



MONDAY, 01 MARCH 2021
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AHLI-SIDAB TO MEET BAUSER IN FINAL
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HM receives message from Emir of Kuwait

Muscat - His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq received a written message from Sheikh Nawaf al Ahmed al Jaber al Sabah, Emir of Kuwait, on Sunday. The message is related to bilateral relations and supporting areas of joint cooperation between the two brotherly countries, as well as countries of the region.

The message was received by Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmoud al

Said, Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers, when he received Sheikh Dr Ahmed Nasser al Mohammed al Sabah, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kuwait, who conveyed greetings and best wishes of Sheikh Nawaf to His Majesty the Sultan.

The meeting reviewed the growing relationship between the sultanate and Kuwait, stemming from the strong bonds binding the two brotherly coun-

tries' peoples. The meeting also touched on a range of current issues pertaining to means of supporting the GCC march, in addition to the latest regional and international developments and matters of common concern.

The Kuwaiti Minister of Foreign Affairs underlined the fraternal and historic relationship, as well as the constructive cooperation between the two coun-

tries. He underscored the importance of expanding fields of joint cooperation in different spheres to support the existing ties and enhance the efforts exerted in this regard.

The meeting was attended by Sayyid Badr Hamad al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, and Dr Sulaiman Abdullah al Harbi, Ambassador of Kuwait to the sultanate.

ONA

Oman, Kuwait review bilateral relations



Muscat - H E Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, held a session of consultations on Sunday with Sheikh Dr Ahmed Nasser al Mohammed al Sabah, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kuwait.

The session reviewed the strong fraternal relations binding the two brotherly countries. The two sides stressed their eagerness to boost the constructive cooperation between the two countries to serve joint interest.

Later, H E Sayyid Badr tweeted, "A fruitful and constructive consultative meeting with my brother Sheikh Dr Ahmed al Sabah, during which we affirmed the work towards

A fruitful and constructive consultative meeting with Sheikh Dr Ahmed al Sabah, during which we affirmed the work towards more cooperation between our two countries, and support for our joint Gulf action

H E SAYYID BADR

more cooperation between our two countries, and support for our joint Gulf action."

The two sides reviewed regional and international issues, and exchanged views to enhance the GCC joint action in light of the outcomes of the Alula Summit, which was held in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in January.

The session was attended by a number of officials from both sides, including H E Dr Sulaiman Abdullah al Harbi, Ambassador of Kuwait to Oman.

Sheikh al Sabah and his accompanying delegation had arrived on Saturday night and left on Sunday afternoon.

ONA

NEWS BRIEFS

OMAN REAL ESTATE FUND LISTED ON MSM

Muscat - Oman REIT Fund was listed on Muscat Securities Market (MSM) for parallel market trading on Sunday with a capital of RO65.5mn, divided in 654.8mn units at an issue rate of 102bz (100bz as value of unit and 2bz as issuance fees).

Oman Real Estate Fund consists of 22 investment portfolios and is expected to offer good returns with a targeted annual dividend of 7.5 per cent that would grow to 8.2 per cent over a five-year period. It will boost the real estate sector in the sultanate by providing liquidity and unrolling a variety of sale and purchase instruments.

In January this year, Shumookh Fund Management, the investment manager of the fund, launched the fund and subsequently launched an IPO of RO39.28mn representing 60 per cent of the total fund.



Omani team placed first in Arabia in Google coding contest

Our Correspondent
Muscat

A student team of University of Technology and Applied Sciences - Higher College of Technology - has placed first among Arab countries and 22nd globally in Google's coding competition Hash Code 2021. The team was one among more than 9,000 from around the world.

Called Rakizah, the team comprised four software engineering students of Higher College of Technology, Muscat - Ahmed al Alawi, Ammar al Hudaifi, Khalfan al Busaidi and Luay al Habsi.

Hash Code is aimed at students and professionals from around the world; participants

pick a team and programming language and Google picks an engineering problem for them to solve. The competition measures the ability and potential of participants in applying innovative solutions to complex software problems. Past problems have covered challenges like automating smartphone assembly and designing the layout of a Google data centre.

