



MUSCAT DAILY

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36°C/27°C

MINISTRY SETS GUIDELINES FOR NEW SCHOOL YEAR
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ROYAL DECREE RESTRUCTURES CBO BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Muscat - His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has issued Royal Decree No 117/2020 forming the Board of Governors of the Central Bank of Oman (CBO).

Article 1 structures the CBO's Board of Governors under the chairmanship of Sayyid Taimour bin Asaad bin Tarik al Said, with membership of the following:

- Minister of Economy (as Deputy Chairman)
- Undersecretary of the Ministry of Finance
- Chief Executive Officer of Capital Market Authority
- Maqbool bin Ali bin Sultan al Lawatia
- Sheikh Mohammed bin Saud bin Salim Bahwan al Mukhaini
- Ahmed bin Mohammed bin Abdullah al Abri

The board's membership will be for five years from the date of enforcement of this decree.

Article 2 cancels all that contravenes this decree or contradicts with its provisions.

Article 3 states that this decree will be published in the Official Gazette and enforced with effect from its date of issue.

ONA

'Vaccine may be available before end of year'

Shaddad al Musalmi
Muscat

With many countries expressing interest in joining the COVAX facility designed to guarantee fast and equitable access globally to COVID-19 vaccines, Oman is in continuous coordination with companies to get doses as soon as it is produced.

Announcing updates, H E Dr Ahmed bin Mohammed al Sa'eedi, Minister of Health, said, "Hopefully, the vaccine will be available before the end of this year. We are in consultation with all vaccine companies."

COVAX is led by GAVI, the World Health Organization and the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI). Its aim is to deliver 2bn doses of effective, approved COVID-19 vaccines by the end of 2021.

The shots will be delivered equally to participating countries proportional to their populations and initially administered to health workers. "We need to take care of our health workers. Most of them wear masks and protective clothing for eight hours straight, and if this epidemic continues, they will become more tired," Dr Sa'eedi said.

He said that COVID-19 cases are increasing both locally and globally and there is need to ad-



Institutions must ensure only 70 per cent of employees work from office. Hundred per cent of employees returning to work is violation of the decisions of the Supreme Committee

H E DR AHMED BIN MOHAMMED AL SA'EEDI

here to the precautionary measures. "Institutions must ensure only 70 per cent of employees work from office. Hundred per cent of employees returning to work is violation of the decisions of the Supreme Committee," Dr Sa'eedi said.



Bahrain follows UAE, inks peace deal with Israel

Washington, US - US President Donald Trump announced on Friday a 'peace deal' between Israel and Bahrain, which becomes the second Arab country to settle with its former foe in just the last few weeks.

"Another HISTORIC breakthrough today! Our two GREAT friends Israel and the Kingdom of Bahrain agree to a Peace Deal - the second Arab country to make peace with Israel in 30 days!" Trump tweeted.

A joint US-Israeli-Bahrain statement said there would be "full diplomatic relations".

Bahrain has agreed to formalise the deal with Israel at a ceremony on September 15 at the White House, where the United Arab Emirates will also sign off on its own thaw with Israel announced in mid-August.

According to the statement, Bahrain's King Hamad bin Isa al Khalifa, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Trump talked earlier on Friday before an-

nouncing the breakthrough.

At the White House Trump celebrated, calling it "a truly historic day" and "so interesting" that he was able to make the announcement on the anniversary of the September 11, 2001 attacks against the United States.

"When I took office the Middle East was in a state of absolute chaos," said Trump, who faces a difficult re-election in just over seven weeks.

The UAE's earlier announcement of a normalisation of relations with Israel broke with years of Arab League policy on the Middle East conflict and has seen pushback from the Palestinians and Iran.

Trump, who has made crushing sanctions and diplomatic pressure on Israel's arch foe Iran a priority of his administration, predicted however that there would be a 'very positive' development in the standoff with Tehran.

APF

Two arrested for fraud, blackmailing 57 women

Experts caution against scamsters offering jobs on social media platforms

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Royal Oman Police (ROP) has arrested two people accused of blackmailing 57 girls in two separate cases.

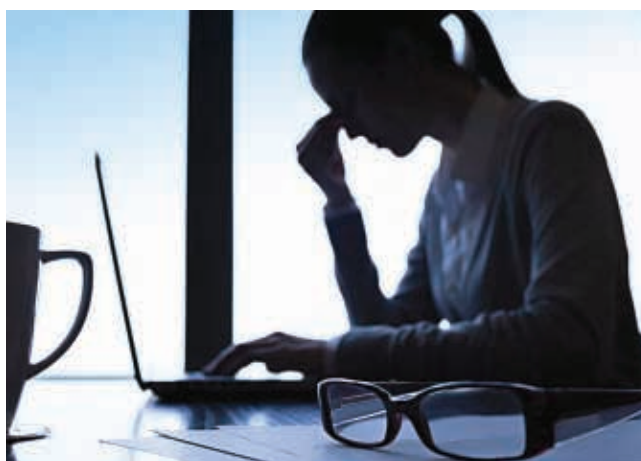
In the first case, ROP arrested a person accused of defrauding 56 girls by impersonating as the head of the recruitment department of an airline in July.

According to an ROP official, the girls were promised jobs through a fake account on a social media platform. "The victims were blackmailed after they shared their profiles and personal photos," he said.

In the second case, the ROP official added, "Buraimi Governorate Police Command arrested a person on September 9 accused of defaming a girl and violating the Law on Combating Information Technology Crimes. The accused blackmailed the girl and threatened her after he was able to communicate with her through social media."

Experts cautioned that the only way to protect youth from such fraudsters is raising awareness of these activities by parents and teachers from an early stage.

Speaking to *Muscat Daily*,



Cases of blackmail have become varied and multiplied due to growing social media sites and platforms

DR MAHA ABDUL MAJEED AL ANI

Dr Maha Abdul Majeed al Ani, specialist psychological counsellor, said, "Cases of fraud have increased in recent years at the global level, particularly so in the Arab world, compared to previous years. Cases of blackmail have become varied and multiplied due to growing social media sites and plat-

forms."

Dr Maha informed that fraud is psychologically unhealthy and has negative repercussions on the individual and on society giving rise to a number of mental health disorders.

"The blackmailer usually exploits the weaknesses of the victim. Social media helps the

blackmailer use different methods to delude the victim in his ability to satisfy his needs.

"People who are exposed to fraud are weak in character and have a desire to reach their goals in any way, as well as are poorly informed and unaware of the misuse of social media. They have blind trust in others."

According to Dr Maha, there can be several reasons why a blackmailer commits crime, including family disintegration, weak religious faith or aggressive desires represented in causing harm to others, lack of self esteem, emptiness and frustration.

Asked about the solution to end such cases, she said, "Young people should obtain information from reliable sources, not be fooled by false promises, improve interaction with social networking sites, and not share personal information with others."

She noted that parents have a big role in keeping their children safe by instilling religious, ethical values, customs and community traditions in their children, satisfying their psychological needs, communicating and having open and effective dialogue, besides

being positive role models for their children.

According to Khalid Ahmed Ali Tabook, head of the Family Counselling and Guidance Department in Dhofar at the Ministry of Social Development, family plays a big role in youngsters not falling prey to any kind of blackmail.

"The youth should deal very carefully with social media and not share personal data with anyone. Job openings in Oman appear on reliable sites. Make sure of any job offered on social media and its source," Tabook cautioned.

The ROP official urged everyone to be alert when dealing with unknown persons, especially online, saying citizens should only apply for jobs through official accounts and channels of institutions and companies to stay safe from fraudsters.



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Our Correspondent
Muscat

Clearing the decks for the re-opening of schools, the Ministry of Education has announced health protocols and the general framework for activities at schools to be followed when the new academic year (2020/21) commences on November 1.

H E Dr Madiha al Shibaniyah, Minister of Education, said on Thursday, "The ministry has prepared study plans and programmes to ensure the safety of administrative and teaching staff and those benefiting from the educational system."

The health protocols include clear precautionary measures such as checking temperature, availability of sanitisers, wearing face masks and physical distancing in classrooms and school buses.

Talking about the framework for activities at schools, she said, "Students will come from home wearing a face mask, without which they will not board the bus. Duration of classes will be 45 minutes."

Information related to COVID-19 infection or fever that a student may develop will be relayed to guardians immediately and the same is expected from parents if their children present symptoms at home.

Based on the number of students, the ministry has classified schools into three categories and allotted time schedules accordingly. For low-density schools, school hours will be for three hours with only 16 students per classroom. Medium-density schools will have 50 per cent of their original class strength and conduct four-hour instruction days. At high-density schools, the attendance will be one-third of total student strength over five-hour instruction days.

Students belonging to medium- and high-density schools will continue their online classes via educational platforms and television channels during the week when they stay at home.

"School buses will transport 50 per cent of their capacity to achieve the required physical distancing between students. Students of grade one to four do not need wear masks, according to the World Health Organization. Bilingual schools, community schools with international curricula have started online education but from November 1, they can begin direct education. Expat schools will also reopen on November 1," said H E Dr Madiha. She noted that 97 schools will operate at full capacity as these fall outside the scope of Internet coverage.

"We have agreed with local companies to provide computers and Internet packages at reasonable prices to students. The plan



(Photograph for illustrative purpose only)

GUIDELINES FOR NEW SCHOOL YEAR



Students will come from home wearing a face mask, without which they will not board the bus. Duration of classes will be 45 minutes

H E DR MADIHA AL SHIBANIYAH

Indian schools scheduled to reopen

Bilingual schools, community schools and international curricula schools have had online education for three-four months now, but they can start direct education again on November 1, H E Dr Madiha, announced on Thursday.

In an online meeting held with parents of Indian School Muscat on Saturday, school authorities said they were awaiting detailed guidelines from the Ministry of Education following which they will announce when and how the school will reopen.

Closing schools in the event of an outbreak

In the event of an outbreak of COVID-19 infection in a school, it will be shut down according to protocols already approved by the Supreme Committee.

H E Dr Madiha al Shibaniyah said, "Physical attendance of students in the classroom is subject to reevaluation in coordination with the Ministry of Health and the Supreme Committee. There are committees formed for this purpose at the level of schools, governorates' educational directorates and the Ministry of Health to monitor the students' conditions closely.

"The approved framework is flexible; if we need to shut down

the schools, we will go for distance learning and through TV channels."

The Ministry of Education will soon finalise the regulations for exempting students suffering from certain health conditions from attending school.

Dr Saif bin Salem al Abri, director general of Disease Control at the Ministry of Health, said, "There will be an intensive educational campaign on the measures that must be taken in schools by all groups. There is a protocol related to the closing of a school if a COVID-19 case is detected, which has been approved by the Supreme Committee."

EXAM DATES



▶ The second term exams for students of General Education Diploma for the academic year 2019/20 will begin on October 4, 2020 and end on October 21, 2020.

▶ Exam preparation leave for the General Education Diploma exams for the academic year 2020/21 will be from June 15, 2021 to June 17, 2021.

Final exam dates in public schools, special education schools and private schools not applicable to the special evaluation system and adult education are as follows:

▶ Exams of grades (5-11) from June 6, 2021 to June 17, 2021.

held on June 13 and 14, 2021.

▶ Exams of General Education Diploma and equivalent levels in personal skills subjects (school sport, musical skills, art, French and German languages) will be

▶ General Education Diploma examinations and equivalent levels with correction services are scheduled from June 20, 2021 to July 15, 2021.

Exams at the end of school year: MoE



Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Education (MoE) confirmed that examinations for the academic year 2020/21 will take place from June 6, 2021, to June 17, 2021.

Dr Zuwaina al Maskari, director general of Educational Evaluation Centre in the Ministry of Education, said, "We have reduced curricula by 30 per cent. The academic calendar will serve the students. We have identified and reduced specific evaluation tools for everyone for the final evaluation. The exams will be at the end of the school year. We reduced the percentage weights of exam scores and increased the percentage of continuous evaluations, which include three standardised short tests for all groups."

She informed that short tests



We have reduced curricula by 30 per cent. The academic calendar will serve the students

DR ZUWAINA AL MASKARI

will not be included in the final exam. "Additionally, students with chronic diseases will be treated according to a special mechanism. As for the exams, we will focus on what takes place in the classroom."

Second wave of COVID-19 imminent?

Government is playing its part; community should take strong, collective steps to fight virus

Shaddad al Musalmay
Muscat

Governments around the world having done their part to curb the spread of COVID-19, it is now the role of the community to take collective and strong steps to prevent the second wave of infection as the battle against the common enemy continues. H E Dr Ahmed bin Mohammed al Sa'eedi, Minister of Health, said on Thursday that the second wave in most countries was inevitable.

"If we adhere to the precautionary and preventive measures, it can be avoided. The sultanate is still in the first wave," he said. All partners of international community and country leaders are encouraging to proactively take actions to fight the COVID-19 together; hard times are yet to end in many countries including Oman.

"I am sure that we will overcome this pandemic. No one in the government and committees wants us to return to the state of closure. So I call on everyone to adhere to the precautionary measures and spread awareness in the community," H E Dr



If we adhere to the precautionary and preventive measures, the second wave of the pandemic can be avoided. Oman is still in the first wave

H E DR AHMED AL SA'EEDI

Sa'eedi said.

As there is resumption of more activities, there is a need for self-monitoring and social awareness. "Some countries took decisions to shut down

again a few establishments and we hope that we will not be compelled to take such decisions. The number of casualties has reduced since July, but for this rate of decrease to continue depends

on the extent of adherence to preventive measures."

According to Dr Ahmed al Mandhari, WHO regional director for the Eastern Mediterranean, this week, the region reached another milestone as it surpassed 2mn COVID-19 cases.

"We are observing developments that remind us again that we must remain totally vigilant in managing this virus. Several countries that had successfully

controlled transmission a few months ago, including Morocco, Tunisia, Jordan and Lebanon, are now seeing an acceleration of cases," Dr Mandhari said.

As social gatherings and population mobility increase, international travel resumes, and levels of mask use remain low, it is perhaps inevitable that we see a resurgence of new cases across the region.

"The challenge for us all is to ease these measures in a manner

and at a pace that minimises the public health threat. It is now more critical than ever to protect those who have not yet been infected, especially the most vulnerable," Dr Mandhari said

To reduce risk of transmission in the coming weeks and months, individuals and communities must continue to implement the well-known and proven prevention measures, especially in settings such as social gatherings, schools and

other public events.

"We appreciate the commitment of most segments of society. It is necessary to wear face masks. The countries that succeeded in overcoming the pandemic did not succeed because of government measures only, but as a result of everyone's sense of responsibility and commitment to follow the precautionary measures," H E Dr Sa'eedi said.

@shadadm

House collapse kills expatriate worker

Muscat - An expatriate worker died on Saturday as a result of a house collapse, while another one was injured in Muscat.

The Public Authority for Civil Defence and Ambulances announced

that a worker of Asian nationality died and another was injured as a result of the house collapse in the wilayat of Muttrah in Muscat governorate on Saturday.



AUCTION NOTICE

Port of Duqm Company S.A.O.C., hereby announces the following Auction (in closed envelopes) to auction the below listed used vehicles (each vehicle separately):

Vehicle Type	Inspection Site
Toyota Coaster Bus (29 passengers), Engine Capacity 4 liter, Model Year 2015	Al Wusta Governorate, Duqm
Nissan pickup, Engine Capacity 2.4, Model Year 2014, (2 units)	Al Wusta Governorate, Duqm
GMC Van, Engine Capacity 6 liters, Model Year 2013	Al Wusta Governorate, Duqm
Toyota Sedan Corolla, Engine Capacity 1.6 liter, Model Year 2011	Muscat Governorate, N. Azaiba, 18 November Street
Toyota Prado 4WD, Engine Capacity 4 liter, Model Year 2012	Muscat Governorate, N. Azaiba, 18 November Street

Auction No	Date for inspection	Date for Receiving bids (sealed envelopes)	Bank Guarantee
PODC/SCM/020/2020	Sep 13, 2020 to Sep. 17 2020 From 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. - 14:00 p.m., - 17:00 p.m., from Sunday to Thursday	Sep 20, 2020 From 8:00 a.m. - 14:00 p.m. - 17:00 p.m.	50/- OMR Non Refundable

General conditions:

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

For any further inquiries related to the auction; please contact auction coordinator during official working hours (Sunday to Thursday) in Duqm mobile 99287942 & 99190276 and in Muscat 92760090 & 95595141.

Notes:

- Vehicles are sold as they are in their current condition.
- Port of Duqm Company SAOC reserve the right to cancel or postpone the auction without giving any reasons.
- Port of Duqm Company SAOC reserves the right to issue sales orders either in part or in full to the auctioned vehicles without any justifiable reasons.

Port of Duqm Company S.A.O.C.
PO Box: 2409, PC: 111, Sultanate of Oman,
Almashreq Building, 18 November Street, N. Azaiba
T: (+968) 24342800 | F: (+968) 24587343 | www.portofduqm.om



EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

Providing Breakfast & Lunch for Haya Water Staff

Haya Water, a registered trademark of Oman Wastewater Services Company S.A.O.C is owned by the Government of Sultanate of Oman, and is empowered to plan, build and operate the Wastewater Projects in the Sultanate (except for the Dhofar Governorate) covering wastewater collection, treatment and treated effluent distribution system. Our vision is to build and operate a World Class Wastewater System in the Sultanate of Oman. Haya Water invites Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) to send their Expression of Interest for the provision of Breakfast and Buffett Lunch for Haya Water Staff in its Head Quarter (Bait Haya) and Operation & Maintenance Building in Madinat Al Irfan for a period of three years.

The terms and conditions of this service are listed below:

- The vendor shall provide light snacks/ breakfast in Head Office (Bait Haya) and Operation & Maintenance Building from 7:00 AM until 9:00 AM – Sunday to Thursday.
- The vendor shall provide Buffett Lunch in Head Office (Bait Haya) and Operation & Maintenance Building from 12pm until 3pm – Sunday to Thursday.
- The vendor shall ensure that the utensils in which the food and beverages are served are properly and hygienically cleaned and maintained in a good condition in line with the HSE requirements.
- The vendor shall provide catering equipment, consumables, flatware, glassware and cutlery.
- The vendor shall cook the food in its facility and transport it to Haya Water facilities.
- All Personnel engaged by the vendor shall be comprehensively insured for accidents and injuries by the vendor at his cost and according to the law of Sultanate of Oman.
- Haya Water will provide rent free furnished canteen (eating tables and chairs).
- Cleaning of canteen shall be carried out by the vendor.
- The vendor is not charged for electricity, water and the facilities available in the dining halls.
- Haya Water shall not guarantee on minimum number of staff that will avail the breakfast and lunch services.
- Vendor is required to agree on the menu prices with Haya Water's Management and the prices for the same shall be collected from the staff.
- The maximum number of staff in Head Quarter are 280 and Operation & Maintenance Building are 180.

