S SHIELD VOLLEYBALL FINAL

Following disappointments in HM's Cup hockey and football, Seeb spikers provided the much-needed delight to the club and their fans as they claimed the 2021 Ministry's Shield Volleyball Championship for the third time in a row recently.

Organised by the Oman Volleyball Association (OVA), Seeb defeated Al Kamil W'al

Wafi 3-1 at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in the final of the tenth edition of the championship. This was the third straight title for Seeb, who won 26-24, 25-15, 32-34, 25-14.

Seeb are now level with Al Salam and Saham, who have also won it three times each while Sohar is the other title winner.

It was little consolation for Seeb, who were hoping to enter the final of His Majesty's Cup football and hockey events.

However, Seeb lost out to holders Dhofar in the football

semifinals and had to settle for a third-place finish in the hockey tournament after losing in eventual champions Ahli-Sidab in the semis. A top club official said, "It is good win for the spikers but we were hoping for better news in the HM's Cup football and hockey events."

For Al Kamil W'al Wafi, it was second consecutive disappointment, having finished runner-up in the OVA First Division League, losing out to Al Salam recently.

Earlier, OVA league champions Al Salam claimed the

bronze after beating Ahli Sidab 3-0 (25-18, 25-19 25-20).

Ahmed al Toobi of Seeb was named the Most Valuable Player of the tournament.

Later, H E Said bin Sultan al Busaidi, Undersecretary at the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, presented the awards in the presence of H H Sayyid Melek bin Shihab al Said, H E Rashad bin Ahmed al Hinai, Undersecretary at the sports ministry, Sheikh Badar al Rawas, OVA chairman, and other officials.

@ashokmuscat



Action from the final match between Seeb and Al Kamil W'al Wafi

QUICK RUN

SLC announces 17-member squad for Windies Tests

Sri Lanka flew five Test players on Saturday to join a 17-member squad for the two Tests against the West Indies at the end of the ongoing limited overs tournament. Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) said Lahiru Thirimanne, Dhananjaya de Silva, Roshan Silva, Vishwa Fernando, and Lasith Embuldeniya left the island Saturday for the Caribbean. The first Test starts on March 21 and the second is scheduled for March 29.

Test squad: Dimuth Karunaratne (captain), Dasun Shanaka, Pathum Nissanka, Oshada Fernando, Lahiru Thirimanne, Dinesh Chandimal, Angelo Mathews, Niroshan Dickwella, Roshan Silva, Dhananjaya de Silva, Wanindu Hasaranga, Ramesh Mendis, Vishwa Fernando, Suranga Lakmal, Asitha Fernando, Dushmantha Chameera and Lasith Embuldeniya.

Ibrahimovic poised for Sweden comeback: Reports

Zlatan Ibrahimovic will return to international football at the age of 39, Swedish media reported on Saturday. Sweden, coached by Janne Andersson, have qualified for the Euros and kick off their campaign against Spain in Bilbao on June 14. The return has been under discussion for several months, according to reports. "It is certain that the Milan star is making a comeback in Janne Andersson's squad for the World Cup qualifiers," said the website *Footbolldirekt*. AFP

FOOTBALL ROUND-UP

Arsenal frustrated by Xhaka blunder

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE

Burnley, UK - Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta refused to condemn Granit Xhaka after the midfielder's embarrassing mistake gifted Burnley a 1-1 draw on Saturday, while Southampton ended a nine-game winless run by beating Sheffield United 2-0.

Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang put Arsenal ahead early on at Turf Moor, but Xhaka's farcical howler allowed Chris Wood to equalise in the 39th minute.

Xhaka foolishly tried to pass the ball out of his own six-yard box instead of clearing it and his miscued effort bounced off Wood into the Arsenal net.

Arteta's team couldn't make amends for Xhaka's blunder and tenth placed Arsenal are now nine points behind fourth placed Chelsea. "It is the way we play and the way we want to play," Arteta said. "We have to know the risk and the rules for the way we want to play. It is what it is."

Arteta had warned Arsenal's players this week that their league position was unaccept-



Arsenal's Granit Xhaka reacts during the English Premier League match against Burnley at Turf Moor in Burnley, UK, on Saturday (AFP)

able for a club with such a rich history. But, with their hopes of qualifying for the Champions League via a top-four finish in tatters, Arsenal will have to prioritise their trip to Greece to play Olympiakos in the Europa League last-16 first-leg on Thursday. "It is really complicated. I have a feeling with the way that

we are playing at the moment that we can win any game," Arteta said.