In a statement, the university said, 'The Rakizah team's participation in the competition was a result of the students' eagerness to acquire skills in the competencies related to the university's specialisations and what the labour market requires, which is consistent with Oman Vision 2040.'

Courts go paperless starting today



Launch of the first phase of the connectivity project between the Council of Administrative Affairs for the Judiciary and the Public Prosecution on Sunday

Our Correspondent
Muscat

In line with Oman Vision 2040, starting today, the sultanate's Public Prosecution will refer cases to courts electronically. The Public Prosecution will launch an electronic link programme with courts to refer cases towards this end.

Hon Judge Sayyid Khalifa bin Said al Busaidi, President of the Supreme Court, Chairman of the Council of Administrative Affairs for the Judiciary and Vice Chairman of the Supreme Judicial Council, launched the first phase

of the connectivity project between the Council of Administrative Affairs for the Judiciary and the Public Prosecution on the latter's premises on Sunday. The launch was carried out in the presence of H E Nasr bin Khamis al Sawai, Attorney General.

'The project is in keeping with Oman Vision 200 and its objectives in the field of institutional digital transformation and in support of the advancement of judicial work,' the Public Prosecution said in a statement.

'The first phase includes paperless referral of cases from the Public Prosecution office to penal

circuits in all courts in the country, starting March 1, 2021, and permanently stopping referring actual case files.'

The statement added that criminal cases will be heard online using computers and tablets in order to achieve quality control and offer accurate judicial processes and statistical readings.

'Specialised committees will work on completing the integration process according to a timeline to allow parties in dispute to use the same technology and have their cases settled,' the Public Prosecution stated.

Mobile courts soon

Meanwhile, the Council of Administrative Affairs for the Judiciary is working on launching mobile courts as part of Oman Vision 2040. "These will enable and assist in resolving and expediting labour cases and disputes, and bring litigation services closer to the industrial cities," said Hon Judge Yousuf bin Hamoud al Flaiti, head of general administration for planning in the Council of Administrative Affairs for the Judiciary and head of implementation programme of Oman Vision 2040 in the council.

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Wadi Kabir fire victims await compensation



Muscat - A week after a fire razed more than 20 old car yards, garages and spare parts shops in Wadi Kabir Industrial Area to the ground, owners are anxiously waiting to hear about compensation from authorities. Having lost their livelihood, some of these business owners and workers claim the way forward is to rebuild what they lost in the fire.

One owner of a used spares business, Jordanian national Mohammed Basheer said, "The authorities asked us and investigated how the fire broke out and the estimated cost of loss. I have

been instructed not to remove, or even touch, the burnt stock in my yard until further notice."

After his only source of livelihood went up in flames, Muneer Hussain - another spare parts yard owner - is left with little patience. "As soon as the authorities allow us, I will sell my burnt stock as scrap and return home to Pakistan. I cannot rebuild this business. I don't have the resources to rebuild the stock I lost in the fire."

Hussain is resigned to his fate and has reposed his trust in the authorities. "Oman and Omani

As soon as the authorities allow us, I will sell my burnt stock as scrap and return home to Pakistan. I cannot rebuild this business. I don't have the resources to rebuild the stock I lost in the fire

MUNEER HUSSAIN

authorities are always caring and supportive. I have full faith in whatever decision they take regarding our losses. I will accept it happily."

Hussain has no place to stay either; his accommodation

above his yard is burnt too. He now relies on friends' generosity for a place to sleep and food too.

"Since my flat too was destroyed in the fire, I have sent my family back home to Pakistan," said Irfan Yaqoob.

Five cars belonging to customers which he was repairing were charred in the fire in his garage. According to Yaqoob, it's about time the authorities introduced an affordable insurance plan, "maybe something similar to third party insurance for cars", to cover the vehicles parked in Wadi Kabir garages for repairs.

"Insurance for garages is too high for small garages like ours. It is impossible for us to pay the premium every year, especially during the ongoing pandemic when our business is already slow and we are struggling to

meet our daily needs."

The five customer vehicles that were parked in Yaqoob's garage for repairs when the fire broke out had third party insurance. The owners expect him to pay for their cars.

"Unless the authorities provide some kind of compensation for our losses, we will not be able to help our customers because we have already lost our livelihood. My survival depends on my community's help."