Submissions must include experience, business profile, references for similar services with other organizations.

Interested SMEs shall submit the Expression of Interest to tender@haya.om on Thursday 24th September 2020.

For any further information or clarification, please email to tender@haya.om.

80077111 | www.haya.om | hayawater
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Little environmentalist

12 year old says it with flowers as he spreads awareness on the environment

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Hamad al Jaafari, 12, was honoured by the Environment Authority in the Governorate of North Sharqiyah last week for his voluntary services. The lad's activities include cleaning beaches in Al Ashkharah and distributing flowers among tourists to raise awareness on the urgent need of preserving the environment.

Nizar Salim al Fannah al Araiimi, director of the Environment Department in North Sharqiyah, informed that Hamad was feted for his efforts to encourage community members to preserve the environment.

Hamad's activities help spread environmental awareness among community members and tourists alike as he engages with them in his own way urging beachgoers to not litter. "We call on all members of society to keep beaches, wadis and aflaj clean," Araiimi said furthering Hamad's cause.

Speaking to *Muscat Daily*,



(Supplied photos)

I started cleaning beaches in 2018 with my family. Since then, I have participated in all the clean-up campaigns on the beaches of Al Ashkharah

HAMAD AL JAAFARI

their parents. Soon, the boys started collecting money from their parents to support the clean-up activities, conveying their message of cleanliness with flowers to beachgoers in Al Ashkharah.

Asked what prompted him to take up these activities, Hamad said, "My parents taught me that preserving the environment is important for every human being and I must have a

positive role in this."

Calling themselves the Little Environment Friends Team, Hamad and his group of volunteers also hold environment related events, besides regular beach clean-ups. While thanking the Environment Authority for honouring his work, and his family for encouraging him, Hamad also called out to private companies to support the team financially to achieve its goals.



Hamad al Jaafari being honoured by the Environment Authority

Hamad said, "I started cleaning beaches in 2018 with my family. Since then, I have participated in all the clean-up campaigns on the beaches of Al Ashkharah."

Following his first participation in 2018, Hamad roped in his friends to organise clean-ups every month, collecting waste from beaches with the support of

400km desert trek 'Walk of Oman' officially launched in London

Our Correspondent
Muscat

A 400km fundraising desert trek - the Grenadier Walk of Oman - by wounded ex-military personnel, was officially launched on September 9 in London.

Hosted at the Honourable Artillery Company (HAC) in London - the oldest regiment in the British Army, dating back to 1537 - the evening threw spotlight on the ongoing hard work and commitment of the six candidates who are involved in the expedition and the challenge that lies ahead.

Formed of five ex-military personnel and one member still currently serving, all six of the team have physical or cognitive injuries and will tackle one of their toughest challenges yet, as they pull a custom-built cart weighing in excess of 300kg (around three times their own bodyweight) across the dunes of the Empty Quarter, or Rub al Khali, over the course of 21 days.

Organised by military charity,



(Supplied photo)

Walking With The Wounded (WWTW), the Walk of Oman expedition will start on November 20 and end on December 11.

It is further supported by the Royal Office of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and is being organised in partnership with the Omani Armed Forces.

The guests were treated to a special video from Prince Harry, Duke of Sussex, in his role as the official Expedition Patron. Discussing the difficult trek that lies

ahead of the team participating in the Grenadier Walk of Oman, the Duke of Sussex shared a message of good luck and highlighted the continued support WWTW provides to ex-servicemen and women.

Prince Harry said in the message, "I want to personally congratulate the UK team members on their selection and wish them well as they prepare for the epic journey that they will be embarking on. You represent the whole

veteran community and I have no doubt that through this opportunity you'll demonstrate the resilience, the courage and the talent that exists within those who have served."

The team will trek between 20km to 22km per day. Temperatures will reach 35°C and around 550,000 steps will be taken across the Omani desert.

The Grenadier Walk of Oman marks the team's fifth international expedition.

Three Asians arrested in Musandam

Muscat - Royal Oman Police (ROP) announced that the Musandam Governorate Police Command has arrested three persons of Asian nationality on

charges of attempting to smuggle 2016 cans of alcoholic drinks in addition to a cache of narcotic substances by sea to Khasab.

PRAYER TIMINGS

Fajr	4.37	Asr	3.35
Sunrise	5.53	Maghrib	6.18
Duhr	12.08	Isha	7.29

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OABC to host information session on exporting to US

Muscat - The Oman American Business Center (OABC) will host a free informational session for Omani exporters interested in promoting their products in the United States. The session will discuss how to attend ASD Market Week, one of the oldest and largest consumer trade shows in the US, now available for online attendance.

Though the show cannot be conducted in-person, many are anxious to get back to business, which is why the organisers announced plans to launch the Virtual Product Sourcing Platform, from October 2, 2020, to March 2021.

This virtual directory gives the 225,000 invited buyers and 2,700 vendors the opportunity to connect and conduct business-to-business meetings. Buyers can source new products, refill orders and schedule appointments all through the online platform. This virtual platform enables vendors to showcase their products in an easy to navigate directory.

At the end of the online trade show, exporters are also invited to attend a full scale, live edition of ASD Market Week on February 28-March 3, 2021, in Las



After the info session, those who wish to register for the trade show will have the experience and support of the OABC at their service

Vegas, NV.

The show focuses primarily on wholesale of fashion accessories, housewares, gifts and toys, apparel, affordable footwear, holiday and seasonal merchandise, souvenirs and novelties, electronic accessories, bedding and bath, health and beauty products and general merchandise.

"Oman is one of only 20 countries in the world, and one of two countries within the GCC, that has a free trade agreement with the US," explained Ali Daud,

chairman of the OABC.

"In this exclusive club of trade partners there is so much untapped potential ready to be explored. This online opportunity is a fantastic chance for Omani exporters to engage with the world's largest economy and fish in the world's largest ocean."

"We are extremely excited to support companies looking to attend this event," said Rebecca Olson, executive director of the OABC.

"The first unique opportunity

presented here is the chance to connect with buyers over a long period: rather than 2-3 days, attendees can plan meetings and make connections over several months. The second opportunity relates to cost - typically to exhibit at a show in-person could cost upwards of US\$20,000. This show will cost less than 1/10 of that price, and could provide value and help companies gauge whether or not to make the trip in-person in 2021."

After the info session, those who wish to register for the trade show will have the experience and support of the OABC at their service. All members of the OABC will receive specialised training over multiple days, focused on how to attend the trade show and make the most of the experience as a vendor.

While the info session is mainly focused on companies looking to export to the US, importers in Oman may also attend the session. Many of the vendors exhibiting will have 'Made in USA' products available. Thanks to the FTA, these products enter Oman duty-free.

To register, visit: www.oabc.org/events/



University of Technology and Applied Sciences eyes partnership with Huawei

Muscat - The University of Technology and Applied Sciences and Huawei Company held a meeting recently to discuss businesses, services and projects provided by the latter in the fields of Communication and Information Technology (ICT) which may support the university's academic programmes.

They also highlighted the future trends in science, knowledge and modern technology that could be foreseen during the upcoming stage as well as the company's aspiration to provide high-quality services and advanced competitive products. This results from the university's desire to strengthen its relations with the private sector, building effective partnership with vari-

ous business sectors and opening the door for mutual cooperation with national and international companies.

Accordingly, and in terms of the cooperation and partnership between the university and the company, the parties discussed areas of effective cooperation in the fields of knowledge and technology that relate closely to the professional programmes that could be offered by Huawei. This will lead to building students' future knowledge and skills in advanced technology by delivering specialised courses and including some skills in the curriculum offered by the university.

In addition, the parties discussed the possibility of benefiting from some technological and

educational platforms that could be a source of knowledge and self-learning in the university. They also considered the possibility of establishing a laboratory for advanced technology related to Huawei in one of the university's colleges.

With the aim of benefiting the university's faculty and students and fostering the university's direction towards achieving its vision and goals to be a pioneer in the technological and applied education, the two parties agreed to expand fields of cooperation and partnership. They decided upon forming a team to ensure the implementation of their agreement as well as enforcing the cooperation areas and foreseeing future partnerships.

REGIONAL WEATHER

ABU DHABI

Max 43°C Min 28°C



DUBAI

Max 41°C Min 30°C



MANAMA

Max 38°C Min 29°C



DOHA

Max 40°C Min 29°C



KUWAIT CITY

Max 41°C Min 30°C



RIYADH

Max 41°C Min 25°C



NATIONAL BISCUIT INDUSTRIES LTD. SAOG

DIRECTORS' REPORT

Dear Shareholders,

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I have great pleasure in welcoming you to the thirty seventh Annual General Meeting of your Company.

REVENUE AND PROFITS

The company recorded a Net Revenue of RO 12,694,553 in the financial year 2019-20 compared to RO 12,551,496 in the financial year 2018-19. The Management focuses to maintain the market leadership position in Oman, expand export markets, endeavor of improving margins, efficiencies and reducing operating costs as advised by the board. The NABIL brand along with the new value added product enjoys a significant brand image in Oman market and have a good brand presence across the GCC and other regions outside of GCC markets.

Despite an increase in trade marketing and logistic costs in all markets, the company performance has improved the revenue and profitability over the last year.

Thus, the company has achieved a net profit of RO 875,419 for the financial year 2019-20 as compared to RO 770,297 in the financial year 2018-19.

OPERATING COSTS

Raw materials were purchased at competitive prices throughout the year as per the requirements. Necessary steps were taken to control the overall labour and other operating costs which have helped in improving the profitability of the company.

DIVIDEND

The Board of Directors proposes a cash dividend of 15% on the paid up share capital of RO 1,000,000 amounting to RO 150,000. There are no other appropriations.

COMPLIANCE WITH CMA

Your Company has been constantly monitoring and upgrading its internal control procedures and systems in compliance with local laws and regulations. As a part of this process, the internal controls, procedure manuals and guidelines as recommended by the Capital Market Authority, have been implemented from 2003 onwards. The Board through a process of internal audits, audit committees' regular involvement in the review process, ensures that the internal controls and procedures adopted by your company are effective.

CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

Your company confirms its compliance with the code of corporate governance for Public Listed Companies issued in July 2015 and a separate note on Corporate Governance forms a part of this report.

FUTURE OUTLOOK

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

The government of Oman has taken measures and issued directives to support businesses and the economy at large, these conditions have significantly impacted the economic and business environment for the company. The situation, including the government and public response to the challenges, continues to progress and rapidly evolve.

Though, the company cannot estimate the length or gravity of the impact of COVID-19 outbreak at this time, we are resilient and cautiously optimistic of a satisfactory performance in the coming year. Our objective is to continue to increase the brand presence of its existing and new products across all the markets and thus improving the profitability despite prevailing competitive environment. Company plans to open new markets and launch new products by adding new manufacturing capabilities.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

At the end of the report we wish to express our condolences to the Omani People for the demise of the late Sultan Qaboos Bin Said Bin Taimur the establisher of Omani renaissance. We also express our loyalty to His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tariq. May Allah protect him and guide him for the benefit of Oman and its people.

Board sincerely thank and appreciate all the Ministries and Government Departments for their continued support to your Company.

Board also likes to convey sincere thanks to the shareholders of National Biscuit Industries Limited SAOG for the confidence they have reposed in the company and its Board.

Finally, the Board thanks the Management and Staff members for their support in the financial year 2019-20 and looking forward to continued progress for your company.

NOOH BIN MOHAMMED AL- ZIDJALY
Chairman

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 30 JUNE 2020

	2020 RO	2019 RO
ASSETS		
Non-current assets:		
Property, plant and equipment	2,349,291	2,190,633
Intangible assets	163,054	172,496
Right-of-use assets	348,469	-
Total non-current assets	2,860,814	2,363,129
Current assets:		
Inventories	1,625,877	1,263,028
Trade and other receivables	2,881,083	2,922,186
Wakala deposits	3,784,238	2,512,993
Cash and bank balances	1,032,065	383,395
Total current assets	9,323,263	7,081,602
Total assets	12,184,077	9,444,731
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES		
Shareholders' equity:		
Share capital	1,000,000	1,000,000
Legal reserve	333,333	333,333
Retained earnings	5,523,147	4,797,728
Total Shareholders' equity	6,856,480	6,131,061
Non-current liabilities:		
Staff terminal benefits	450,369	412,136
Non-current portion of lease liabilities	350,800	-
Deferred tax liability	58,659	68,674
Total non-current liabilities	859,828	480,810
Current liabilities:		
Trade and other payables	4,271,140	2,674,911
Current portion of lease liabilities	15,774	-
Provision for tax	180,855	157,949
Total current liabilities	4,467,769	2,832,860
Total liabilities	5,327,597	3,313,670
Total equity and liabilities	12,184,077	9,444,731

STATEMENT OF PROFIT OR LOSS AND OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2020

	Year ended 30 June 2020 RO	Year ended 30 June 2019 RO
Sales	12,694,553	12,551,496
Cost of sales	(10,391,055)	(10,169,171)
Gross profit	2,303,498	2,382,325
Other income	133,766	86,598
Selling and distribution expenses	(633,813)	(888,686)
General and administration expenses	(731,638)	(651,817)
Profit from operations	1,071,813	928,420
Finance costs	(39,708)	(20,244)
Profit before tax	1,032,105	908,176
Income tax expense	(156,686)	(137,879)
Profit for the year	875,419	770,297
Other comprehensive income for the year	-	-
Total comprehensive income for the year	875,419	770,297
Earnings per share (RO/share)	0.875	0.770



NATIONAL BISCUIT INDUSTRIES LTD SAOG
P.O. Box 29, PC 124, Rusayl, Sultanate of Oman

EXTRA ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING & ANNUAL ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING AGENDA

The Board of Directors of National Biscuit Industries Ltd SAOG ("Company") is pleased to invite the shareholders to attend the extraordinary general meeting and the annual ordinary general meeting of the company, which are scheduled to be held at 3:00 pm on Sunday, 27/9/2020, via the electronic platform to hold general meetings which can be accessed through the website of the Muscat Clearing and Depository Company (www.mcd.gov.om) if the quorum of the meeting is not completed, a second extraordinary general meeting and / or a second annual ordinary general meeting will be held at 3:00 pm on Wednesday 30/9/2020 to discuss the following agenda:

FIRST: THE EXTRA ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING

- To consider and approve the amendment of the company's articles of association in accordance with the requirements of the Commercial Companies Law promulgated by Royal Decree No. 18/2019 (according to the attachment).

SECOND: ANNUAL ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING

- To consider and approve the Report of the Board of Directors for the financial year ending on 30th June 2020.
- To consider and approve the Corporate Governance Report for the financial year ending on 30th June 2020.
- To consider the Auditor's Report and approve the Balance Sheet and Profit and Loss Account for the financial year ending on 30th June 2020.
- To consider and approve the proposal to distribute cash dividends to shareholders by 0.150 Baize per share.
- Approval of the sitting fees to the Board of Directors meetings and it's Sub-committees for the last financial year and determine the sitting fees for the forthcoming financial year.
- To consider and approve the transactions entered into by the Company with related parties during the financial year ended 30 June 2020
- To consider and approve the related party transactions proposed to be entered during the financial year ending on 30th June 2021
- To approve the amount allocated and spent for the Company's Corporate Social Responsibilities for the financial year ended on 30th June 2020
- To consider and approve a proposal to donate amount of (RO 25,000) for the local society for the financial year ending on 30th June 2021.
- To discuss & approval of the criteria for evaluation of performance of the Board.
- To appoint an independent expert to evaluate the performance of the Board for the financial year ended 30/06/2021 and determine their fees.
- Appointment of the auditors of the company for the financial year ending on 30th June 2021 and determine their fees.

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

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

If you have any inquiries kindly contact the finance manager Tolentino De Souza on +96899529281

H E Dr Rahma, ministry and Madayn officials visit Sohar Industrial City

With the aim of exploring cooperation opportunities in scientific research, innovation and technical and vocational training in the industrial cities, H E Dr Rahma bint Ibrahim al Mahrouqiyah, Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, visited Sohar Industrial City, which falls under the umbrella of the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates - Madayn.

H E Dr Rahma was accompanied by H E Dr Muna bint Salim al Jardaniyah, Undersecretary for Vocational Training in the ministry, H E Dr Bakhait bin Ahmed al Mahri, Undersecretary for Higher Education, H E Dr Saif bin Abdullah al Haddabi, Undersecretary for Research and Innovation, and Hilal bin Hamad al Hasani, CEO of Madayn.

During the meeting, Eng Abdullah bin Salim al Kaabi, director general of Sohar Industrial City, elaborated on the key development indicators and current projects in the industrial city.

Eng Kaabi said, "During 2019, the volume of investments in Sohar Industrial City amounted to RO2,165,632,684 with an estimated growth rate of 1.16 per cent compared to 2018. In fact,



Sohar Industrial City had the highest increase in the total volume of investments during 2019 compared to other industrial cities of Madayn, as the total investments during 2019 in-

creased by RO24mn.

This increase in the total investments of Sohar Industrial City is owed to the investments of companies that were introduced in the industrial city

during 2019."

The number of workforce in Sohar Industrial City during the same year exceeded 17,000 with an Omanisation rate of 36 per cent.

"By the end of 2019, the number of projects touched 416 in Sohar Industrial City, of which 285 are existing projects, 72 are under construction, and 59 projects were allotted with space. It

should be noted that the total area of Sohar Industrial City during the same period reached 29,883,548sq m, of which 21,157,520sq m have already been developed," Eng Kaabi

pointed out.