Aubameyang opened the scoring in the sixth minute, cutting in from the left flank and using a nimble step-over to ease past Matt Lowton into the Burnley area. With six Burnley players too slow to respond to



Leipzig's players celebrate after a goal against Freiburg on Saturday

the danger, Aubameyang had space to drill a low drive from 12 yards that beat Nick Pope's weak attempted save at his near post.

It was Aubameyang's 14th goal of the season in all competitions and his eighth against Burnley in his Arsenal career.

In the other match, Southampton's win helped them

move ten points clear of the relegation zone. James Ward-Prowse's penalty opened the scoring just after the half hour mark before Che Adams came up with a blistering strike into the top corner on 49 minutes.

GERMAN LEAGUE Leipzig knock Bayern from top

Berlin, Germany - RB Leipzig went top of the Bundesliga on Saturday with a 3-0 romp at Freiburg to usurp previous leaders Bayern Munich, who later host Dortmund in Germany's 'Klassiker'. Christopher Nkunku, Alexander Sorloth and Emil Forsberg scored the goals in Freiburg which lifted Leipzig one point ahead of Bayern.

OTHER RESULTS:

SCOTTISH PREMIERSHIP:

Rangers 3 St Mirren 0, Aberdeen 0 Hamilton 0, St Johnstone 1 Hibernian 0, Ross County 3 Kilmarnock 2, Motherwell 3 Livingston 1. AFP



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INDIA ROUT ENGLAND

Five each for Ashwin, Patel; Kohli's men qualify for WTC final vs New Zealand



India players and officials celebrate after claiming the Test series against England with an innings' win in the fourth Test in Ahmedabad, India, on Saturday

INDIA VS ENGLAND
FOURTH TEST: DAY THREE
Ahmedabad, India - India wrapped up a convincing innings victory to seal a 3-1 series result and a spot in the World Test Championship (WTC) final, after England collapsed against spin for the final time on tour. Although Washington Sundar was left high and dry four runs short of a maiden Test hundred, Axar Patel hounded the visitors for his fourth five-for of an immensely impressive debut series to help confirm the inevitable midway through the evening session on day three.

India will meet New Zealand in the WTC final, which is scheduled between June 18 and 22, at a yet-to-be-named venue in England - the ICC is expected to make the final call soon. Sundar had batted impressively in the slipstream of Rishabh Pant on the second day to revive India from trouble at 146 for six, and he seemed destined to become a Test centurion at the age of 21, only to run out of partners in anticlimactic fashion as the last three wickets fell for no runs in five balls. Although England's openers managed to survive a three-over spell before the lunch break, India soon took the game by the throat. Six wickets tumbled during an afternoon session in which England skittered and

scraped to 65 for six, and only a doughty fifty from Dan Lawrence prevented India from putting their feet up much earlier. England once again paid a heavy price for underperforming with the bat in conditions that were far less demanding than those encountered in the second and third Tests. Sundar, batting at No 8 in only his fourth Test, emphasised the gulf. There was barely a false shot as he went about compiling a four-hour innings that looked set to end

with his bat raised to the cavernous Motera stands; even without the garland, his 96 was a higher score than any England batsman barring Root managed in the entire series. His efforts extended India's lead from 89 overnight to a daunting 160, and it soon became clear that England did not have the stomach for one last fight. R Ashwin scalped two wickets in his opening over and four of the top five were dismissed in single figures as panic

set in once again. Lawrence provided a glimmer as England attempted to at least make India bat again, but he was last man out after notching a second Test fifty, as Ashwin completed a five-wicket haul of his own. Overall, Ashwin and Patel claimed 59 wickets between them, at averages of 14.71 and 10.59 respectively, as English uncertainties on even vaguely spin-friendly surfaces were ruthlessly exploited. The first 90 minutes of play

had been conspicuously lacking in drama, as Sundar and Patel calmly extended their eighth-wicket stand to 106. Both made Test-best scores against a toiling England attack but, with Sundar's milestone almost in touching distance, the innings suddenly imploded. Cricinfo