One of the two-storey buildings, with garages on the ground floor and residential units on the

first, which caught fire on the afternoon of February 18 was owned by Yahya al Rahbi.

"I have 20 buildings in Wadi Kabir and all are insured. The burnt building too was insured. I have opened the insurance claim and am waiting for the insurance company to complete the inspection and claim process," Rahbi said.

He informed that the fire has damaged the building's structure significantly. "I think the municipality will cancel the building and I will need to rebuild it."

Photo and Text by Syed Fasiuddin

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Rights Issue of 300,000,000 Shares, at a price of Baizas 101 per Share

(With a share price of Baizas 100 per share plus issue expenses of Baiza 1 per Share)

Shareholders who wish to exercise their rights should submit their duly completed Applications Forms and payment to the Collecting Bank.

Shareholders who do not wish to exercise their rights, have an option to trade their rights on Muscat Securities Market, through their brokers during market hours up to 9th March 2021.

Investors who wish to purchase rights may do so on Muscat Securities Market through their brokers during market hours up to 9th March 2021. Such investors, based on the rights purchased, should contact the Issue Manager immediately to obtain their application forms for subscription.

RIGHTS TRADING PERIOD	RIGHTS SUBSCRIPTION PERIOD
Opening Date: 25 th February 2021	Opening Date: 1 st March 2021
Closing Date: 9 th March 2021	Closing Date: 15 th March 2021

ISSUE MANAGER



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'Adoption of Lisbon Agreement protects identity of local products'

Muscat - The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) has stated that Oman's joining of the Geneva Act of the Lisbon Agreement on Appellations of Origin and Geographical Indications, which was ratified by Royal Decree No 19/2021 on February 15, 2021, provides legal protection to sultanate's local products which bear geographical indications.

The products which will benefit include the Omani dagger, Omani frankincense, Omani sweets, Omani ships, pomegranates of Jebel Akhdar, Omani Jabalian goats, Southern cows, Omani lemons and Omani thyme, as the said act allows international registration of geographical indications in addition to appellations of origin.

The ministry pointed out that the adoption of the Geneva Act of the Lisbon Agreement will also contribute to provide financial revenues to the sultanate as a result of the member states of the agreement protecting the appellations of origin and their geographical indications.

MoCIIP also called on all competent entities and authorities to carry out the international registration of local products which have geographical indications, in order to ensure their protection against any an external infringement.

Ali bin Hamad al Maamari, director of the Intellectual Property Department at MoCIIP, said, "The Geneva Act of the Lisbon Agreement on Appellations of Origin and Geographical Indications was signed in Geneva on May 20, 2015, while it came into force on February 26, 2020."

He added that the act strengthens the existing international registration system to protect names that identify the geographical origin of products, while the Lisbon Agreement applies to appellations of origin, which are a special type of geographical indications being placed on products that are closely related to their origin.

He pointed out that the act also provides maximum flexibility in implementing the legal protection standard (through a special system of appellations of

origin or geographical indications, or through the trademark system).

He affirmed that the act also allows the accession of some intergovernmental organisations to it in a way that enhances the comprehensive character of the international protection system, while the Lisbon Agreement and the Geneva Act of the Lisbon Agreement together provide effective and more comprehensive international protection for product names whose quality is related to a certain origin.

Maamari explained that the International Bureau of the Act maintains an international registry that records the international registrations that are made under this act or under the Lisbon Agreement and the 1967 Document or both, as well as maintains the data of these international registrations.

He explained that the application for the protection of geographical indications in the sultanate is being filed at the International Bureau of the Act via the Intellectual Property Department at MoCIIP.

Shura urges people to take COVID-19 shots

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Health and Environmental Committee of Majlis A'Shura discussed the increasing number of COVID-19 cases in various governorates and called on those in the target groups to go for vaccination.

The committee also followed

up on the pandemic situation in North Sharqiyah governorate and wanted the concerned authorities to reconsider the decision to continue to close commercial activities in the governorate and discuss its negative effects on the owners of small and medium enterprises.

The committee confirmed that it is following the vaccina-

tion campaign carried out by the Ministry of Health and called on members of the community, especially the groups most vulnerable and those with chronic diseases and the elderly, to get vaccinated which will lead to controlling the spread of the virus.