The visit included a tour at phase 7 of Sohar Industrial City, which is being implemented by Madayn on an area of 8.5mn sq m. The project includes road works, water and sewage networks, sewage treatment plant, rain drainage channels, water tanks in addition to safety and security requirements.

The Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation also visited Sohar Aluminium Company, which was formed in September 2004 to undertake a landmark greenfield aluminium smelter project in Oman.

Moreover, the minister visited Omani Euro Food Industries Company, which was established in 1997 at Sohar Industrial City.

The company is manufacturing HACCP & ISO 22000-2005 certified baby food and health food, which include baby cereals, biscuits, rusks, among other products.

The company is implementing all food quality and safety requirements in addition to hygiene and public health procedures to match the highest international quality standards.

Omantel offers solidarity to people of Sudan

As part of its Corporate Social Responsibility and in solidarity with the Sudanese Republic and its people, Omantel joins hands with Oman Charitable Organization to collect donations to address the effects of the floods that hit Sudan.

Omantel also offered the Sudanese community in Oman three days of free calls to help them communicate with their family and friends back home.

Omantel called on all its customers to help the Sudanese people by taking part in the Oman Charitable Organization donation campaign by sending an SMS containing 'Donate' to 90022.

Customers can donate more than once to help those affected by the floods that affected most

states of Sudan.

On the other hand, Omantel provided free calls to prepaid and postpaid customers to call Sudan from Tuesday, September 8 till Friday, September 11 without the need to activate a subscription to avail such free calls.

Omantel is the leading telecommunications company in the sultanate, and the main provider of integrated communications services to individuals, companies and government agencies.

Omantel is making constant endeavours to enhance prosperity and growth among all sectors by introducing a new business concepts and bringing global content and entertainment.

Omantel aspires to achieve optimum customer satisfaction.

Omifco takes delivery of 3 new Fuso trucks

General Automotive Company (GAC), the official distributor of Fuso trucks in Oman, recently handed over the keys of three 18 tonne GVW (12 tonne chassis Pay Load) new Fuso FJ trucks to Omifco (Oman India Fertiliser Co).

The three trucks, each equipped with an insulated body and freezer unit, will be sponsored by Omifco to support Oman Agricultural Society.

The trucks were handed over to Ibthihaj Khalifa Said al Araimi of Omifco by Manoj Ranade, GM of General Automotive Company, at the Fuso Truck Centre in Azaiba. Also present at the handover ceremony were members of the senior management and staff from both companies.

Commenting on this occasion Ranade said, "We are truly honoured to have Omifco choose the new Fuso FJ to sponsor the Oman Agricultural Society. Fuso's wide selection of light, medium, and heavy-duty trucks,



and passenger buses, coupled with its reputation for performance and reliability, has secured it a strong position within the Omani market.

"I am confident that each of these three new Fuso FJ Trucks will be a welcome addition to the Oman Agricultural Society fleet and will contribute to the success

of their operations."

Ibthihaj Khalifa Said al Araimi from Omifco said, "As a company that is 50 per cent Omani owned and operating here in the sultanate, we are always looking for ways in which we give back to the community. Fuso is a brand that we have personally had a great experience with, and their

trucks are easily characterised by their high quality and operational efficiency. GAC is equally reputed for their high levels of service and support. As such, we felt that the Fuso FJ would be a most suitable vehicle to donate to the Oman Agricultural Society.

"I am confident that these three trucks, will enable the

Oman Agricultural Society to better serve their beneficiaries across the country."

The Fuso truck and buses are one of Japan's leading commercial vehicle brand and has been present in Oman for over four decades, which has allowed the brand to build a loyal customer base and a strong platform for introducing new light, medium, and heavy duty trucks and buses to the market.

All Fuso vehicles are characterised by their strong trusted quality, economic efficiency, solid functional design, committed service, and wide choice.

The new Fuso FJ is one of the newer generation trucks from Daimler commercial vehicles.

Designed for heavy-duty operations, the new Fuso FJ features a powerful yet efficient 6.4lt turbo diesel engine mated to a smooth shifting 6 and 9-speed transmission for optimal driver comfort and operational efficiency.



Al Kishry participates in Asian Games Organising Committee meeting

Taha bin Sulaiman al Kishry, OOC secretary general, participated in the third meeting of the Coordination Committee formed by the Olympic Council of Asia to follow up the work of the Organising Committee of 19th Asian Games (Hangu - China).

The online meeting was held last week.

During the meeting, the sports programme of the games with the dates of the competitions, the committee's findings regarding the promotional campaign and marketing, and a doc-

umentary film about the Asian Games were reviewed.

The latest updates were presented regarding the stadiums and the athletes' village, media, medicine and anti-doping, plans and programmes prepared for the torch as well as the festival

and the exhibition accompanying the games.

The 19th Asian Games will be held in Hangu from September 10 to 25, 2022, and it will be the third Asian Games hosted by China after Beijing in 1990 and Guangzhou in 2010.

Vivo X50 series is different

The smartphone industry is highly dynamic and innovative due to technological advancements and new product proliferation. Product differentiation is still important for smartphone manufacturers as, over the past decade, consumers have selected smartphones based on photography features, design, price, screen resolution and familiarity with the interface.

Through in-depth market research among diverse regional segments, vivo has localised the specs of the X50 and X50 Pro to better cater to consumer demand and preferences in various markets. Here's a look at some of the top features of the two smartphones.

Professional photography

Vivo's X50 series phones are positioned as professional photography smartphones that deliver industry-leading photography experiences to users. The X50 and X50 Pro offer powerful,



comprehensive and differentiated photography features: The X50 comprises a 32MP front camera and four rear cameras, including a 48MP Main Camera with Optical Image Stabilisation, an 8MP Super Wide-Angle Camera, a 13MP Professional Portrait Camera and a 5MP Super Macro Camera.

The X50 Pro also has a 32MP front camera, while its four rear cameras comprise a 48MP Gimbal Main Camera, a 13MP Professional Portrait Camera, an 8MP Super Wide-Angle Camera and an 8MP 5x Telescopic Camera.

Smooth display

The X50 series comes with a flexible curved screen and uses chip-on-plastic (COP) bonding technology. Compared to traditional IPS (in-plane switching), the COP screen has a slimmer size and lighter weight, so users can use the phones in a more relaxed manner.

The X50 and X50 Pro sport a 6.56-inch AMOLED display with 90 Hz refresh rates and 180 Hz sample rates that refreshes and responds faster. For added smoothness, particularly in games, the vivo Energy Guardian technology reduces heating.



Sony MEA introduces new line-up of audio systems

Sony Middle East & Africa launches four exciting new models to its High-Power Audio Systems range with the MHC-V83D, MHC-V73D, MHC-V43D and MHC-V13, expanding choices for party lovers as well as families who prefer one-box styled systems with a smaller footprint and portable design.

This new line-up of High-Power Audio Systems features key upgrades for better power and improved sound quality, such as the High-efficiency Tweeter that uses horn tweeters and High-efficiency Midrange that uses mid horn speakers. It introduces not just greater height expansion of sound but also a wider range, covering a larger area.

The V83D and V73D features four tweeters at the front and rear to expand the sound stage upward. Additionally, the midrange distributes sound from the front and the back of the speaker, covering a wide area with improved clarity for mid-range frequencies.

The Omnidirectional Party Sound is a result of combining the front and rear tweeters, the midrange, a woofer and JET Bass Booster, enabling music to reach further and wider, pleasing guests with great sound wherever they are.

The V43D and V13 are both equipped with two front tweeters that spreads sound across any venue. Like the V83D and V73D, the V43D also includes

the midrange. These all-new designs increase the rigidity of the cabinet, delivering stronger bass while also improving clarity.

The V83D and V73D create unforgettable atmospheres with the all-new Omnidirectional Party Light and Speaker Light. The unit sends out waves of deep blue, sky blue and green lighting along with multi-coloured stripe lighting, immersing party lovers in an authentic nightclub or outdoor festival experience by lighting up both floor and ceiling.

In addition, a new animation programming is installed to create more dynamic patterns, creating an incredible atmosphere to spice up the party.

The V13 comes with a multi-colour woofer light that is perfect for families to spruce up their home with an everyday compact-sized audio speaker, while the V83D, V73D and V43D's woofer and midrange lights are a deep blue colour that is perfect for parties and events in any space.

A new Ambient light mode across the new line-up makes it easier than ever to transition lightly from party mode to non-party mode. The Ambient light mode makes it perfect for the family looking to unwind with slower and relaxing light animation.

Karaoke sessions at home have never been better. The V83D, V73D and V43D also boast a new DSP reverb module in the Microphone Echo feature.

2020 GMC Terrain arrives in Oman



GMC has announced the Middle East arrival of the 2020 Terrain, which is packed with more available advanced safety technologies than ever before. The available Driver Alert Package on the Terrain has been enhanced with Front Pedestrian Braking. To help make it easier for the driver to park and manoeuvre in low-speed situations, HD Rear Vision Camera has been made available on the 2020 Terrain, while the Surround Vision feature is exclusively on the Denali models.

GMC offers customers the widest range of choices yet, with two available turbocharged propulsion systems. Two efficiency-enhancing nine-speed automatic transmissions are matched with the two turbocharged engines. Stop/start technology is featured on all systems.

Bold, modern design

The Terrain's bold exterior evolved the brand's signature

cues with stronger, sharper and more sculpted elements such as the grille and lighting features. Its refined shape in the wind tunnel helps ensure the distinctive profile cuts through the air with optimal efficiency and quietness.

All other models feature signature LED running lamps and tail lamps. Bi-functional HID headlamps are standard on SLE and SLT. Additionally, 17-inch wheels are standard on SLE, with 18-inch wheels standard on SLE AWD, and standard on SLT.

Turbocharged propulsion choices

A range of two turbocharged gas engines, including the 1.5lt and 2.0lt turbocharged gas engines, matched with two unique nine-speed automatic transmissions. The 2.0lt turbo engine offers stronger acceleration and a higher degree of performance than its 1.5lt counterpart.

GMC's Electronic Precision Shift enables large storage room

in the centre console with electronically controlled gear selection consisting of intuitive push buttons and pull triggers.

The 2020 Terrain comes standard with GMC's driver-controllable Traction Select system, which has choices for different driving conditions. Elements such as the throttle responses are optimised for the selected driving mode. AWD models include a FWD mode that disconnects the AWD system to minimise drag and optimize fuel economy, while the AWD mode offers all the benefits of an active AWD system.

Refined, versatile and purposeful interior

Like the exterior, the 2020 Terrain's interior makes a statement and serves as a fundamental component of the vehicle's heightened emphasis on refinement and functionality. Elements such as authentic aluminium trim, soft-touch materials on the

instrument panel and doors and standard active noise cancellation are premium features seamlessly integrated into the interior design for a luxurious customer experience.

An expanded centre console with pass-through storage underneath adds to the Terrain's functionality. A fold-flat front passenger seat and flat-folding rear seat help Terrain offer greater versatility for stowing longer items and make it easier to load cargo. There are also under-floor compartments in the cargo area for secure storage.

GMC keeps passengers connected with 7-inch and available 8-inch-diagonal infotainment systems, featuring compatibility with Apple CarPlay and Android Auto functionality.

Expanded range of safety features

An expanded range of available active safety technologies is designed to enhance driver aware-

ness and even help make it easier to park and manoeuvre in low-speed situations.

The features include radar and camera-based adaptive technologies that can provide alerts to potential crash threats, allowing the driver to react and make changes to potentially avoid them.

In addition to six standard air bags, including frontal driver and passenger, roof rail-mounted head curtain (for front and rear outboard seat) and thorax side-impact air bags (for front seats), the 2020 Terrain features GMC's innovative Rear Seat Reminder.

Rear Seat Reminder alerts drivers to check the back seat as they exit their vehicles under certain circumstances.

The system alerts when the second-row doors are opened before the vehicle is started.

The 2020 GMC Terrain is now available at GMC dealers across the Middle East.

Techno Elevators with Sanuvox, Canada brings UV clean air & surface solutions

Techno Elevators LLC signed up with Sanuvox, Canada for UV based clean air and surface solutions with their brand as e-Clean in the Sultanate of Oman.

"We are very honoured that we have signed with Sanuvox, Canada which has been there in world market for 25 years with many ranges of high-quality products in UV segment," said Shabbir Boriyawala, chairman, Techno Elevators LLC & NOE Group.

Sanuvox Technologies Inc is a global leader in ultraviolet air purification and they are providing the most advanced cost-effective in-duct and stand-alone UV air and coil sterilisation systems. Proprietary Sanuvox UV systems are designed to maximise exposure time delivering the ultraviolet energy required for exceptionally high airborne disinfection.

In-duct and stand-alone Sanuvox systems are used around the world in residential, school, commercial and medical



installations and transport buses and are highly recommended by health experts when the current pandemic was announced which might be airborne.

For AHU-based air conditioning systems they can provide UV

coil cleaner to remove virus and bacteria in cooling coil, inside the duct solutions and standalone UV air purifier systems to improve indoor air quality and energy efficiency, reduce maintenance costs and building

related illnesses, by sterilising up to 99.9 per cent of airborne bio-contaminants with all types of viruses, bacteria and fungus in a single pass.

Tasleem Khan, CEO, said, "We are receiving many enquiries

from schools, hotels, malls and restaurants, clinics as these clean air solutions are for now and future as well. Sanuvox has been recognised by international agencies like Ashrae, EPA, Lancet Medical Journal, RTI labs, McGill University and approved by CSA/ULC, and done prestigious project and hospitals in the US, Canada and many parts of Middle East and India."

Unlike conventional lamps on the market, Sanuvox UV air purification systems use a patented process designed to deliver the maximum UV dosage to the moving air-stream with UVC of 254nm which attacks the micro-organisms on a molecular level deactivating and destroying the contaminants. Sanuvox has also solution for severe odour related issues in garbage rooms, restaurants and also they have wide range of products as UV robots for disinfecting the surfaces of all contaminants in hospitals, offices, hotels, gyms, etc without any chemicals in 5-10 minutes.

SIMPA launches Oman's first omnibus survey

SIMPA Marketing Research & Consultancy, Oman's trusted and most experienced research agency announced the launch of Oman's first omnibus survey.

In an omnibus survey many clients share the cost of the survey with each client having the opportunity to ask a few specific questions relevant to their organisation.

SIMPA Omnibus will research the opinions of 500 nationally representative adults in Oman.

The omnibus respondents will be chosen by their demographic details including age, gender and social class or income. Diverse clients or brands from any industry can take part in the omnibus as long as they wish to get answers from a nationally representative adult population for example, a telecom client can ask about awareness, a banking client on brand equity an oil and gas client can ask about Net Promoters Score (NPS) and an in-

surance client can ask about usage and consumer behaviour, etc. The omnibus survey provides clients with cost-effective and fast access to the opinions of consumers across Oman.

Suhail Khan, GM - Marketing research at SIMPA, said, "We all are facing challenging times, business environment has not been the same in 2020. We all have had to face challenges, cut costs and devise better ways to maximise returns and improve ROIs. Gaining consumer insight is even more important in a phase where shooting in the dark won't help business enterprises."

"Therefore, we are encouraging all Omani brand owners and local custodians of regional and international brands who wish to know more about their market in Oman to partner with SIMPA for this survey."

For further information: info@simpa-mr.com or call on 24701930.

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1 Foundation
5 New Britain
seaport
11 Give's partner
15 Plotters group
16 Come forth
17 Tocsins
20 Don Quixote
super-hit
22 Wealthy
24 ____ The Giant
25 Idles
26 Ruined: sl.
28 Soviet space
station
29 Café au ____
30 Witticisms
31 Recorded
32 Stun
33 Inclined
34 Penalties
35 "____ Mom"
36 Sharpened
37 Uneasy
39 Confined
40 Early video
game
41 Bauxite, for one
42 To ____ his own
43 Spanish region
45 Plunders
48 Real news, to an

52 "___ gratias:" L.
54 White heron
55 Let in
56 Obdurate, as a
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57 Amethyst's mo.
58 Midday
59 Primp
60 Backbone
61 Church calendar
62 Aggregate
63 Errors
64 Berries
65 Turtles refuge
66 Greek letter
67 Titanic captain's
cry
69 Check data
70 Set afire
72 Implement
73 Patriotic org.
74 Treaty group
75 Plain-spoken
77 Barker
81 Range of view
83 Groom's gal
84 Gannet
86 "Barefoot
Contessa"
Garden
87 ___ Duncan, Ed.
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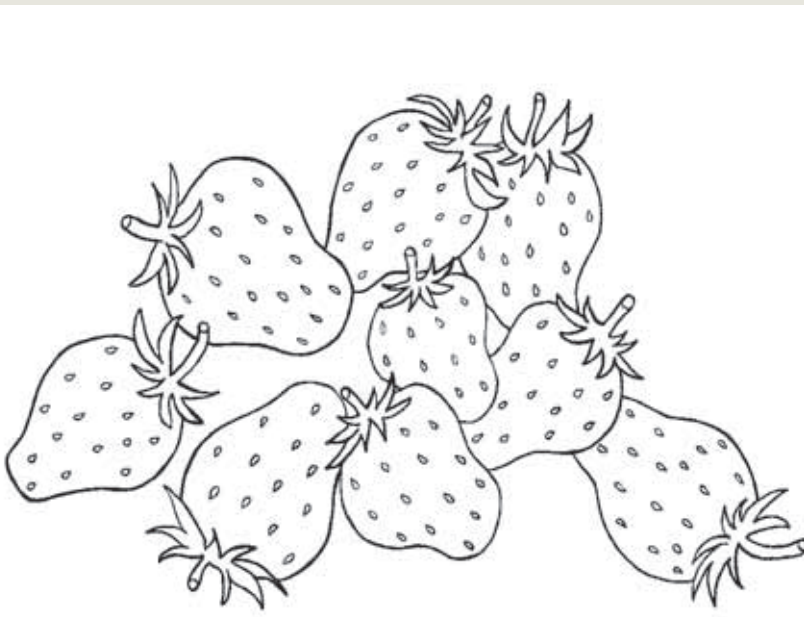
88 Long-legged bird
89 French marshal
90 "Rara ____"
91 Precious stone
92 Ladd western
93 "____ Bulba"
94 Came up
95 Spruce
97 Sophisticate
100 Group of nine
101 Main meal
102 Net
103 Concerning
104 Polite
negations
105 Taro root
DOWN
1 Robbers
2 Cease prematurely
3 Strongbox
4 Bldg. addition
5 New version
6 Astonishes
7 Czech patriot
8 Curved lines
9 Exclamation of
aversion
10 Unwanted escape
of liquid
11 Meddle
12 Audibly
13 Ger. philosopher
14 Poet's word