SCOREBOARD		
England 1 st Innings 205		
INDIA 1 st INNINGS		
S Gill	lbw b Anderson	0
Rohit Sharma	lbw b Stokes	49
C Pujara	lbw b Leach	17
V Kohli	c Foakes b Stokes	0
A Rahane	c Stokes b Anderson	27
R Pant	c Root b Anderson	101
R Ashwin	c Pope b Leach	13
W Sundar	not out	96
A Patel	run out	43
Ishant Sharma	lbw b Stokes	0
M Siraj	b Stokes	0
Extras:	(b 10, lb 6, nb 3)	19
TOTAL: 365 in 114.4 overs		
Fall of wickets: 1-0, 2-40, 3-41, 4-80, 5-121, 6-146, 7-259, 8-365, 9-365, 10-365		
Bowling: J Anderson 25-14-44-3, B Stokes 27-4-6-89-4, J Leach 27-5-89-2, D Bess 17-1-71-0, J Root 18-1-56-0		
ENGLAND 2 nd INNINGS		
Z Crawley	c Rahane b Ashwin	5
D Stiley	c Pant b Patel	3
J Bairstow	c Rohit b Ashwin	0
J Root	lbw b Ashwin	30
B Stokes	c Kohli b Patel	2
O Pope	st Pant b Patel	15
D Lawrence	b Ashwin	50
B Foakes	c Rahane b Patel	13
D Bess	c Pant b Patel	2
J Leach	c Rahane b Ashwin	2
J Anderson	not out	1
Extras:	(b 4, lb 8)	12
TOTAL: 135 in 54.5 overs		
Fall of wickets: 1-10, 2-10, 3-20, 4-30, 5-65, 6-65, 7-109, 8-111, 9-134, 10-135		
Bowling: M Siraj 4-0-12-0, A Patel 24-6-48-5, R Ashwin 22.5-4-47-5, W Sundar 4-0-16-0		

Kohli hails India's comeback

Ahmedabad, India - After the latest emphatic innings and 25-run victory, India captain Virat Kohli hailed the way his side came back from a game down to dominate the series and book their place in the World Test Championship final against New Zealand. "The comeback in Chennai (the 2nd Test) pleased me the most. The first game was an aberration and England outplayed us," Kohli said. "We bowled and fielded with more intensity and so the comeback was very heartening. Our bench strength is extremely strong and that's a good sign for Indian cricket." England captain Joe Root



admitted his side, who suffered a two-day humiliation in the third Test, had been 'outplayed' again. "There are a few key areas of the games where India managed to grab them and we didn't," he said. Kohli praised Rohit Sharma for his 161 which proved deci-

sive in the second Test in Chennai and R Ashwin, who he described as India's 'most bankable player over the years'. India coach Ravi Shastri singled out Rishabh Pant's performance with the bat and behind the wickets as 'magnificent'. "He was told in no uncertain terms that he has got to respect the game a little more. He's got to lose a bit of weight and work hard on his keeping," said Shastri. "Yesterday's innings was the best counter-attacking innings I have seen in India. He built a partnership with Rohit playing against his nature - to do that is not easy." AFP



Sri Lankan players celebrate a dismissal of a West Indies batsman

Sri Lanka defeat WI to level series

WEST INDIES VS SRI LANKA
SECOND T20I

St John's, Antigua and Barbuda - Sri Lanka's spinners bamboozled world champions West Indies to claim a 43-run win in the second T20I at Coolidge Cricket Ground on Friday.

Having lost by four wickets in the opening game on Wednesday, in a game where West Indies skipper Kieron Pollard launched six sixes in an over, the tourists successfully defended 160 on Friday to level the three-match series. West Indies were all out for 117 in the 19th over as Sri Lanka ended an eight-game losing streak in T20.

The final match is at the same venue on Sunday. Leg-spinner Wanindu Hasaranga finished with three for 17, off-break bowler Akila Dananjaya, who was the victim of Pollard's mid-week assault but also claimed a hat-trick, had one for 13.

Wrist spinner Lakshan Sandakan took three for ten, including Pollard who made just 13. "The wicket was a bit slow. I tried not to give away any boundaries. That's why I was able to bowl well," man-of-the-match Hasaranga told the post-match presentation.