It urged people not to be led by rumours about vaccines.

Omani cardiothoracic surgeon wins prestigious US fellowship

Our Correspondent
Muscat

A cardiothoracic surgeon from Oman has received the Michael J Davidson Structural Heart Fellowship awarded by the Society of Thoracic Surgeons and the Thoracic Surgery Foundation in the United States.

Dr Qasim bin Saleh al Abri - a cardiothoracic surgeon from Sultan Qaboos University Hospital and a minimally invasive cardiac surgery fellow at Houston Methodist Hospital in the US state of Texas - received the highly prestigious and sought-after fellowship which is awarded to deserving young sur-



Dr Qasim bin Saleh al Abri

geons or trainees committed to the vision of innovative and collaborative cardiovascular care

that Dr Davidson helped pioneer.

Dr Davidson was a compassionate heart surgeon, who was fatally shot by the son of a patient outside an examination room in Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston in January 2015. Davidson died hours later.

The fellowship offers support to cardiothoracic surgeons and trainees who are seeking to enhance their skills in both transcatheter valve techniques and open valve surgery.

It provides the awardees with direct experience utilising novel and less invasive solutions for complex structural heart patients, for a six-month or one-

year period.

Dr Davidson graduated from Yale School of Medicine in 1996 and completed residencies at Duke University Medical Center and the Brigham and Women's Hospital.

Following completion of his cardiac surgery training, he completed an additional year of training divided between the cardiac catheterisation lab and the operating theatre, mastering sophisticated catheter skills and building a bridge to the hybrid future which he envisioned and helped to create.

Dr Abri said the award in memory of the noted heart surgeon is given annually, and doc-

tors are nominated after being recommended by their hospitals to apply and compete for the fellowship.

"All the candidates present a clear plan and visualisation of how they will benefit from the award. A specialised committee hears the plan and decides the winner."

He added that the fellowship will be devoted to scientific research and surgical innovation during his study of minimally invasive cardiac surgery as well as practical practice in the hospital.

He stressed that the fellowship will open new horizons for cardiac surgeons in the sultanate and the quality of their training.



Kerala waives PCR test fees for NRIs

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The southern India state of Kerala has made mandatory RT-PCR tests free for all non-resident Indians arriving from abroad, including those from Oman and other Gulf states.

The government 'will conduct RT-PCR tests free of cost for expatriates returning to Kerala', said state health minister K K Shailaja, adding that the COVID-19 tests for all international passengers have been made mandatory as per the federal government's decision on February 23 for all Indian airports.

The charges for the test differ from airport to airport.

P M Jabir, director of Non-Resident Keralites Affairs Welfare Board said, "The decision to charge for PCR tests has been from the federal government which was met with opposition

from several migrant workers group including us. On our insistence, the Kerala government waived the charges for NRIs. The state government is now bearing the expenditure payable to the federal government."

He added, "There should have been a pan-India protest against such baseless rules which is harassment to the public. I am happy that the Kerala government took a very pro-migrant stand and waived the charges for its people."

The recent rule of a repeat PCR test on arrival in India has added to the stress and burden that the returnees are facing.

Santosh K, an expatriate who wanted to travel to Bengaluru, said, "I had an emergency back home. But owing to all these unnecessary travel hassles, dropped the idea for now. I incurred some loss as my tickets were already booked."

Sidr tree fire put out; EA calls to preserve resources

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Environment Authority (EA) has expressed its gratitude to the Royal Oman Police (ROP) and the Public Authority for Civil Defence and Ambulances (PACDA) for their prompt response and cooperation in dealing with a fire in a sidr tree in Amerat.

"The authority regrets recurrence of such incidents of fire destroying perennial trees, the



latest one being due to the recklessness of a group of tourists who lit a cooking fire near these trees. They did not extinguish the fire when they left the site,' EA said in a statement.

The authority called upon everyone to realise the importance of preserving the natural resources of the sultanate, especially the perennial trees that are difficult to replace. It urged people to report any violation of the Omani environment on its hotline number 80071999.

Fuel to cost more in March

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Fuel in the sultanate will cost more in March, according to fuel distributing companies.