15 Appetizer
 18 Powell, Lombard
 comedy
 19 Garry suddenly
 20 Cheekbone
 21 Isolated
 23 Historic Scott
 27 Mimicked
 30 Swing music
 31 Cool: sl.
 32 100 XU
 34 Blue ribbon place
 35 Implied
 36 Man of song:
 Carmichael
 38 Subway fare
 39 Log structure
 40 Prostrate
 42 Entangle
 43 Beautiful youth:
 myth.
 44 Tease: sl.
 45 Feeling
 46 SA rodent
 47 Prehistoric fellow
 48 Leatherneck
 49 Proficient
 50 Act of keeping
 watch
 51 Be frugal
 53 Anc. French coin
 59 Greek
 philosopher

60 Go swiftly: sl.
61 IL airport
63 Hit hard
64 Hubbard's quest
65 Iberian country
68 Study: mus.
71 Neck part
73 Petty quarrel
75 Oat, for one
76 Ends, tackles, etc.
77 Famous guitarist
78 Leghorn, to Luigi
79 Isolate
80 Demolished
81 Droops
82 Best, in Brest
83 Actor Marlon
84 Hang ten man
85 Declaims
88 Defraud
89 N. Zealand
native
90 Araceous
92 Feminine saints:
abbr.
93 Explosives
94 Filled with
reverence
96 Genetic carrier:
abbr.
98 Prefix: upward
99 Compass heading

ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19 Sunday's skies were created with leisure in mind, Aries. The moon prowls into playful Leo in the morning, opening up the opportunity to enjoy yourself in one of your favourite creative activities. Play is the most critical component to your day.	LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22 Everything's turning up, Leo! It's hard not to embrace the good vibes the universe is bestowing on you today. The moon prowls into your sign this morning, making you more visible to others and intensifying your need to make your mark on the world.	SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21 Sagittarians weren't born to stay in one place. You were brought into this world in order to explore every winding road and leave no path untouched. The moon's entrance into feisty Leo this morning has you craving expansion and a break from routine.
TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20 As a Taurus, you came into this world with a mission to create inner serenity. Though you don't always acknowledge that goal, it's there nonetheless! Today's skies are ideal for regaining your peace of mind, as the moon slips into lazy Leo.	VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22 Sometimes, life just wants us to keep it simple, Virgo. That very need for simplicity weaves itself throughout the day, as you find yourself craving some quiet alone time. This is backed by a strong need to recharge, as the moon slips into heart-centred Leo.	CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19 You tend to hide your more vulnerable feelings behind a calm reserve. Today's skies work to unlock your heart with a tiny golden key—one that opens you up to a world of feelings within you. You need raw, honest sharing to feel your best today.
GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21 Geminis weren't brought into the world to hold their tongues. You were created to tell your story. Today's skies offer a reminder of that natural urge, as the moon dips into self-expressive Leo. This prompts you to dive into important exchanges.	LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22 You've put so much effort into discovering what your personal role in society is. Take a beat from your career goals to enjoy yourself among good company. Luna's time in the sign of the Lion is when your goals tend to manifest—or you feel a deep love.	AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18 Things are heating up in your love life today, Aquarius. The moon treks into your opposite sign of romance-craving Leo, stirring up your awareness of partnership and sweetening the deal with her blissful union to lover Venus in the evening.
CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22 You're likely to have money on your mind today, Cancer. And more importantly, the spending of it! The moon slips into luxurious Leo, which stirs up an awareness of your current set of resources. It's an ideal day for making any sort of purchase.	SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21 The world wants to see you sparkle. People are bound to respond well and shower you with praise. Luna steps into proud Leo, drawing your attention toward career matters. Plus, her union with Venus makes your career efforts irresistible to everyone involved.	PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20 What will bring you the most peace today is productivity. It needn't be a giant force of effort. All that matters is that you devote some energy toward something you love to do. The Leo moon merges with blissful Venus, making it easy to relax.

A black and white line drawing of various fruits. From left to right, there is an apple with a small leaf, a banana with a long stem and a small leaf, a pear with a small leaf, an orange with a small leaf, and a bunch of grapes with a small leaf. Below the fruits, the word "Fruits" is written in a large, rounded, sans-serif font.



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

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

S	R	U	S
E	R	E	B
N	O	V	I
R	E	I	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

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

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 HEM GRASS TINES TILL
 OLAN MOTHS NOIST WOU
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 RATED GROSS NORA
 ELOYS WINDOWS SALOM
 ELITES SHA SCION GEME
 OMO GATED GRATING
 WINDMILL NOIES LYRAY
 AIRTIME CIGER LENA
 TAPED CIGAR BACI
 TAPED CIGAR BACI
 ARAB KINOW SKIING DAIN
 SKIES GENTE LENT TIME
 HANNAH NOBADA HONOR
 WINDGALL WER WIND PIP
 ALA TITARA GRALL YTE
 TAIT TUNITIS NADEL TIE

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

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



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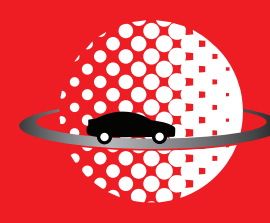
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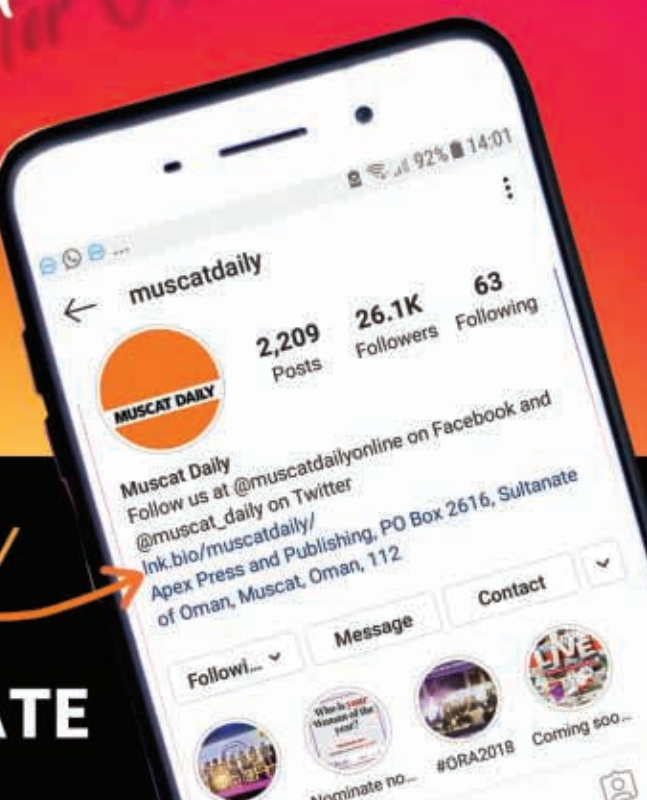
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THIEM OVERCOMES MEDVEDEV TO SET UP TITLE CLASH WITH ZVEREV

New York, US - Dominic Thiem of Austria will play Germany's Alexander Zverev in the US Open final on Sunday for their first Grand Slam titles after they won their last-four matches in contrasting styles Friday.

Second seed Thiem ousted third-seeded Russian and last year's runner-up Daniil Medvedev in a closely fought three-setter that was packed with powerful baseline rallies and impressive serving.

The 27 year old Thiem won 6-2, 7-6 (9-7) 7-6 (7-5) in 2hr 56 min inside Arthur Ashe Stadium to reach his fourth Grand Slam final.

Earlier, Zverev came from two sets down to complete a remarkable comeback against 20th-seeded Spaniard Pablo Carreno Busta and reach his first tennis major final.

The 23 year old German won an error-strewn, scrappy encounter 2-6, 6-3, 6-4, 6-3 in 3hr 23min, also on the famous Ashe court.

It marked the first time in Zverev's career that he came from two sets behind to win.

"I actually looked at the scoreboard when I was down two sets to love," Zverev said.

"I was like, 'I can't believe it. I'm playing in a semifinal, I'm supposed to be the favourite and I have no chance, I'm playing that bad.'"

Zverev made 36 unforced

errors in the first two sets compared to just 12 for Carreno Busta as the nerves of the occasion seemed to get the better of him.

But Zverev began to cut down on his mistakes in the third set, upping his service game and taking control of rallies with more powerful, accurate groundstrokes.

"I started taking the ball more on the rise. I started giving myself the chance to be the one that is aggressive," said the German.

"I'm through to my first Grand Slam final and that's all that matters," added Zverev.

Carreno Busta said he had lost 'a big opportunity' to reach

I actually looked at the scoreboard when I was down two sets to love. I was like, 'I can't believe it'. I'm playing in a semifinal, I'm supposed to be the favourite

ALEXANDER ZVEREV

a first Grand Slam final.

"I made the semifinals here. I know that is a good result, is a good performance, but now in this moment it's tough," he told reporters.

Zverev becomes the first German man to reach the final of a tennis major since Rainer Schuttler at the 2003 Australian Open.

New winner

This year's US Open field has been depleted by the absence of Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal.

The tournament was blown wide open by the disqualification of world No 1 and heavy favourite Novak Djokovic in the last 16 for hitting a line judge with the ball.

It means Sunday's final will see a first-time Grand Slam

champion for the first time since Croatian Marin Cilic won at Flushing Meadows in 2014.

It also means there will be a Grand Slam champion other than Djokovic, Nadal or Federer for the first time since Switzerland's Stan Wawrinka won the third of his tennis majors at the US Open in 2016.

Thiem, ranked third in the world, will be playing his second consecutive Slam final after reaching the last-two at this year's Australian Open.

He also lost in the French Open final in 2018 and 2019.

Thiem's semifinal score slightly flattered him. It was a high-quality affair that saw small shifts in momentum in both play-

ers' direction at different stages.

Ultimately the match was decided by Thiem winning points at key moments, with Medvedev squandering a 4-2 lead in the second.

He was also on set point while serving at 5-3 in the third set but Thiem won a 38-shot rally to take the game and bring the set back on serve before clinching the tie-break and the match.

"It was great tennis from both of us," said Thiem, whose attention now turns to Zverev.

"We have such a great friendship and rivalry. It's really amazing thing that we will face off against each other in a Slam final," he added.

AFP

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Serena's quest for record 24th Grand Slam title to continue

New York, US - As a weary Serena Williams packed her bags and left Flushing Meadows in the early hours of Friday morning, her latest bid for a record-equalling 24th Grand Slam title snuffed out in the semifinals of the US Open, one question was left hanging in the balmy night air: if not now, when?

For nearly four years, Serena has been trading groundstrokes with Father Time as she attempts to add one more Grand Slam title to her collection, cementing her claim to be the greatest women's tennis player ever seen.

Yet since her 23rd and last major title at the 2017 Australian Open, when she was pregnant with daughter Olympia, the window of opportunity has been closing. Did that window slam shut on Thursday night? Only time will tell.

Certainly, throughout her career, be it returning from serious illness to dominate her sport, or from continuing to compete at the highest level at an age when most of her contemporaries have



Serena Williams' crashed out in the semifinals of the US Open on Friday

long since retired, Serena has repeatedly demonstrated that writing her off is a mug's game.

Opportunity lost?

But it is hard to avoid the conclusion that the 2020 US Open offered Serena by far her best chance of finally matching Margaret Court's total of 24 Grand Slam singles crowns.

Serena, who will turn 39 this month, seemed disinterested by the question of whether she will ever reach that milestone. "How does making it deep into majors affect your resolve to keep up the pursuit for as long as it might

Six of the top ten players in the world, including world No 1 Ashleigh Barty and world No 2 Simona Halep, opted to skip the tournament. So too did the defending champion, Canada's Bianca Andreescu, who defeated Serena in the 2019 final.

'Weakest US Open'

It meant three of the four reigning Grand Slam champions were absent from New York. Tracy Austin, the two-time US Open champion, called it the 'weakest US Open of the Open era'.

And by the time Thursday's semifinals had rolled around, Serena was the highest remaining seed in the draw. Throughout the past fortnight, Serena had offered plenty of reminders that she still possesses a substantial residue of the talent that has put her at or near the pinnacle of women's tennis in four different decades. However the resurgent Azarenka, who like Serena has successfully continued her career after becoming a mother, proved a bridge too far in the last-four.

AFP

Pacer Hazlewood stars as Billings ton goes in vain

ENGLAND VS AUSTRALIA
FIRST ODI

Manchester, UK - Australia fast bowler Josh Hazlewood insisted it was a case of 'onwards and upwards' after he starred in a 19-run win over world champions England in the first one-day international at Old Trafford on Friday.

Hazlewood took a miserly three for six from his maximum ten overs that stifled England's pursuit of a target of 295 from the outset, removing opener Jason Roy and Test skipper Joe Root for single figure scores as the hosts limped to 22 for two off the first ten overs.

This was Australia's first 50-over match against England since a crushing eight-wicket defeat by their arch-rivals in the semifinals of last year's World Cup at Edgbaston.

Hazlewood, however, didn't play in that match after being controversially omitted from the World Cup squad, with the selectors instead wanting him to regain full fitness following a back injury for the subsequent Test series in England, where Australia retained the Ashes in a 2-2 draw.

Asked if the way he bowled on Friday made his World Cup absence all the more painful, Hazlewood replied: "Nah it's onwards and upwards. That's a

long time ago now, so always looking forward."

The 29 year old was close to unplayable during a stunning opening spell of two wickets for five runs in six overs. "England's top order is probably the form top order in the world in the last three or four years, so I guess going against them is a good measure of where you're at," Hazlewood said after what was just Australia's third win in 14 ODIs against their oldest foe.

"To keep them down to 20-odd for two in the first ten was great."

Meanwhile England captain Eoin Morgan said Hazlewood had enjoyed a 'day out' after his side went 0-1 down in a three-match series that continues on Sunday. "They (Australia) were outstanding, incredibly accurate and they got the ball moving," he said. "It's not often it happens to us."

‘Keeping Stokes’s chair warm’

Sam Billings kept England in the game with 118, his maiden ODI hundred, after sharing a century partnership with Jonny Bairstow (84) following the hosts' collapse to 57 for four.

Billings was the only member of England's XI on Friday not involved in the World Cup squad, with his inclusion owing much to star allrounder Ben Stokes still being on compassionate leave with his ill father in New Zealand.

Billings, reflecting on his 'mixed feelings' at making a hundred in a losing cause, told Sky Sports he was keen to 'keep putting scores on the board' after what was just his 19th ODI appearance in a five-year England career.

The 29 year old Kent batsman added, however: "I don't think it matters how many runs I get, I know I'm only keeping Stokes's chair warm for him."

Morgan, however, insisted Billings had batted brilliantly on the back of 'sporadic' chances caused by the fact he, as well as Jos Buttler and Stokes, had often been at No 6 instead.

"But today he (Billings) really stood out in a spot that is really difficult to bat, where you can be thrown in at all different circumstances," said Morgan.

AFP



Australia's Josh Hazlewood celebrates after dismissing an England batsman at Old Trafford on Friday



England's Sam Billings hits a boundary during his knock of 118 against Australia on Friday (AFP)



Steven Smith in action against England during the T20I last week

Smith will relish the short stuff: Marsh

Manchester, UK - Australia all rounder Mitchell Marsh said there would be no 'backing down' by Steve Smith from any England bouncers should the star batsman feature in Sunday's second one-day international at Old Trafford.

Smith missed Australia's 19-run win in the first of a three-match series against world champions England after being hit on the head by a throw-down from a member of the tourists' coaching staff while batting in the nets on Thursday.

Australia insisted he was being rested purely as a precaution despite passing a concussion test and a team spokesman said Saturday that Smith had come through another such check on Saturday. "It gives us great confidence and probably gives our selectors a few headaches now because the top-order struck them beautifully without getting big scores," Marsh told a conference call on Saturday.

"Any time you have Steve Smith coming back into the team is a great feeling."

Smith was felled by a 92 mph bouncer from England's Jofra Archer during last year's drawn second Test at Lord's. But despite missing the third Test, Smith still scored 774 runs, including three hundreds, at an average of over 110 during a five-

match series that ended all square at 2-2, with Australia retaining the Ashes.

World Cup winner Archer is set to be involved again on Sunday as England look to level a three-match series.

And Marsh insisted Smith would be the last person who would want Australia's formidable pace trio of Mitchell Starc, Josh Hazlewood and Pat Cummins to go easy on him in the nets.

"The Steve Smith I know will probably ask guys to bump (bounce) the hell out of him, he loves the contest," said Marsh. "Anyone that bowls 150 kph, he loves the challenge so certainly there will be no backing down from Steve Smith, I know that 100 per cent for sure."

Asked if Smith would rise to the challenge if England bowled bouncers at him, Marsh replied: "Absolutely. I'm looking forward to seeing that happen."

Meanwhile, there is also a doubt over whether Mitchell Starc will be available for the second match of the series having experienced some groin pain on Friday.

Kane Richardson, who impressed during the T20I series, would probably be the favourite to replace Starc if needed although there are plenty of other options in the squad included the uncapped quick Riley Meredith.

AFP/Cricinfo

‘Our intervention is not government interference’

SASCOC to appoint task team to investigate CSA

Johannesburg, South Africa - The South African Sports Confederation and Olympic Committee (SASCOC), which instructed Cricket South Africa's (CSA) Board and Executive to step aside on Thursday evening, has written to the ICC emphasising that its intervention cannot be considered government interference and is based in South African law.

SASCOC's communication with the game's global governing body comes even as CSA seeks legal advice on the validity of SASCOC's involvement in its affairs.

Specifically, SASCOC sought to distance itself from the country's government and offered to meet with the ICC to provide assurance of its independence.

"SASCOC rejects any allegation or insinuation that the SASCOC intervention constitutes Government interference," SAS-

COC's letter to the ICC reads.