West Indies were 45 for one before five wickets fell for just 21 runs. Chris Gayle, who was out for a first ball duck on Wednesday in his first appearance in two years, made a patchy 16 when he fell to a catch by Ashen Bandara off Hasaranga. Opener Lendl Simmons (21) was next out, lbw failing to pick a Hasaranga googly. Nicholas Pooran, Jason Holder and Dwayne Bravo all fol-

lowed quickly for single figure scores. Dananjaya had earlier dismissed opener Evin Lewis for six. Hasaranga, just 23, added Fabian Allan to his list of victims with the West Indies struggling on 89 for seven in the 16th over. With more than 22 an over required, Sandakan then got the big prize of Pollard, caught in the deep for just 13 having surprisingly opted to bat at No 7. Sandakan then halted Obed McCoy's cameo of 23 from seven balls with the tail-ender proving to be his team's top scorer. AFP

SCOREBOARD		
SRI LANKA		
D Gunathilaka	c Sinclair b Bravo	56 (42)
P Nissanka	run out	37 (23)
D Chandimal	c Simmons b Bravo	3 (7)
A Mathews	c Holder b McCoy	13 (05)
A Bandara	c Simmons b Holder	21 (09)
T Perera	run out	2 (3)
W Hasaranga	not out	19 (10)
N Dickwella	not out	0 (0)
Extras:	(b 1, lb 2, w 6)	9
TOTAL: 160 for six in 20 overs		
Fall of wickets: 1-95, 2-96, 3-104, 4-119, 5-129, 6-154		
Bowling: F Edwards 2-0-19-0, K Sinclair 4-0-32-0, J Holder 4-0-36-1, O McCoy 4-0-34-1, D Bravo 4-0-25-2, F Allen 2-0-31-0		
WEST INDIES		
L Simmons	lbw b Hasaranga	21 (09)
E Lewis	b Dananjaya	6 (06)
C Gayle	c Bandara b Hasaranga	16 (06)
N Pooran	b Chameera	8 (05)
J Holder	c Dananjaya b Gunathilaka	9 (05)
D Bravo	c Mathews b Chameera	2 (4)
K Pollard	c Chandimal b Sandakan	13 (05)
F Allen	lbw b Hasaranga	12 (07)
K Sinclair	c Nissanka b Sandakan	3 (08)
O McCoy	b Sandakan	23 (07)
F Edwards	not out	1 (02)
Extras:	(b 1, nb 2)	3
TOTAL: 117 all out in 18.4 overs		
Fall of wickets: 1-9, 2-45, 3-48, 4-60, 5-65, 6-66, 7-89, 8-93, 9-116, 10-117		
Bowling: A Dananjaya 4-0-13-1, D Chameera 4-0-26-2, T Perera 2-0-42-0, W Hasaranga 4-0-17-3, L Sandakan 3-4-0-10-3, D Gunathilaka 1-0-8-1		

50th anniversary of Gavaskar's Test debut celebrated

Ahmedabad, India - It was exactly 50 years ago, on March 6, 1971, that Sunil Gavaskar made his Test debut in Port of Spain on India's tour of the West Indies, which they won 1-0 - a seminal achievement, one of the high points in the history of Indian cricket. To mark the occasion, the BCCI felicitated Gavaskar at the lunch break on the third day of the fourth and final Test between India and England in Ahmedabad with a commemorative Test cap. For his part, Gavaskar chose to make another debut of sorts on the day, on Instagram. Back in 1971, the debutant opening batsman made 65 in that first innings and 67 not out in the second as India won the Test by seven wickets, and scored 774 runs in four Tests on that tour. That remains the record for the most runs in a Test series by an India batsman, and joint 12th (with Steven Smith, in the 2019 Ashes) in the overall list of batsmen with most runs in a Test series. He retired from the game with 10,122 runs from 125 Tests at an average of 51.12, with a then-record 34 centuries in the format. He also played 108 ODIs, scoring 3092 runs in them at an average of 35.13. He has since worn many hats, including being the president of the BCCI for a short period in 2014. Cricinfo

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ALL SET FOR SUMMIT CLASH

Salalah giants Dhofar face Al Suwaiq challenge as they chase record tenth HM's Cup title



A file photo of Dhofar and Al Suwaiq players in an aerial duel during their Omantel League match on February 22 at the Al Rustaq Sports Complex



Dhofar coach Rasheed Jaber (C) and team goalkeeper Faiz al Rusheidi (L) at a press meet on Saturday



Dhofar are a much different side today. They have a majority of players in the national team and have an experienced coach. They are going to be a tough team to beat but I have the confidence in my boys

HAKEEM SHAKER, AL SUWAIQ COACH

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Ashok Purohit
Muscat

2020-21 HIS MAJESTY'S CUP FOOTBALL FINAL

Four years ago in 2017, Salalah giants Dhofar were on the verge of winning a historic domestic double. Having won the Omantel League crown, they were the favourites to win the His Majesty's Cup crown that year. But, their dreams of a double crown were dashed by Al Suwaiq, who turned out to be their party-spoilers under Iraqi coach Hakeem Shaker.