Prices for the month of March was announced on Sunday. M91 will cost 200bz per litre, while M95 will cost 214bz per litre. Diesel will be priced 222bz per litre.



The revised prices will come into effect on March 1. Fuel prices for the month of February were 188bz for M91, 202bz for M95 and 209bz for diesel.

REGIONAL WEATHER		
	Max	Min
Abu Dhabi	28	18
Doha	25	17
Kuwait City	21	13
Manama	23	17
Riyadh	28	12



MUSCAT MUNICIPALITY

Advertisement No.(8 /2021)

Companies specialized in the field and registered with **Tender Board**, may obtain tenders documents for the website through the following link: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>) against non-refundable fees as mentioned below starting from the date of this announcement and until the end of deadline stipulated below.

Tender No.	No E- Tender	Description of Tender	Tender Fee	Last date to collect the tender	Tender return date	Grade
PRE/21/010	2021/HQ-8))	R F P for Annual Maintenance Contract (A M C) of Oracle E- Business H R M S and Financial System (E- Tender)	Rial 25	27/03/2021	08/04/2021	Specialized

Tender Conditions :-

- Bidders shall submit their offers electronically accompanied with an electronic copy of abond issued by any local bank in Oman addressed to Muscat municipality. The bond shall be (1%) of the tender value valid for ninety (90) days starting from the date of bids submission.Any tenders which do not meet the required bond shall not be accepted.
- Original Tender Bond envelope should be sealed with red wax and entitled to His Excellancy/ Head of Intrnal Tender Committee and to be placed in the Tender Box at Muscat Municipality HQ, Third Floor, before 10:00 am as per the date Mentioned in the above table. All envelopes are to be clearly marked with the name of the Tender being presented and no other marks.
- For any inquiries regarding tenders, please visit e-tendering website: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>)
- For technical support of e-tendering system please send an email to (etenderhd@ita.gov.om) or call (+96824166670).

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IMPORTANT NOTICE

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Bank Nizwa would like to advise you that the Central Bank of Oman (CBO) has instructed all banks to process employee-related salary/allowances/bulk payments only using our secure Corporate Internet Banking (CIB).

If your business is registered with Bank Nizwa for Salary/Bulk Payment processing for employees, please note that we will be unable to process the transactions manually.

As always, we are available to support your queries or clarifications for this transition. You can contact the corporate support team or email: bn.wsb-support@banknizwa.om at any time.

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MoE, PDO sign pact to finance blind students' craft showroom

Muscat - The Ministry of Education (MoE) has signed an agreement with Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) to finance the construction of a hall and a showroom for products in the craft-training unit at the

Omar bin Al Khattab Institute for the Blind.

The signing took place at the institute's headquarters in Muscat last week, where H E Dr Abdullah Ambusaidi, Undersecretary for Education in MoE,

signed the agreement with Eng Mohammed al Gharibi, director of Foreign Affairs and Communications at PDO.

The agreement comes within the framework of the fruitful partnership between MoE and

private sector institutions to develop and improve the services provided to children with disabilities. It also comes in translation of Oman Vision 2040 and international agreements ratified by the sultanate under Royal De-

crees to support the rights of children and children with disabilities.

Moreover, it also supports the principle of 'inclusive education and equal opportunities' for persons with disabilities, and to en-

hance efforts aimed at supporting the skills and competencies of students with disabilities and qualifying them for the labour market in consideration to their abilities and capabilities and providing them with opportunities to participate and support their desires for future life.

In 2016, PDO funded a project to establish a pottery-making workshop at the Omar bin Al Khattab Institute for the Blind.

The workshop provided a unique opportunity for blind students to enjoy and learn at the same time.

It also helped students to achieve a new source of income or join the profession of pottery making if they wish to do so in the future.

The new financing agreement aims to expand that previously funded workshop.

In his statement H E Dr Ambusaidi said, "I would like to extend my sincere thanks to the Omar bin Al Khattab Institute for the Blind for the efforts it pro-

vides in order to develop the skills of this group of society which is evident in the creativity of blind students. The support provided by the private sector and the government sector for this category is commendable, and we hope that this support will continue to encourage this group of students, so that they can manage their lives by themselves."