"At no stage does or did SASCOC act under the direction or control of the Minister of Sport in the country, or the Government of the Republic of South Africa. The Board exercises its judgment independently of Government, or any

SASCOC is a legislatively-created body recognised by the National Sports and Recreation Act of 1998. It is the only sports confederation in South Africa

other outside influence."

SASCOC is a legislatively-created body recognised by the National Sports and Recreation Act of 1998. It is the only sports confederation in South Africa, and is the umbrella body under which all sporting bodies in the country operate. In terms of

SASCOC's constitution it is allowed to 'enquire into the activities of any of its Members where malpractices and other forms of misconduct are alleged', its letter to the ICC reads.

While CSA has committed to engaging with SASCOC, it issued a media statement in the early

maintains the only reason it has taken this much interest in CSA is because it believes the game of cricket is being damaged by CSA's actions.

The next step in SASCOC's process is appointing a task team to investigate CSA's administrative and financial affairs.

SASCOC hoped to work with the CSA Members' Council - the body made up of the 14 provincial presidents who have the highest decision-making powers in CSA - to nominate the members of the task team but the Members' Council did not meet with SASCOC on Friday.

The Task Team is not an 'attempt to place CSA under administration', but it does require 'the CSA Board and those senior CSA officials who serve on it on an ex-officio basis to step aside in order to facilitate the work of the Task Team'.

Cricinfo

LPL auction on October 1

Colombo, Sri Lanka - Sri Lanka's cricket board will auction some 150 players next month, including international stars, for the five teams that will make up the virus-delayed premier league, officials said on Friday. The 23-match Lanka Premier League (LPL), originally due in August, will now be played from November 14 to December 6, with matches in Dambulla, Kandy and Hambantota.

"The player auction of the LPL will be held on October 1," the board said in a statement.

Five teams named after the Sri Lankan cities of Colombo, Kandy, Galle, Dambulla and Jaffna, will take part. Sri Lanka Cricket said 30 foreigners including Chris Gayle, Darren Sammy, Darren Bravo, Shahid Afridi and Shakib al Hasan will play in the tournament.

"Each franchise can buy up to six international players," the board said. The five teams will consist of 30 international cricketers and 65 local players.

AFP



GUNNERS FIRE TO KICK OFF SEASON IN STYLE

Tough welcome to the top flight for Fulham; Zaha strikes winner as Crystal Palace down Southampton



Arsenal players celebrate after a goal against Fulham during the opening match of the 2020-21 English Premier League season on Saturday (AFP)

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE

London, UK - Arsenal made a flying start to the new English Premier League (EPL) season as Gabriel Magalhaes grabbed a debut goal and Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang scored a stunner in Saturday's 3-0 win at Fulham.

Just 48 days after last season's delayed conclusion, the EPL is back and Arsenal hit the ground running with the kind of confident display that has become their hallmark since Mikel Arteta took charge.

Arsenal's free-flowing attack was too incisive for promoted Fulham and Alexandre Lacazette gave the visitors an early lead at Craven Cottage.

Brazilian defender Gabriel scored Arsenal's second after the break in his first appearance since his close-season move from Lille.

Aubameyang added the final flourish with a typically eye-catching strike that emphasised why Arsenal are so desperate for the Gabon forward to sign an extension to the contract which expires at the end of the season.

With former Chelsea winger Willian providing a pair of assists on his debut, it was the ideal way for Arsenal to start a season that appears full of promise after last season's FA Cup triumph.

While the continued absence

of fans due to the coronavirus and shorter than usual break has taken a little anticipation away from the new campaign, Arsenal were keener than most to get back in action after beating Chelsea in the FA Cup final.

The Gunners had underlined their rapid improvement by defeating EPL champions Liverpool on penalties in the Community Shield last month and Fulham were no match for them.

The only dark cloud for Arteta was a pre-match spat between Dani Ceballos and Eddie Nketiah.

The pair had to be separated by Arsenal teammates after Nketiah reacted to an aggressive challenge from Ceballos while a

group of players were exchanging passes in the warm-up.

Arteta's worries were eased when Lacazette netted in the ninth minute. Granit Xhaka's strike forced a miscued clearance from Tim Ream and Willian pounced with a close-range shot that Fulham keeper Marek Rodak could only push out to Lacazette, who slotted home from virtually on the goalline.

It made Lacazette the first player to score the opening goal of a EPL campaign twice after the French striker also bagged the opener in 2017-18.

Gabriel was enjoying a composed debut and the 22 year old showed he can be a goal threat

as well when he doubled Arsenal's lead in the 49th minute.

Willian swung over the corner and Gabriel showed his desire as he rose above Michael Hector for an attempted header that hit his shoulder as it flashed into the net.

Fulham's defence was crumbling like the recently demolished Craven Cottage stand and Aubameyang finished them off in the 57th minute with a carbon copy of his Community Shield goal against Liverpool.

Just as at Wembley, Willian's superb cross-field pass picked out Aubameyang and he was allowed to advance unchecked into the area before bending a fine finish into the far corner.

And in another early game, Crystal Palace made a winning start to the 2020-21 EPL season as a volley by Wilfried Zaha in the 13th minute proved enough to sink Southampton.

The Ivory Coast forward, who has repeatedly been linked with a move away from Selhurst Park, was unmarked when he

produced a clinical finish from Andros Townsend's impressive cross.

Maguire to remain United captain

Harry Maguire will remain Manchester United captain, manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer confirmed on Saturday.

Maguire, 27, was given a suspended prison sentence on the Greek island of Syros after being found guilty of aggravated assault, resisting arrest and repeated attempts of bribery.

He maintains his innocence and has appealed against the decision, which nullifies the conviction. "He is going to be our captain," Solskjaer told MUTV.

SPANISH LEAGUE
La Liga opens with stalemate

Madrid, Spain - Spanish League (La Liga) kicked off its 2020-21 season with a goalless draw between Eibar and Celta Vigo on Saturday.

Still without fans due to the

coronavirus pandemic, Spain's top flight got off to a slow start at Ipurua, where Eibar finished with ten men after Pape Diop was sent off in the 87th minute.

Celta's Nolito and Emre Mor were both denied in the first half while Pedro Leon and Brais Mendez had good chances for Eibar before Diop picked up a second yellow card for a late slide.

Reigning champions Real Madrid, Barcelona, Atletico Madrid and Sevilla are all sitting out La Liga's opening weekend after they were given extra time off following last season's European competitions.

AFP

OTHER RESULTS

SCOTTISH PREMIERSHIP

Livingston 1 Hamilton
Academical 2
Aberdeen 1 Kilmarnock 0
Rangers 4 Dundee United 0
Motherwell 1 St Johnstone 0
St Mirren 0 Hibernian 3
Ross County 0 Celtic 5



Crystal Palace's Wilfried Zaha (right) scores past Southampton's English goalkeeper Alex McCarthy on Saturday

Vinales bags pole in record time at San Marino

MOTOGP

Misano Adriatico, Italy - Maverick Vinales produced a new lap record at the Marco Simoncelli circuit on Saturday to claim pole position for the San Marino MotoGP as Yamaha locked out the top four places on the grid.

The Spaniard, who had to make a dramatic emergency leap from his bike when it lost its brakes at 210 km/h in the Styrian GP last month, pulled out a sizzling final lap of 1min 31.411sec, beating the previous track record of 1min 31.629 sec.

"We had a good strategy, saving our tyres for Q2," said Vinales who claimed the 11th pole of his career. "I feel amazing. It felt fantastic on the bike, we will try and go to the maximum tomorrow."

Vinales was a remarkable three-tenths of a second faster than the Yamaha satellite SRT rider Franco Morbidelli with his teammate and championship leader Fabio Quartararo completing the front row.

"I imagined I was going to feel better but the confidence is not so great," said the Frenchman who holds a three-point lead over Ducati's Andrea Dovizioso in the championship standings.

Veteran rider Valentino Rossi, who topped the third practice session, closed out a fine day by claiming fourth spot.

AFP

Hamilton on Tuscan GP pole



Mercedes' British driver Lewis Hamilton celebrates winning the pole position at the Mugello circuit on Saturday

FORMULA ONE
TUSCAN GRAND PRIX

Mugello, Italy - Lewis Hamilton claimed a record-increasing 95th pole position on Saturday when he outpaced Mercedes teammate Valtteri Bottas to seize the prime grid position in qualifying for Sunday's inaugural Tuscan Grand Prix.

It was the series leader and six-time champion's seventh pole in eight races this year as Mercedes continued their dominant run to nine poles out of nine this season with an eighth consecutive front row lockout.

Bottas had been fastest in all three practice sessions, but he was unable to maintain his

superiority over the Briton in the decisive hour albeit that his second run was affected by yellow flags after Esteban Ocon spun in his Renault.

Red Bull's Max Verstappen was third ahead of his teammate Alex Albon with Charles Leclerc claiming fifth for Ferrari, as they celebrate their 1000th Grand Prix at their own circuit. Sergio Perez, who faces a one-place grid penalty for his brush with Kimi Raikkonen on Friday, qualified sixth ahead of his Racing Point teammate Lance Stroll, Daniel Ricciardo of Renault, Carlos Sainz of McLaren and Ocon.

"It's been a very tough weekend," said Hamilton. "And

I'm very grateful to my team because it has been so close with Valtteri and Max, but what a circuit this is!"

Ferrari escape embarrassment

On a glorious day in the Tuscan hills, the air temperature was 29°C and the track 46°C as Q1 began with Bottas topping Hamilton by almost three-tenths, leaving Verstappen adrift by half a second in third.

Perez was fifth behind Albon with Leclerc in sixth while, in the drop zone, Vettel scrambled through to Q2 in his Ferrari to dump last Sunday's Monza winner Pierre Gasly into 16th.

That meant the Frenchman was eliminated along with Antonio Giovinazzi of Alfa Romeo, the two Williams of George Russell and Nicholas Latifi and Haas's Kevin Magnussen.

At their celebratory weekend, Ferrari had escaped utter embarrassment, but a team radio exchange was a salutary reminder of their current plight. "Did we go through or not?" asked Vettel, an unexpected question from a four-time champion. "Yep, we did," Ferrari replied. "Oh..." said Vettel.

In Q2, Hamilton was out quickly to set the pace in 1:15.309, beating Bottas, by 0.013, for the first time this weekend with Verstappen slotting into third, 0.17 off the Briton.

In the second flurry, the top five stayed in their garages as Sainz squeezed his McLaren teammate Lando Norris out of the top-ten for the first time this season. Out with Norris went Daniil Kvyat of Alpha Tauri, Kimi Raikkonen of Alfa Romeo, Vettel and Romain Grosjean of Haas.

The top ten 'shootout' began with Hamilton ahead again, clocking 1:15.144 to beat Bottas by 0.059 and Verstappen, third, by four-tenths. Albon stayed fourth. On the second runs, Hamilton was unable to improve, before the session was upset when Ocon spun and stopped, prompting yellow flags to slow the action before the flag fell.

AFP

Andersen claims stage 14, Roglic retains Tour lead

TOUR DE FRANCE

Lyon, France - Denmark's Soren Kragh Andersen of the Sunweb team soloed to victory after a frantic run into Lyon on stage 14 of the Tour de France on Saturday.

Slovenian Primož Roglič finished with an elite group of race contenders a few seconds behind the Dane to retain the lead in the overall standings ahead of a major mountain test on Sunday.

"We pulled it off, it's the kind of thing you dream of," Andersen said at the line.

The 158-strong peloton left a carnival atmosphere in rugby-loving Clermont-Ferrand

for a tricky run over five small hills on a hot day with Peter Sagan's Bora team leading proceedings as the Slovak targeted winning a bunch sprint in Lyon.

With a perilous inner-city finish it was Andersen, however, who sprung a lightning attack in the final kilometre to clinch a second win for his team this week after Marc Hirschi's solo win on Thursday.

Sagan came in fifth as the bunch sprinted to the line, but Ireland's Sam Bennett stays ahead of the seven-time Tour de France points winner in the race for the green jersey.

AFP



Denmark's Soren Kragh Andersen celebrates as he crosses the finish line



MICROSOFT TAKES AIM AT SONY
Microsoft will on Tuesday launch its Xbox cloud gaming service priced at US\$1 for new users' first month, in a drive to attract casual gamers and as competition with Sony heats up

BUSINESS

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 13, 2020 **MUSCAT DAILY** 13

Madayn records RO6.6bn total investments in industrial cities

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The total investments in Oman's industrial cities, which are managed by the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn), have reached RO6.6bn by the end of 2019.

Madayn is now working towards developing Madayn Vision 2040 to be along the lines of Oman's Vision 2040, according to Hasan bin Marhoon al Marhoon, director-general of planning and business development at Madayn.

The sultanate's industrial cities recorded a growth of 1.54 per cent in gross investments in 2019 compared to the previous year. The number of workforce in Madayn's industrial cities at the end of 2019 reached 61,213, with Omanisation percentage touching 34 per cent, according to a press statement issued by Madayn.

"Through the development of Madayn Vision 2040, we aim at establishing world-class business cities while maintaining the Omani identity. Madayn aims at emphasising its role in promoting comprehensive and sustainable economic and social development through enhancing public-private partnership in order to develop and operate



Hasan al Marhoon

The number of approved business permits in Madayn industrial cities reached 2,556 in 2019

integrated business cities," Marhoon said.

The number of investment projects in the industrial cities reached 2,313 projects at the end of 2019, of which 1,759 are existing projects, 285 are under construction and 269 projects have been allocated with spaces.

Moreover, the total area of Madayn's industrial cities



The total investments in Suhar Industrial City increased by RO24mn (supplied photo)

reached 114,306,724 sq m by the end of 2019 with a utilisation rate of 52 per cent of the total investable area.

Marhoon elaborated that the growth in the total investments in all the industrial cities during 2019 amounted to RO101mn. Suhar Industrial City recorded the highest growth in investments last year compared to other industrial cities.

"The total investments in Suhar Industrial City increased by RO24mn, bringing the cumulative volume of the investments by the end of 2019 in Suhar to RO2.2bn. This increase is attrib-

uted to the investments of companies that were introduced in Suhar Industrial City during 2019," he said.

Al Rusayl and Suhar Industrial Cities account for nearly two-thirds of the total workforce within Madayn's industrial cities. The percentage of the workforce in the two industrial cities is 35 per cent and 28 per cent, respectively.

Marhoon emphasised that Madayn strives to develop and deliver its services in accordance with the requirements of investors, and has flexibility in dealing to help reduce time and

efforts of investors, beneficiaries and Madayn employees alike. In 2019, the number of approved industrial plans touched 135, the number of approved building permits reached 191, and the number of approved business permits amounted to 2,556.

Moreover, the number of licences approved in 2019 reached 1,045; of which, 601 licences for industrial activities, 301 licences for commercial activities, 93 licences for service activities, 43 licences for logistical activities, five licences for residential and real estate activities.

Marhoon added that 102 projects have been localised during 2019 at various stages of implementation, noting a growth rate of 4.6 per cent compared to 2018. Of these projects, 76 per cent are existing projects, 12 per cent have been allocated with spaces, and 12 per cent are under construction.

Al Buraimi Industrial City topped the other industrial cities in terms of the total number of projects. By the end of 2019, the number of projects in Al Buraimi Industrial City touched 508 and is followed by Suhar Industrial City with 416 projects.

UK to invest £24mn in Duqm Port



Ben Wallace

London, UK - Britain on Friday announced a £23.8mn investment to triple the size of its base in an Omani port close to the waters of the Gulf.

The expansion of the 'logistics hub' at Duqm will 'facilitate Royal Navy deployments to the Indian Ocean' and 'further support British Army training in Oman', the UK's Ministry of Defence said.

"The long-standing friendships between the UK and the Gulf states are more important than ever," said Defence Secretary Ben Wallace as he visited Oman and Qatar.

"Whether tackling ISIS (the so-called Islamic State group), or making our streets in the UK safer thanks to our intelligence networks, these are hugely valuable relationships that I'm pleased to be able to renew this week," he added.

Duqm Port has a dry dock facility which could support Britain's two aircraft carriers, HMS Queen Elizabeth and HMS Prince of Wales, the ministry said. AFP

Oman's daily oil production rises 7.2% in August: Ministry

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman's average daily production of crude oil increased by 7.2 per cent in August to 720,300 barrels per day (bpd) compared to the average daily output in July this year, according to the monthly report released by the Ministry of Energy and Minerals.

The ministry's statistics showed that Oman exported 744,736 bpd of crude in August, a decline of 4.3 per cent compared with July's daily export quantities.

Oman's oil shipments to China, which accounted for more than 86 per cent of the sultanate's total crude exports, decreased by 2.6 per cent in August compared to July export figures. Crude exports to India also dropped by 9 per cent in August from the previous month.



The Ministry of Energy and Minerals in its report said that oil prices for all reference crude oil grades around the world experienced a bullish trend during the trading days of August (for October delivery) compared with

the trading of July.

The average price of Oman crude futures contract at the Dubai Mercantile Exchange increased by 1.6 per cent in August compared with the previous month. The monthly official sell-

ing price for Oman crude in August (for October delivery) was announced to be US\$44.32 per barrel. The daily trading market price ranged between US\$42.85 per barrel and US\$45.74 per barrel for Oman crude.

U Capital named best brokerage and investment bank in Oman

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Ubhar Capital, also known as U Capital, with assets and custody under management worth US\$1.3bn, has been awarded 'Best Brokerage Excellence Award Oman' and 'Best Investment Bank of the Year Oman' for 2020 by *International Business Magazine (IBM)*.

International Business Magazine has chosen U Capital based on a number of criteria including but not limited to number and volume of transactions, services and advisory provided, value-added services, innovation, pricing and reputation in the market etc.

In a press statement, Anwar al Jabri, chairman of U Capital said, "We are grateful to be recognised with two prestigious titles by *International Business Magazine* as they are considered one of the most important bench-



Anwar al Jabri

marks for key financial services companies in the region. This coveted recognition is a testament to the ability and efficiency of the U Capital team to offer customised financial advisory services that provide our growing network of top-tier clients with innovative, tailored solutions that promote and sustain capital growth."

Jabri added that these awards

come as a result of U Capital's successful completion of several investment banking transactions this and last year despite the challenges raised by COVID-19 pandemic and low oil prices.