Fast forward to 2021 and Dhofar are on the verge of another historic feat and, once again, standing in between the nine-time HM's Cup champions and their bid for a record tenth title, are Shaker's Al Suwaiq.

Will Shaker, who had turned Suwaiq's campaign in 2017 from near disaster to glory with their third HM's Cup title repeat his heroics or will Dhofar under former national team coach Rasheed Jaber clinch their record tenth title? The answers will be known on Sunday when both the teams face-off in the summit clash of the coveted HM's Cup Football Championship at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex (SQSC). The match, which will

be played behind closed doors, kicks off at 6.45pm.

Dhofar have been in great form under Jaber and are unbeaten this 2020-21 season. They are currently second in the Omantel League, trailing Seeb by just two points after ten rounds with eight wins and two draws.

Dhofar's march into the HM's Cup final have been impressive, after the defending champions began their campaign with a bye into last-16. The holders beat Rustaq to book a spot in the double-leg quarterfinals, where they trounced Al Mussanah 5-0 (aggregate scoreline) and then overcame their biggest challenge by edging past Omantel League champions Seeb in the semifinals (2-1 aggregate).

On the other hand, Suwaiq had a nervous journey to the summit clash as they fought back to down Al Ittihad in the semifinals (3-2 aggregate) after overcoming Ibri in the quarterfinals in a penalty shootout.

Suwaiq had edged Sohar 2-1 in a last-16 match after beginning their campaign with a hard-fought win in a penalty shootout over Al Bashayer. But the early games in their HM's Cup campaign were without former Iraq national team coach Shaker.

Speaking at the pre-match



press conference at the Oman Football Association (OFA) headquarters on Saturday, Shaker, who led Suwaiq to their last HM's Cup title triumph in 2017, said, "Dhofar are a much different side today. They have a majority of players in the national team and have an experienced coach. They are going to be a tough team to beat but I have the confidence in my boys. I think we can overcome the challenge."

Dhofar who share the record of nine HM's Cup titles with Fanja are eyeing two records on Sunday.

A victory will not only give

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RASHEED JABER

Dhofar a historic tenth HM's Cup crown but will also give them the only club to have the highest number of domestic titles - domestic league and HM's Cup.

With 11 top-flight league honours, Dhofar are ahead of Fanja, who have nine titles.

A victory will also give them back-to-back crowns for the first time since they achieved in 1980-81. The first of Dhofar's nine titles came in 1976 and after the double in 80-81, they won the final in 1990, 1999, 2004, 2006, 2011 and 2020 editions.

With a illustrious history in the competition, Jaber knows that his boys have the advantage of experience against a rival, who won for the first time only in 2009 and then in 2013 before their third in 2017.

Speaking ahead of the final, Jaber said, "We began our campaign with a mission to enter the final of all the domestic

tournaments. The win over Omantel League leaders and defending champions Seeb in the semifinals was satisfying. We are a step away from a historic tenth HM's Cup title. We hope to achieve it tomorrow. Suwaiq are a very organised team and we will have to be at our best to get past them."

Jaber said that 'only small technical details will make the difference in the final'. "The team which makes less mistakes on the pitch is likely to be the winner," he said.

Dhofar and national team goalkeeper Faiz al Rusheidi said, "We are ready for the final and we all know that it would be a milestone tenth crown."

On the other hand, Shaker, who is having his third stint in Oman, said "Though Dhofar is the favourite, I know my boys have the potential and the skills to upset them."

Shaker said there is a 'lot of difference' between the final in 2017 and on Sunday. He said, "The Dhofar players are much more experienced and playing at the top level. They also have experience of winning more titles since 2017. My team is much different from the one that won the title. I have worked hard over the past couple of weeks and I am hopeful of a good result."

Essam al Subhi, the Suwaiq striker, who scored both the goals in the return-leg semifinals against Al Ittihad said, "Our team is in a good shape for the final. HM's Cup is the most prestigious event and I along with my fellow teammates are proud to have reached the final. We will give our best tomorrow."

H E Sayyid Saud bin Hilal al Busaidi, Minister of State and Governor of Muscat, will be the chief guest and award the trophy in the presence of H H Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, and other top officials.

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Dhofar players after a training session ahead of their HM's Cup final against Al Suwaiq