Lo'ai Bataineh, CEO at U Capital said, "This award is an evidence to our continuous growth and unrivalled dedication of the U Capital team to meet all clients' requirements. This recognition underlines the leading position of U Capital's investment banking expertise locally and regionally in advising clients across the full range of investment banking services including financing advisory, debt capital markets, equity capital markets, M&A advisory, brokerage and research, custodial and other advisory services."

Bataineh further added that U Capital's investment banking team has raised more than US\$7.5bn for various companies in the last 15 years.

IMF officials warn global economic crisis 'far from over'

Washington, US - The global economy is showing signs of bouncing back from the severe downturn caused by the global coronavirus pandemic, but a full recovery is 'unlikely' without a vaccine, IMF chief Kristalina Georgieva said.

In a column co-authored with IMF chief economist Gita Gopinath, the officials stressed that governments should continue to support workers and businesses since the unprecedented nature of the crisis could give rise to a wave of bankruptcies and job destruction.

As lockdowns have eased and businesses around the world have been allowed to reopen, there has been a 'sharp rebound of output, consumption and employment', they said in *Foreign Policy* magazine.

The massive scale and speed of government support has helped cushion the blow and allowed for the initial rebound, Gopinath and Georgieva wrote.

"This crisis, however, is far from over," they said. "The recovery remains very fragile and uneven across regions and sectors. To ensure that the recovery



Kristalina Georgieva (AFP)

continues, it is essential that support not be prematurely withdrawn."

Businesses, even insolvent firms, will need continued help to prevent destruction of millions of jobs. That could include governments taking equity in firms or providing grants in exchange for higher tax rates later, they said.

But governments will have to be cautious in how they distribute their scarce resources, and some firms will inevitably fail, especially in industries like travel that may not survive or will be curtailed in a post-virus world.

In a speech on Wednesday to the World Economic Forum, Georgieva said rapid government action 'put a floor under the world economy', which helped everyone without 'differentiating between... winners and losers'.

Going forward, policymakers will need to invest wisely in areas that have the broadest benefit, including green jobs - such as training workers to make buildings more energy efficient - and 'accelerating digital transformation' in a way that will reduce inequalities, she said. "In other words, support programmes that

take the countries towards growth that is green smart and inclusive," the IMF chief said.

But the fund officials cautioned that, 'Though the world has learned to live with the virus, a full recovery is unlikely without a permanent medical solution.'

With 128 coronavirus vaccines currently under development, there is a strong chance a solution will be found, but 'we must urgently devise multilateral solutions' to ensure adequate supply and distribution, Georgieva and Gopinath wrote. AFP

MARKET ANALYSIS - OMAN

MSM posts weekly losses amid sell-off

The benchmark index of the Muscat Securities Market (MSM) last week ended with losses amid lower market turnover and sell-off by foreign investors.

The MSM30 index closed 1.6 per cent lower for the week and its main sub-indices also dropped, led by Financial index which was down by 1.73 per cent. The Industrial index and Services index were also closed lower by 0.6 per cent and 0.39 per cent, respectively. The traded value (market turnover) during the week was lower on a week-on-week basis by 61 per cent.

Local news

►The Capital Market Authority (CMA) announced that Omanis above 60 years of age will have their loan repayment periods rescheduled to their benefit, while borrowers aged 70 and above will still be eligible for health insurance because of the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

►According to a circular, 70 per cent of government employees were expected to retire after the completion of 30 years of employment in the public sector. U-Capital research believes this is a good development for the banking and insurance sector. In terms of banking, it will provide them with more creditworthy customers. And in terms of insurance, there will be more premiums for the health insurance companies which were previously untapped or not allowed to be insured.

►Oman reported a revenue of RO4.8bn for the first half of



(Muscat Daily)

2020 compared to RO5.51bn for the same period of 2019, a decline of 12.7 per cent. Oil revenue declined by 16.8 per cent while gas revenue decreased by 21.2 per cent. Total expenditures, on the other hand, dropped to RO5.71bn in the first half of 2020 compared to RO6.17bn in the corresponding period of 2019, a decline of 7.5 per cent. The decline in expenditures resulted largely because of the drop in current and investment expenditures by 0.6 per cent and 25.6 per cent, respectively. The sultanate's overall budget deficit stood at RO899mn for the January-June period of 2020, higher by 36 per cent on a year-on-year basis. The deficit in the first quarter was RO36.4mn, while the deficit in the second quarter was recorded at RO863mn.

►As per the National Center

for Statistics and Information, Oman's average oil price was US\$33.7 per barrel in July 2020 compared to US\$23.7 per barrel in June 2020. With 42 per cent month-on-month improvement in oil prices in July compared to June, we believe the deficit will be lower because of higher oil revenue.

►The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) announced a second stimulus package for economic revival and for supporting the banks and finance and leasing companies (FLCs). The following changes are in force with immediate effect:

1. Extension of the timeline for existing loan deferment scheme announced on March 18, 2020. This extension is valid until March 31, 2021, without adversely impacting the risk classification of such loans.

2. Enhancing the limit and tenor

of Forex SWAP facility provided by the CBO. It has been decided to increase the maximum limit of the CBO SWAP facility up to 100 per cent of a bank's net worth, from the current joint ceiling on the SWAP and rediscounting of commercial papers (25 per cent of a bank's net worth), and further extend the tenor of the facility up to a maximum of one year. The maximum limit for rediscounting of commercial papers facility will remain as 25 per cent of a bank's net worth.

3. The loan-to-value (LTV) ratio for housing loans: In order to further facilitate the first-time buyers of housing property, it has been decided to reduce the margin to 10 per cent from earlier stipulated 20 per cent. Regarding the risk weight of 35 per cent on claims secured by residential property, it is clarified

that there is no change in the criteria provided before. Furthermore, banks are permitted to include the cost of registration and insurance in the value of the housing property while computing the LTV in respect of all housing loans and accordingly maintain the minimum margin of 10 per cent.

4. Liquidity coverage ratio (LCR): The minimum standard of 100 per cent for LCR prescribed remains unchanged. However, in case of genuine liquidity constraint faced by a bank, the CBO may consider relaxation on a case-to-case basis by allowing the bank to operate below the minimum LCR requirement of 100 per cent but not less than a minimum LCR of 75 per cent. Banks need prior approval of the CBO and also need to submit a de-

tailed liquidity profile and justifications, indicating the time period sought besides its future strategy, action plan and the timeline for reverting to the maintenance of the minimum LCR of 100 per cent. This is likely to be available until March 31, 2021.

GCC markets

The UAE reported its public finance numbers for the first half of 2020. The UAE federal government achieved a budget surplus of AED9.75bn for the first half of this year. The federal government's revenue stood at AED34.7bn, while spending stood at about AED25bn. A surplus of AED7.95bn was generated during the second quarter of 2020, following on from AED1.8bn surplus in the first quarter. The second quarter revenue stood at AED19.45bn while expenses were at AED17.65bn.

Kuwait has cut KD945mn (US\$3.09bn) in expenditure from its budget for the 2020-2021 fiscal year, the head of a parliamentary committee said last week. In January, Kuwait expected spending of KD22.5bn and revenues of KD14.8bn in the 2020-2021 budget. As a result of the current crisis, the Ministry of Finance has amended the estimates for the 2020-2021 budget, with revenues estimated at KD7.5bn and expenditures at KD21.5bn.

The aggregate sales of 17 Saudi cement producers climbed 38 per cent to 4.3mn tonnes in August 2020, compared to 3.1mn tonnes in the same month last year, data is-

sued by Yamama Cement Company showed. As many as 16 cement producers reported higher sales, topped by Al-Jouf Cement Co with a year-on-year surge of 131 per cent in August. Al-Safwa Cement Co came second with a spike of 116 per cent growth in sales. Clinker production rose 5 per cent to 4.2mn tonnes in the same month, compared to 4mn tonnes a year earlier. However, clinker inventories reached 40.7mn tonnes by the end of August, declining by 6 per cent from 43.1mn tonnes.

Recommendation

Internationally, the markets last week improved after witnessing a correction in the previous two weeks. Technology stocks rallied after witnessing a sizable drop. However, oil stocks remained under pressure after Brent and WTI crude prices dropped on the back of buildup in inventories.

Regionally, the markets remained mixed led by lower oil prices but supported by an expected resolve in the relation between Qatar and Saudi Arabia and UAE. Qatari market which has underperformed against Saudi Arabia ever since the blockade was imposed ended higher post the news.

Locally, Oman's government is planning to tap international and local debt markets as it seeks to plug the budget deficit. We believe the government has exercised good control on expenditure and would be successful in raising debt from international markets at attractive terms.

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INTRODUCING

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Crude oil output of OPEC+ increases in August: EIA

New York, US - Crude oil production from both the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and non-OPEC partner countries increased in August, according to Energy Information Administration (EIA) on Friday.

Non-OPEC output increased by 530,000 barrels per day (bpd) while OPEC production rose month-on-month by nearly 1mn bpd.

As global demand for petroleum liquids declined significantly in March and April due to unprecedented travel restrictions and lockdowns worldwide caused by coronavirus pandemic, global oil inventories increased at record levels, rising by an average of 5.9mn bpd in the first quarter and 7.2mn bpd in the second quarter of 2020.

As a result of lower demand and ample global oil inventories, global crude oil prices fell in March and April to record lows.

On April 15, members of OPEC and partner countries



(OPEC+) agreed to reduce crude oil production in response to these market conditions. The OPEC+ agreement called for a decrease in crude oil output by a combined 9.7mn bpd in May and June, a combined decrease of 9.6 million bpd in July 2020, and a combined decrease of 7.7mn bpd in August.

Compared with January levels, OPEC+ production fell by an estimated 5.9mn bpd in May, 7.9mn bpd in June, 7.1mn bpd in

July, and 5.6mn bpd in August.

OPEC crude oil production decreased by 5.7mn bpd between January and July 2020. The group posted its largest-ever production decline in May by 6mn bpd compared to April, according to US Energy Information Administration (EIA) data.

The non-OPEC partner countries reduced their production by 2.8mn bpd in July from production levels in January 2020.

Anadolu Agency

Reliance denies plans with Amazon

Mumbai, India - Indian conglomerate Reliance denied a report on Thursday that it was planning to sell a US\$20bn stake in its retail business to US rival Amazon in a deal that could upend the country's hugely lucrative e-commerce sector.

The report published by Bloomberg on Thursday said that Reliance, owned by Asia's richest man Mukesh Ambani, had offered Amazon a 40 per cent stake in its retail subsidiary RRVL, citing an unidentified person with knowledge of the matter.

The deal, which would have been the largest for India and for the Silicon Valley behemoth according to Bloomberg data, would have shaken up the South Asian nation's retail sector, transforming the relationship between two firms that have spent months locked in frenzied competition.

But a source at the Indian oil-to-telecoms giant disputed the report, which sent Reliance shares up by more than 76 per



Mukesh Ambani

cent in Mumbai, calling it 'incorrect'.

"It makes no sense for both the parties to establish partnerships or collaborations," the source told AFP on condition of anonymity.

An Amazon spokeswoman declined to comment on the report.

Reliance has been fighting Amazon and Walmart-backed Flipkart for a share of India's online market, establishing its digital platform JioMart in May.

AFP

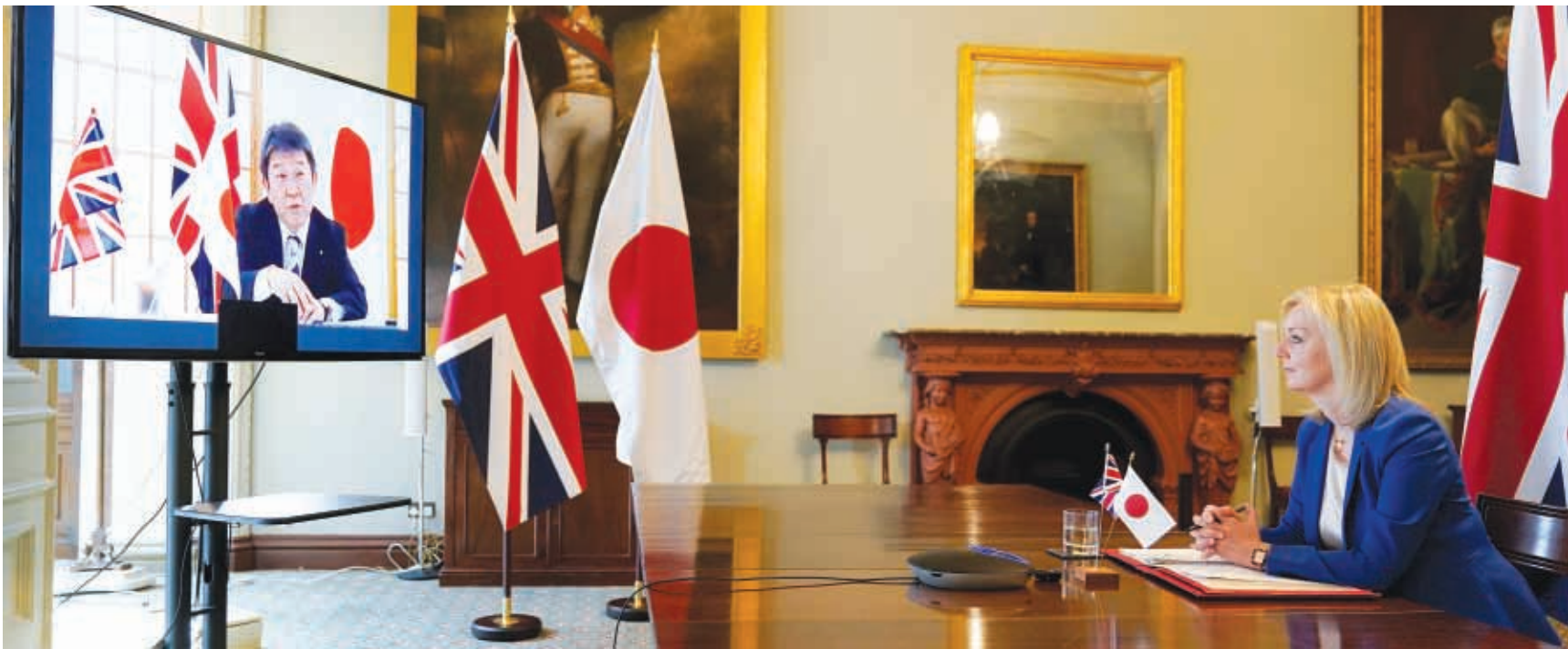
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Britain's International Trade Secretary Liz Truss (right) speaks with Japan's Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi during a video conference call in London, UK on Wednesday (AFP)

Big in Japan: UK announces major post-Brexit trade deal

London, UK - Britain on Friday announced its first major post-Brexit trade agreement - a deal with Japan - as its negotiations with the European Union (EU) become increasingly fractious.

The Department for International Trade said the accord, which largely replicates the current EU-Japan deal, will be worth £15.2bn.

The UK-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement was agreed in principle by International Trade Secretary Liz Truss and Japan Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi during a video call on Friday.

Bilateral trade is currently conducted under the EU-Japan deal that came into effect last year, but that agreement will no longer apply to Britain from December 31.

Britain left the EU in January, nearly four years after a seismic referendum that saw voters opt to end close to five decades of European integration.

A standstill transition period is in place until the end of the year while London and Brussels try to thrash out the terms of their new relationship from January 1 next year.

But the wrangling has become increasingly bitter, and on Thursday the EU threatened legal action after the UK vowed to implement a new law that would break its binding divorce treaty.

UK government ministers trumpeted the new bilateral agreement with Japan as a clear sign to Brexit opponents that agreements can be struck elsewhere.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson

Around 99 per cent of exports between the two nations will be tariff-free under the newly signed deal

said on Twitter that the deal showed 'we have taken back control of our trade policy and will continue to thrive as a trading nation outside the EU'.

Truss hailed what she said was a 'historic moment for the UK and Japan as our first major post-Brexit trade deal' and a 'important step' towards joining the

Trans-Pacific Partnership.

"The agreement we have negotiated - in record time and in challenging circumstances - goes far beyond the existing EU deal, as it secures new wins for British businesses in our great manufacturing, food and drink, and tech industries," she added.

Breakthrough

On the Japanese side, Motegi said the deal - covering sectors from textiles to tech and shortbread - should take effect on January 1, following domestic ratification.

"It was a very tough negotiation, but we reached the agreement in principle in about three months, at an unusually fast pace," he said.

"While maintaining the high

levels of access to the British market under the Japan-EU EPA, we improved our access to the British market on train cars and some auto parts."

Around 99 per cent of exports between the two nations will be tariff-free under the deal, according to the British government, with a particular focus on the food and drink, finance and tech sectors.

Manufacturing parts coming from Japan will benefit from reduced tariffs, as will British beef and salmon travelling in the opposite direction.

British business welcomed the agreement, with Carolyn Fairbairn, director general of the Confederation of British Industry, calling it a 'breakthrough moment'.

AFP

ECB chief less pessimistic on 2020 downturn

Frankfurt, Germany - European Central Bank (ECB) chief Christine Lagarde on Thursday said the eurozone's pandemic-induced downturn was expected to be less severe than initially feared, but a recent spike in coronavirus cases was causing 'headwinds' for the recovery.

Lagarde also addressed concerns about the recent appreciation of the euro, which can have a slowing effect on inflation and complicates the bank's efforts to push price growth higher.

The rise of the euro was 'extensively discussed' when ECB governors held their meeting, Lagarde told reporters in Frankfurt in an online press conference.

The 'appreciation of the euro is something to be monitored carefully', she added.

The governing council made no changes to its ultra-loose monetary policy, keeping interest rates at historic lows and leaving its €1.35tn pandemic emergency bond-buying scheme in place.

Lagarde said the central bank would continue to provide an 'ample degree' of monetary accommodation to support the 19-nation currency club through the COVID-19 crisis.

"The strength of the recovery remains surrounded by significant uncertainty as it continues to be highly dependent on the future evolution of the pandemic and the success of containment policies" to curb the outbreak, Lagarde said.

Incoming data suggested 'a strong rebound' in the third quarter of 2020, Lagarde said, after global coronavirus lockdowns contributed to a record second-quarter slump in the eurozone.

But fears are growing that a



Christine Lagarde

recent uptick in coronavirus cases across Europe could trigger renewed restrictions on public life, hampering the rebound.

The jump 'in coronavirus infection rates during the summer months constitutes headwinds to the short-term outlook', Lagarde warned.

She added that it was 'very likely' that the ECB would use up the full €1.35tn envelope of its pandemic bond-buying scheme.

Unveiling the ECB's latest forecasts, Lagarde said the eurozone economy is likely to shrink by 8 per cent this year, compared with an earlier projection of -8.7 per cent.

Growth will return in 2021 and 2022, at 5 per cent and 3.2 per cent respectively, slightly below the predictions in June.

The ECB's 2020 inflation outlook remained unchanged at 0.3 per cent, and is expected to climb to a slightly higher than expected 1 per cent next year. For 2022, the bank kept its inflation projection at 1.3 per cent.

The projections remain well off the bank's target of reaching price growth of 'close to, but below' 2 per cent.

AFP

Oil giant BP enters offshore wind market in \$1bn deal



London, UK - British energy major BP, aiming to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050, has entered the offshore wind market in a US tie-up with Norwegian peer Equinor.

Under the deal, BP will pay Equinor US\$1.1bn for interests in wind developments off the coasts of New York and Massachusetts, while pursuing other US projects together.

Until now, BP has only oper-

ated onshore wind assets, mostly in the United States.

'BP and Equinor today announced the formation of a new strategic partnership to develop offshore wind projects in the US,' the pair said in a statement.

'This includes the development of existing offshore wind leases on the US East coast and jointly pursuing further opportunities for offshore wind in the US.'

"This is an important early step in the delivery of our new strategy and our pivot to truly becoming an integrated energy company," added chief executive Bernard Looney in Thursday's statement.

"Offshore wind is growing at around 20 per cent a year globally and is recognised as being a core part of meeting the world's need to limit emissions," he said.

AFP

Citigroup names Jane Fraser as first woman chief executive

New York, US - Citigroup's Jane Fraser will become the first woman to lead a major Wall Street firm after the banking giant on Thursday picked her as its next chief executive.

Fraser is set to take over the top job in February, replacing Michael Corbat who will retire.

Her appointment was touted on social media for shattering Wall Street's glass ceiling and comes amid intensifying focus on the need to diversify American corporate leadership in the aftermath of the 'Me Too' movement on workplace equity and mass protests in the US for racial justice.

"Jane Fraser's appointment is an historic moment for women," Texas Democratic Representative Al Green said on Twitter. "But we still have a way to go to achieve diversity and inclusion that captures the whole of our nation."

In April 2019, Green pressed Corbat and six other Wall Street CEOs at a congressional hearing, asking the seven white men if they foresaw a successor who was a woman or a person of colour - none raised his hand.

Fraser, who has served as president and CEO of Citigroup's global consumer banking since 2019, will join the board of directors immediately, the bank said. She has held prior roles for Citi in Latin America and in investment banking.

"I am honoured by the Board's decision and grateful to Mike for his leadership and support," Fraser (53) said in a press release.



Jane Fraser (AFP)

"Our balance sheet is strong and our commitment to serving our clients and communities is even stronger. I will do everything I can to make all our stakeholders proud of our firm as we continue to build a better bank and improve our returns."

The move comes as Citi pivots to a more challenging operating environment as large banks set aside billions of dollars to cover the potential for bad loans due to the coronavirus.

Humanised' banker

Other women have become CEOs of big financial companies or in related industries, such as Abigail Johnson at Fidelity Investments and Julie Sweet at Accenture. But in taking the helm of the fourth-biggest US bank by assets, Fraser joins a group of Wall Street CEOs that until now has been exclusively led by white men.

Her appointment to the top job had been telegraphed from her prior promotion in October 2019 to president and head of global consumer banking. Senior women at JPMorgan Chase also are in line to potentially succeed Jamie Dimon, who is expected to retire in the coming years.

The Scottish-born Fraser joined Citi in 2004 after earlier roles at Goldman Sachs and McKinsey & Company. She has spoken openly about being a working mother in finance, recounting in 2016 how she worked part-time at McKinsey.

Having children 'humanised me', Fraser said in the 2016 appearance at the Americas Society. "There is nothing like having children to help you understand where your priorities are."

Fraser also pursued sometimes unorthodox career moves, such as exiting as head of the private bank in London in 2013 to

oversee a turnaround of the mortgage business from St. Louis, Missouri in the US Midwest. "Everyone thought I was completely nuts," she said. "I knew I would grow. I knew I would learn a completely different skill set."

After stumbling badly during the subprime mortgage crisis, Citigroup recovered in the ensuing decade after the 2008 financial crisis.

From 2012 to 2019, the banking giant saw net income rise from US\$7bn to US\$20bn, Corbat said in the press release.

"We went from returning hardly any capital to returning nearly US\$80bn in capital to our shareholders over the last six years," he said.

The improvement coincided with a post-2008 US economic expansion that ended abruptly with the coronavirus outbreak.

In the most recent quarter, Citigroup added US\$5.6bn in reserves for bad loans, a factor in a 73 per cent drop in profits to US\$1.3bn. Large banks also are staring at a lengthy period of low interest rates, putting a damper on another source of profits.

"The pandemic has a grip on the economy and it doesn't seem likely to loosen until vaccines are widely available," Corbat said on a conference call with analysts.

CFRA Research analyst Kenneth Leon said in a note he was 'positive' on the appointment, adding that Fraser has 'best-in-class experience' from working in leadership across Citi's major divisions.

AFP

IMF ready to help crisis-hit Lebanon

Washington, US - The IMF is ready to 'redouble its efforts' to help Lebanon once a new government is in place as the country reels following a massive explosion at Beirut's port, a fund official said on Thursday.

The country is facing a severe economic crisis after a neglected warehouse full of fertiliser ignited in a cataclysmic blast that devastated the capitol on August 4.

"We stand ready to engage

with the new government," IMF spokesman Gerry Rice told reporters. "After its formation is completed... we're ready to redouble our efforts to help Lebanon and the people of Lebanon overcome the social and economic crisis."

The Washington-based crisis lender is providing technical assistance as the country struggles to recover 'following that terrible event at the port', Rice said.

The tragedy left at least 190 people dead and more than 6,500 injured.

Rice welcomed Lebanon Finance Minister Ghazi Wazni's announcement that he had launched an audit of the central bank's finances, which the fund had called for. Rice said the move was 'an important part of assessing past losses that are part of the central bank's balance sheet'.

AFP

US-negotiated deal makes Bahrain partner to crimes: Iran

Tehran, Iran - Iran on Saturday angrily accused Bahrain of stirring instability after US President Donald Trump announced Manama and Israel were opening ties in a landmark deal that reinforces America's push to redraw Middle East conflicts.

Calling it a 'truly historic day', Trump said on Friday that Israel and Bahrain were establishing full diplomatic and commercial relations.

"They will exchange embassies and ambassadors, begin direct flights between their countries and launch cooperation initiatives across a broad range of sectors, including health, business, technology, education, security and agriculture," he said.

Bahrain said in a joint statement it had agreed to formalise the deal with Israel at a ceremony on Tuesday in the White House, where the United Arab Emirates will also sign off on its own thaw with Israel announced in mid-August.

Shiite Iran, the sworn arch enemy of the United States which has especially tense ties with Bahrain, slammed its Gulf neighbour over the deal.

"The rulers of Bahrain will from now on be partners to the crimes of the Zionist regime as a constant threat to the security of the region and the world of Islam," it said.

Turkey also condemned the deal, saying it undermined the Palestinian cause.

"The step will be a fresh blow to efforts to defend the Palestinian cause and will further embolden Israel to continue its illegal practices toward Palestine and its attempts to make the occupation of Palestinian territories permanent," it said.

Bahrain, a Sunni-ruled kingdom with a large Shiite population, relies heavily on the United States, which stations its Fifth Fleet in the tiny but strategic Gulf archipelago.

'More to follow'

The joint statement said Bahrain's King Hamad, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Trump had spoken hours before announcing the new breakthrough.



Palestinians protest against the normalisation of ties between Israeli and Bahrain, in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip, on Saturday (AFP)

Bahrain dissidents slam Israel deal

Dubai, UAE - Bahrainis opposed to their government's agreement to establish diplomatic relations with Israel vented their frustration on social media on Saturday.

The hashtags 'Bahrainis against normalisation' and 'normalisation is betrayal' were trending on Twitter after US President Donald Trump announced the deal late Friday.

Former MP Ali Alaswad wrote that it was 'a black day in

the history of Bahrain'.

Al-Wefaq, which was the largest in parliament until 2011, bitterly criticised the normalisation deal. 'The agreement between the despotic regime in Bahrain and the Zionist occupation government is a total betrayal of Islam and Arabism and a departure from the Islamic, Arab and national consensus', it said on Twitter.

Hussain Aldaihi, deputy secretary general of Al-Wefaq,

wrote that 'normalisation confirms what is certain, that these regimes pose a threat to their countries, peoples and the nation, by implementing disruptive agendas against the interests of our Arab and Islamic countries & peoples.'

Other anti-normalisation groups, based both inside Bahrain and abroad, expressed their anger in statements sent to media, calling the deal 'shameful'.

Egypt in 1979 and Jordan in 1994 - and Trump is hoping the latest deals will give him badly needed momentum going into the November 3 presidential election.

At the White House, Trump called the development 'very,

the region," said Hend al Otaiba, director of strategic communications at the foreign ministry.

Trump said more Arab nations could also open their doors to Israel.

"I am very hopeful that there will be more to follow," he said.

Trump redraws lines

The Republican businessman has styled himself as the most pro-Israeli US President in history.

He has taken a string of decisions highly beneficial to Israel, from recognising disputed Jerusalem as the country's capital to tearing up an international accord meant to end Iran's isolation in return for verified controls to prevent militarisation of its nuclear industry.

At the same time, Trump has pushed to wind down the United States' own military footprint after decades of bloody entanglements in Iraq and elsewhere.

The UAE's announcement

The UAE's agreement is 'a stab in the back of the Palestinian cause and the Palestinian people'

Ahmad Majdalani

broke with years of policy on the Middle East conflict, prompting angry pushback from the Palestinians.

The Palestinians, who see Arab support as crucial to their limited power in resisting Israeli occupation, also condemned the Israel-Bahrain deal.

The agreement was 'a stab in the back of the Palestinian cause and the Palestinian people', Ahmad Majdalani, social affairs minister in the West Bank-based Palestinian Authority, told AFP.

Hamas, which controls the Gaza Strip, said it was an 'aggression' that dealt 'serious prejudice' to the Palestinian cause.

"As more countries normalise relations with Israel, which will happen quite quickly we believe, the region will become more and more stable, secure and prosperous," Trump, however, said.

AFP

Wrestler executed for killing, says Iran

Tehran, Iran - Iran said it executed a young wrestler on Saturday over the murder of a public sector worker during anti-government protests in August 2018.

Navid Afkari was executed in the morning at a prison in the southern city of Shiraz, provincial prosecutor general Kazem Mousavi was quoted as saying on state television's website.

The 27 year old had been found guilty of 'voluntary homicide' for stabbing to death Hossein Torkman, a water department worker, on August 2, 2018, according to the judiciary.

Shiraz and several other urban centres across the Islamic republic had been the scene that day of anti-government protests and demonstrations over economic and social hardship.

Reports published abroad say Afkari was condemned on the basis of confessions extracted under torture, prompting online campaigns of support for his release. The judiciary's Mizan Online news agency denied the accusations.

The sentence had been carried out at 'the insistence of the victim's family', said Mousavi, the prosecutor general for Fars province.

Afkari's lawyer, Hassan Younessi, said on Twitter that a number of people in Shiraz were to meet with the slain worker's family on Sunday to ask for their forgiveness. He also said that based on criminal law in Iran 'the convict has a right to meet his family before the execution'.

'Were you in such a hurry to carry out the sentence that you deprived Navid of his last visit?'

US President Donald Trump had pleaded for Afkari's life earlier this month, saying that his 'sole act was an anti-government demonstration on the streets'.

'To the leaders of Iran, I would greatly appreciate if you would spare this young man's life, and not execute him. Thank you!' he wrote on Twitter.

Trump has maintained an aggressive approach of 'maximum pressure' toward longtime US foe Iran since becoming president, enacting crippling economic sanctions after withdrawing from a landmark nuclear deal with Iran.

AFP

Anti-Shiite protests in Karachi enter second day

Karachi, Pakistan - Tens of thousands of anti-Shiite protesters including demonstrators linked to Sunni extremists rallied in Pakistan's Karachi on Saturday, in the second day of protests that have sparked fears of sectarian violence.

Vast crowds of men thronged downtown Karachi - Pakistan's largest city and a major business and industrial hub - many of them waving pro-Sunni flags and chanting Sunni-power slogans.

The rallies follow a raft of accusations against Shiite leaders in Sunni-majority Pakistan after a broadcast of an Ashura procession last month showed clerics and participants allegedly making disparaging remarks.

Ashura commemorates the killing of the Prophet Mohammed's grandson Hussein at the Battle of Karbala in 680CE.

A security official told AFP Saturday's crowd was estimated to exceed 30,000 people.

There were no immediate reports of violence.

The rally was organised by the organisation Jamaat Ahle Sunnat



Pakistanis gather during an anti-Shiite protest in Karachi on Saturday (AFP)

and by the hardline party Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP), which has organised huge and often violent protests in the past. "If you play with the religious sentiments of the Sunni, we will not tolerate it," Karachi TLP chief Allama Abid Mubara told the rally. Sunni people could ultimately 'get their heads cut off, but can also behead other people', he added.

But Mufti Muneeb-ur-Rehman, who was the event's main speaker, insisted the rally aimed to 'promote peace'.

"Our movement is not against any sectarian group, our move-

ment is against those individuals who desecrate our revered personalities," he said.

Sectarian violence has erupted in fits and bursts for decades in Pakistan, with anti-Shiite militant groups bombing shrines and targeting Ashura processions in attacks that have killed thousands.

A crackdown by security forces culminated in July 2015 when Malik Ishaq - the chief of banned Sunni group Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ) - was killed in a firefight with police along with 13 fellow militants.

AFP

Tehran province blast kills 1, damages buildings: Media

Tehran, Iran - An explosion in a battery workshop near the Iranian capital on Friday killed one person, injured ten others and damaged apartment buildings and cars, Iran's state news agency IRNA reported.

The blast struck at 5.15pm on the ground floor of a three-storey residential building in Tehran province's Nasim Shahr county, local fire brigade chief Iraj Torkamani told IRNA. A fire triggered by the explosion 'was so severe that a worker immediately died and 10 residents from 25 apartments in the building were lightly injured', he said.

More than 20 cars and some other nearby buildings were also damaged, he added.

Torkamani told Tasnim news agency that the cause of the explosion was still unclear and investigations were underway.

A local crisis management chief, Mansour Darajati, told state television that a malfunctioning cutting tool may have been the cause.

The broadcaster showed



This image grab obtained from Iranian State TV IRINN shows people gather at the site of an explosion in a battery workshop in Nasim Shahr county, southwest of Tehran, on Saturday (AFP)

walls of a building's ground floor seemingly blasted open and several cars with broken windows damaged by falling debris.

The incident is the latest in a series of fires and explosions that have hit military and civilian sites across Iran since June.

On July 2, a building at Iran's Natanz nuclear complex was

badly damaged, at the end of a week marked by two explosions in Tehran, including one near a military site.

Officials have said the blasts were accidents, but some Iranian media suspected covert Israeli operations were responsible.

Iran's Supreme National Security Council announced on July 3

that the 'cause of the accident' at Natanz had been 'accurately determined' but declined to elaborate for security reasons.

At the end of July, Mojtaba Zolnour, head of parliament's national security and foreign affairs committee, ruled out drone or missile attacks as the cause.

AFP

Tear gas fired during protests by migrants on Greek island of Lesbos

Clashes occurred near a new camp as thousands demanded help after being left homeless by a fire in the main camp

Athens, Greece - Greek riot police fired tear gas at protesting asylum seekers on Lesbos island on Saturday, as thousands demanded help after being left homeless by the fire that destroyed Europe's largest migrant camp.

Asylum seekers - from elderly to newborns - have been sleeping rough on Lesbos since Wednesday, when the Moria camp was gutted in apparent arson attacks. Families have been huddling under blankets and sleeping in doorways, parking lots or by roads.

Clashes occurred on Saturday near a new temporary camp built by Greek authorities where hundreds of young men gathered to protest, some throwing stones at riot police who responded with tear gas.

Earlier in the day, fire fighters had to put out a fire near a police blockade.

'Freedom!' said one handwritten sign held up by a protester. 'We want to leave Moria,' said another.

"We were protesting peacefully against the new camp and the police threw tear gas against us. My baby had the gas in her eyes!" Zola, a Congolese woman carrying her five-month-old baby, told AFP.

Some people suffering from respiratory problems were taken away in ambulances, while others fainted, according to the migrants.

Adding to the chaos, migrants wrestled each other to grab water bottles thrown out of vans, AFP photographers reported.

Migration Minister Notis Mitarachi told reporters that keeping access open to food, water and medical supplies was a 'priority', even as aid organisations said they had difficulty reaching the homeless.

Tensions

Efforts to find temporary shelter for over 11,000 people left on the street by the destruction of the Moria camp were still inadequate, rights groups said.

'As thousands are now left sleeping rough in the hills around Moria or on the streets, tensions between local residents, asylum seekers, and police are increasing,' Human Rights Watch warned in a statement on Saturday.

The Moria camp, regularly criticised by the UN and rights groups for overcrowding and dismal sanitary conditions, burned



Refugees and migrants throw back tear gas canisters fired by riot police during clashes near the city of Mytilene on the Greek island of Lesbos, on Saturday (AFP)



A migrant woman and a girl after during clashes on Saturday (AFP)

As thousands are now left sleeping rough in the hills around Moria or on the streets, tensions between local residents, asylum seekers, and police are increasing

Human Rights Watch



Migrants and refugees run after police threw tear gas during clashes near the city Mytilene on Saturday (AFP)

"The process of moving people will start today."

Local objections

Local volunteer groups have struggled to supply asylum seekers with food and water.

"We are sleeping in the dirt or on the road under the open sky,"

a group of migrants from the former camp said on Facebook. Some people had even found shelter under the trees of the local Greek cemetery, they added.

Sleeping on the roadside and in parking lots, men, women and children have used of whatever

they can find in nearby fields, pinning tarpaulins on tree branches and reeds for privacy and protection from the beating sun.

The local mayor has rejected efforts to build new temporary camps as 'unrealistic' and residents have tried to stop the construction of new camps by

setting up roadblocks.

Army and fire service helicopters had to be used to bypass the barriers.

"Any thought to rebuild this sort of thing should be forgotten," Mytilene Mayor Stratis Kytelis told Antenna TV on Friday. "The island's society cannot take any more... for reasons of health, social cohesion, national security," added Kytelis.

The plight of the stranded families has prompted other European countries to offer to take in hundreds of asylum seekers, particularly unaccompanied youngsters.

But Greece has long complained that, aside from providing funds, its EU partners have done too little to help.

Past efforts to create a quota system, in which all European countries would have agreed to take in refugees from Greece, foundered due to opposition from rightwing populist governments such as those in Poland and Hungary.

AFP

Attenborough in warning to humanity with new documentary

London, UK - Renowned TV naturalist David Attenborough, in a new documentary, gives his starkest warning yet for humanity to safeguard species from mass extinction for the sake of our own survival.

His one-hour film *Extinction: The Facts*, airing on Sunday on the BBC in Britain at 20.00 BST, does not hold back in portraying the devastating consequences of mankind's encroachment on natural habitats - and draws a clear link to pandemics such as the coronavirus crisis.

"The tone of the programme is very different from his usual work", BBC writes.

It comes after international experts warned in a report this week that global animal, bird and fish populations have plummeted more than two-thirds in less than 50 years due to humanity's rampant



David Attenborough's one-hour film *Extinction: The Facts* will be aired on Sunday on the BBC in Britain

over-consumption.

"We are facing a crisis," Attenborough warns at the start of the documentary, according to the BBC, 'and one that has consequences for us all'.

The broadcaster said the programme contained 'horrific scenes of destruction', such as monkeys leaping from trees into a river to escape a huge fire.

In another, a koala limps across a road in a doomed search for shelter from a forest blaze.

The new film from the maker of *Blue Planet* and *Planet Earth* also tracks the suspected origins of COVID-19 to populations of bats living in caves in the Chinese province of Yunnan.

It shows the Chinese 'wet market' in the city of Wuhan, specialising in the sale of wild animals for human consumption,

which scientists believe was at the root of this year's deadly pandemic.

The film gives dramatic visual reinforcement to this week's Living Planet Index report, which warned that continued loss of natural habitats increases the risk of future pandemics as humans come into ever closer contact with wild animals.

Attenborough also portrays the world's last two northern white rhinos, a mother and daughter in Central Africa.

"Over the course of my life I've encountered some of the world's most remarkable species of animals," the 94 year old said. "Only now do I realise just how lucky I've been - many of these wonders seem set to disappear forever."

There is hope, however, as Attenborough retraces an iconic

film he made in the 1970s showing a fast-dwindling band of mountain gorillas on the border between Rwanda and the present-day Democratic Republic of Congo.

Their population has recovered from just 250 then to more than 1,000, thanks to a determined conservation campaign in Rwanda, and Attenborough meets the offspring of a playful young female he met four decades ago.

"I may not be here to see it, but if we make the right decisions at this critical moment, we can safeguard our planet's ecosystems, its extraordinary biodiversity and all its inhabitants," he concludes in the documentary.

"What happens next is up to every one of us."

AFP

'Truly momentous' talks open between Taliban, Afghanistan

Doha, Qatar - Peace talks between the Taliban and the Afghan government opened in Qatar on Saturday, marking what US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo heralded as a 'truly momentous' occasion in nearly two decades of gruelling conflict.

The US-backed talks will be arduous and complex, delegates acknowledged at an opening ceremony in Doha, and are starting even as violence continues to grip Afghanistan.

"We will undoubtedly encounter many challenges in the talks over the coming days, weeks and months," Pompeo said as he called for the warring sides to 'seize this opportunity' to secure peace.

"Remember you are acting not only for this generation of Afghans but for future generations as well, your children and your grandchildren."

Highlighting the war's brutal toll, Abdullah Abdullah, Afghanistan's former chief executive who is heading the peace process for Kabul, said 12,000 civilians have been killed and another 15,000 wounded since the US signed a withdrawal agreement with the Taliban on February 29.

Abdullah called for an immediate, humanitarian ceasefire - but his plea went unanswered by Taliban co-founder Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, who made no mention of a truce in his opening remarks.

The Taliban have long worried that reducing violence could lessen their leverage at the negotiating table.

Instead, Baradar repeated the insurgents' message that Afghanistan must be run according to Islamic law.

The Taliban want to reshape



Abdullah Abdullah (centre), Chairman of Afghanistan's High Council for National Reconciliation, speaks with members of delegations after the first day's session, in Doha on Saturday (AFP)

I want the peace negotiating team to consider the will of the people of Afghanistan

Sayed Jamil Ibrahim

Afghanistan into an Islamic 'emirate', while the administration of President Ashraf Ghani will seek to maintain the Western-backed status quo of a constitutional republic that has enshrined many rights, including greater freedoms for women.

"We want Afghanistan to have an Islamic system in which people from all walks of life see themselves without discrimination and live in brotherhood with each other," Baradar said.

Norwegian Foreign Minister Ine Eriksen Soreide urged all sides to include 'women, victims and minorities and other stakeholders' in the process, saying such inclusivity is the key to an enduring accord.

Four of the 21 people on the Kabul negotiating team are women. The Taliban's delegation of the same size has none.

In the Afghan capital, resi-

dents were glued to their televisions watching the opening ceremony unfold. "I want the peace negotiating team to consider the will of the people of Afghanistan," said Kabul resident Sayed Jamil Ibrahim.

Competing visions

The US-backed negotiations come six months later than planned owing to bitter disagreements over a controversial prisoner swap agreed in February.

President Donald Trump, up for re-election in November, has pushed hard to end the United States' longest war and wants all

foreign forces to leave Afghanistan by next year.

But a comprehensive peace deal could take years, and will depend on the willingness of both sides to tailor their competing visions for the country.

"My beard was black when the war began, it is snow white now and we are still in war," said Kabul resident Obaidullah (50).

"I don't believe the war will end that soon.

I am sceptical about the talks because both sides want their full agenda and their system enforced," added the retired civil servant.

The talks are being held in a hotel conference room in Doha, where chairs were dotted at socially distanced intervals facing a banner emblazoned with the words 'Afghan Peace Negotiations' in four languages.

Delegates began to arrive from dawn at the luxury venue, which hosted the signing of the US-Taliban deal in February that paved the way for the talks.

The Taliban claimed 'victory' following the deal and see their bargaining position as stronger now than at any time in the last two decades.

AFP

China frees five detained Indians

New Delhi, India - China on Saturday released five Indian nationals it detained in a region bordering Tibet, the Indian Army said, days after the two sides agreed to dial down tensions on their disputed frontier.

The men, who the Indian side said had accidentally strayed into Chinese territory, were escorted back across the high-altitude frontier by the People's Liberation Army (PLA) to the border town of Kibithu.

'After quarantine of 14 days for COVID-19 they will be handed over to family members,' an Indian defence spokesman said on Twitter.

There was no official confirmation of the release from China, but the state-run *Global Times* tabloid claimed the men were 'Indian intelligence staff who had disguised themselves as hunters'.

It reported that the men had trespassed and that Chinese officials had 'detained, warned and educated' them.

India and China, which fought a brief but deadly border war in 1962, have been embroiled in a series of deadly clashes and showdowns on their contested border in recent months.

Both sides have sent tens of thousands of troops to the region since a skirmish in June that saw 20 Indian troops killed, along with a still unknown number of Chinese casualties.

New Delhi responded with an escalating economic embargo that saw a ban on Chinese-made apps and a block on Chinese goods at its ports and customs posts.

Earlier this week the *Global Times* published a strident editorial warning that Indian troops 'will all be annihilated' if Delhi provoked a war.

AFP



A Rohingya migrant being tested for COVID-19 in Lhokseumawe, Indonesia's Aceh province (AFP)

UN adopts COVID-19 response resolution, US, Israel vote against

United Nations - The United States was supported only by Israel on Friday in a vote against a UN resolution for a 'comprehensive and coordinated response' to the COVID-19 pandemic, a text that included recognition of the WHO's leadership role.

The measure, which has been negotiated since May, was adopted by an overwhelming majority of 169 countries out of 193, with Ukraine and Hungary abstaining.

The text, called an omnibus resolution because it covers multiple aspects of the pandemic, 'acknowledges the key leadership role of WHO and the fundamental role of the United Nations system in catalysing and coordinating the comprehensive global

response to the COVID-19 pandemic'.

The United States withdrew from the WHO this spring, accusing the body of mismanaging the coronavirus pandemic and delaying launch of a global alert.

The text 'calls for intensified international cooperation and solidarity to contain, mitigate and overcome the pandemic and its consequences'.

And it supports UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres' call in March for a ceasefire between countries in order to better facilitate the fight against the pandemic - a request that has been little followed.

The text additionally calls for 'the urgent removal of unjustified obstacles', meaning sanctions, in

order to create better access to products used in combatting the virus.

It requests nations to maintain food and agricultural supply chains and encourages synergetic economic recovery strategies to promote sustainable development and combat climate change.

Ahead of the vote, the United States unsuccessfully attempted to remove a paragraph on protecting women in the area of sexual and reproductive health, over objections about abortion.

Libya and Iraq also voted for the paragraph's removal. However more than 120 countries voted to keep it and 25 countries abstained.

AFP

Delhi summons India's Facebook chief

New Delhi, India - Delhi summoned Facebook's India chief on Saturday to answer allegations that the social media giant failed to remove dangerous content in its biggest market globally.

India is the US-based firm and its messaging service WhatsApp's biggest market in terms of users, and the company is under pressure worldwide over the policing of hate speech.

Facebook has been embroiled in a huge row in India after the *Wall Street Journal* (WSJ) reported in August that the site failed to take down anti-Muslim comments by a politician from the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in order to protect its busi-



Facebook India policy head Ankhi Das with Mark Zuckerberg (FB/Ankhi Das)

ness interests.

The Delhi Assembly panel on peace and harmony said on Saturday it would investigate evidence - described by the committee as 'incriminating material on record' - submitted by four prominent journalists and digital rights activists.

The committee has asked Ajit Mohan, the managing director of Facebook India, to appear before it on September 15 to determine the 'veracity of allegations' made by the group.

It follows US civil rights groups claiming last week that the firm had failed to address

hateful content in India and demanded that its India policy chief, Ankhi Das, be removed.

Facebook has denied any political bias but admitted it has to do better to curb hate speech.

The panel - headed by Raghav Chadha, a lawmaker with a party rival to Prime Minister's Narendra Modi's BJP - also said the firm should be probed over its 'alleged role and complicity' in the sectarian Delhi riots in February.

After the furore over the WSJ's August report, Facebook blocked the said BJP lawmaker for his comments on Rohingya refugees from Myanmar.

AFP

Sri Lanka navy plugs fuel leak on damaged cargo ship; tanks intact

Colombo, Sri Lanka - Sri Lankan military divers fixed a fuel leak from the engine of a fire-damaged oil tanker off the island's east coast, the navy said on Saturday, in a salvage operation after the huge week-long blaze.

While the navy says no crude oil has escaped the cargo of the *New Diamond*, leaked diesel fuel had created a two-kilometre-long slick in the Indian Ocean that was visible from the air.

The fuel was seeping into the water through damaged pipes connected to a ballast water intake on the ship's starboard side, according to a navy statement.



This handout photo shows international salvage experts boarding the fire-stricken tanker *New Diamond*, in the Indian Ocean on Thursday (AFP)

That leak was plugged on Friday along with an inlet on the port side of the Panama-registered tanker, it said.

Dutch salvage company SMIT

said its experts had boarded the crippled vessel and found the 270,000-tonne crude oil cargo unaffected by the fire.

'The cargo tanks with the

crude are intact,' the firm told AFP in The Hague on Friday.

'Discussions are ongoing on the destination of the vessel to transfer the crude.'

Sri Lanka's environmental authorities fear a marine disaster if the tanker is allowed to transfer its oil to another ship in the country's waters.

The fire was completely doused on Wednesday, but an unspecified amount of the ship's 1,700 tonnes of fuel leaked when storage tanks ruptured in the blaze that destroyed the engine room and much of the vessel's super-structure.

AFP

TRADITIONAL SIP

Bastah Majan introduces coffee utensils customised by potters of Bahla



Photo by Syed Fasiuddin

Hubert Vaz

Bastah Majan, an indigenous chain of traditional coffee lounges, set up by Fahad al Saqri, a young entrepreneur, has now introduced a set of signature coffee utensils that represent the cultural heritage of Oman.

As one sips coffee at this lounge, prepared in many local flavours, like Salalah Latte, Sahara Latte, etc, one also gets an opportunity to get up, close and personal with the heritage of Oman as the coffee utensils have designs inspired by historic edifices which speak volumes of a bygone era.

Saqri, who set up his first coffee lounge at Azaiba a few years ago, after being inspired by the coffee lounge trend in the West which was akin to Oman’s own tradition wherein people met over coffee to socialise, now has a second outlet at Mabelah, and is all set to open his third outlet in Al Khoudh this week.

“I wanted to do something new as a businessman and faced much discouragement from my friends and acquaintances as well as from my own family when I voiced my idea of an Omani coffee lounge. People said, I had no chance to compete with the popular international coffee chains which have set up base in the sultanate many years ago. However, I persisted in making my dream a reality,” said Saqri, adding



“At Bastah Majan, we are constantly innovating. I don’t want it to be just a coffee lounge but a place where people get acquainted with the culture of Oman and the hospitality of the people

FAHAD AL SAQRI

that much hard work and planning as well as his own resources went into this venture which has now become very popular with Omanis, young and old.

To add a more traditional touch to the ambience within his coffee lounges, which are being used by young students as well as senior professionals for unwinding or having seri-

ous business interactions, Saqri has introduced a set of coffee utensils in two rustic hues, each comprising a coffee cone (dripper), a 750ml capacity serving jug and a tumbler that is smaller than regular coffee mugs. These are being used to serve coffee within the lounge as well as are put on sale for purchase by patrons.

Saqri explained that he has got the coffee utensils custom made by a popular small scale business outlet in Bahla which is known for its traditional pottery. The utensils are made from clay and baked as well as glazed with the signature seal of Bastah Majan on it. While the coffee dripper resembles the traditional incense burner, the design of the mug is inspired by the tower of Nizwa Fort. One set has been created in an earthy hue resembling the beige fort walls while the other set has been made in a greenish hue resembling the greenery of Dhofar and Jebel Akhdar wherein he has family connections.

“At Bastah Majan, we are constantly innovating. I don’t want it to be just a coffee lounge but a place where people get acquainted with the culture of Oman and the hospitality of the people. We also regularly conduct seminars, group discussions, lecture and many other events within the lounge as well as offer the walls for budding artists to showcase their talent,” says Saqri, adding, “expect more surprises in coming days.”

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Photo by Syed Fasiuddin

HOME IS WHERE THE ART IS

Hubert Vaz

When you open the main door to her bungalow in Bousher, art does not hit you in the face, neither is there any indication of it on the exterior. But, as you let your eyes focus on the cool interiors, you slowly wonder whether you've entered an elegant art gallery where every piece has been tastefully curated and placed in a spot where it belongs.

For Tahira al Lawati, popularly known as Tahira Fida, home is where the art is, quite literally. For someone who imbibed lessons in art at a very young age from her mother (who was also an artist), the need to express herself in artistic terms comes quite naturally. Be it choosing her own garments or the interiors in her home, laying the table for a buffet or delivering a lecture to students in college, art invariably finds its way and overpowers everything she does.

"For me, art is life or life is art, you can say it any way. My mother trained me to do intricate things at an

early age, from embroidering cushions to cooking, all aimed at making me a talented wife someday to run my home efficiently. But it was when I joined a GCC competition, wherein a collage of a bird made with bits of egg shells on velvet won me the second prize, I realised that art would someday become a big part of my life," said Tahira, adding that the initial encouragement from her mother set the path before her for a fulfilling career in art.

As she grew up, Tahira not just studied, but also taught art as well as English, in a private school in Oman. In a bid to fulfill her childhood ambition, she later pursued a master's degree in art from the University of Arts in London and came back refined and replenished with renewed vigour to take her career as an artist to greater heights.

After achieving esteemed qualifications in art from London and interacting with artists from all over the world, as well as travelling to different parts of the world to view the work of accomplished artists, Tahira says, "It then felt as if I have begun drowning in art. I was breathing art, I was eating

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TAHIRA AL LAWATI

art, everything I did was overwhelmed with art. Now art has become my life."

Tahira has tastefully decorated her home with her artworks without overdoing it. If you glance around, everything that you see, from the car-

pets to the drapes, from the furniture to crockery, all seem to have a unique elegance which make them appear artistic and apt.

Tahira's family (her husband and two adult sons) have also come to terms with the fact that art is inseparable from her persona and often family conversations revolve around art. Her artistic inputs are often considered paramount in all decisions concerning their lifestyles.

Tahira, who teaches Research Skills at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences, says, when she comes home she likes to have her own breathing space, which she gets only through her art – a solace and succour that lifts her spirit!

Most of her art can be described as mixed media 3D art, though some of it is semi-Islamic art, she said, explaining that you also find letters from the scripts of five languages that she speaks (English, Arabic, Urdu, Persian and Lawati) in her artworks.

For Tahira, art exists not only in her canvasses or creations but in every aspect of her everyday life. And, she often wonders if there is anything else to life, besides art.



Geometric Souls
A semi-sculpture corner-stand, each having its own character and engravings, part of a collection called 'Geometric Souls'



Nizwa Door
Part of a collection - 'Undying Memories' - representing ancient doors and windows in Oman with which Tahira feels a strange connection



Languages from Caves
A circular artwork representing a quaint language inspired by carvings on ancient caves interspersed by golden spheres representing the cosmos



Loving Bouquet
From a collection showcasing the colours of flowers blooming in summer and the silence of the breeze

Living with Art