Eng Gharibi said, "This agreement comes within the context of the company's social responsibility and support to this group of society in particular, which undoubtedly has great importance. The company's support to this institute comes for the second time after the pottery-making workshop was established.

"The second stage of the project is to extend this workshop to enable this group to develop their skills and secure a source of income for them, which helps them to financial independence to some extent."

MoH undersecretary visits Musandam



(Supplied photo)

Muscat - H E Dr Fatma bint Mohammed al Ajmi, Undersecretary for Administrative, Financial & Planning Affairs in the Ministry of Health (MoH), visited a number of health institutions in Musandam governorate to follow up on the progress of work in those institutions.

The visit included the under-construction Khasab Hospital, where the undersecretary was briefed on the progress of work and the remaining stages of the project. She also paid visits to the Khasab Referral Hospital, Khasab Health Centre and

Kimzar Health Centre and met the administrators and health workers. She urged them to make every effort to overcome difficulties and facilitate the provision of health services.

H E Dr Fatma visited the Directorate General of Health Services of Musandam governorate (DGHS-Musandam), where she discussed a number of issues related to the health system in the governorate with the director general and senior officials. She was accompanied by Dr Ghanim bin Mohammed al Sadi, DGHS-Musandam director general.

Auction - used office furniture

A company announces its desire to sell used office furniture through auction. Those wishing to buy must place bids in closed envelopes and can contact the Administrative Affairs department at the company's headquarters in Qurum, Sultan Center building for inspection, noting that the last date for receiving purchase bids is **Monday March 15, 2021 at 3pm.**

Terms: The form must be filled out, signed and placed inside a sealed envelope signed by the applicant. The responsibility and costs of dismantling and moving the furniture from the company's site lies with the bidder; and the company does not bear any costs in this regard. The bid will be based on the highest total advance price. Whoever is awarded the bid must dismantle and move the furniture from the company's offices, within a maximum period of 3 working days from the date of notification.

For further inquiries, ontact the incharge directly by phone number: 95218232 or 99344165

 شركة المها لتسويق المنتجات النفطية ش م ع ع Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Co. SAOG P.O.Box: 57 , P.C: 116 , Mina Al Fahal , Sultanate of Oman Tel: 24610200, Fax: 24610201, Website: www.almaha.com.om				
Chairman's Report				
Dear Shareholders, On my behalf and the Company's board of directors, I am pleased to congratulate His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik Al Said on His Majesty's anniversary of assuming leadership of the Sultanate. We are praying to the Almighty Allah to bring back this anniversary many years to come and grant His Majesty good health and happiness all along. Despite all the setbacks and challenges resulted from the global Covid-19 pandemic and the decrease in the international oil prices in 2020, we are proud of the positive results we have achieved during the past year and happy in realizing the principle of responsibility towards the community, the shareholders and the employees for the service and interest of this great country. On behalf of the Board of Directors, I am pleased to present the 17th Annual Report of your Company, together with the Audited Financial Statements for the year ended 31 December 2020.				
FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE (RO'000)				
	2020	2019	Inc /(dec)	Inc/(dec) %
Sales	333,762	465,914	(132,152)	(28%)
Cost of Sales	(313,673)	(438,829)	(125,156)	(29%)
Gross profit	20,089	27,085	(6,996)	(26%)
Other income	4,907	4,305	602	14%
Total expenses	(24,133)	(27,982)	(3,849)	(14%)
Net profit	863	3,408	(2,545)	(75%)
Earnings per share (RO)	0.013	0.049	(0.036)	(73%)
Book value per share (RO)	0.599	0.657	(0.058)	(9%)
Retained earnings(RO'000)	30,032	33,999	(3,967)	(12%)
Total equity (RO'000)	41,336	45,303	(3,967)	(9%)
HIGHLIGHTS				
- Total sales during the year 2020 dropped to RO 333.8 million (2019: RO 465.9 million), a decrease by RO 132.2 million, i.e., by 28%. The decline in sales is mainly attributed to the reduction in economic activities & fall in demand due to the strict measures introduced by the Government to contain the pandemic. - As a result of reduced economic activities, net profit dropped to RO 863 k (2019: 3,408 k), i.e., by about RO 2.5 million (75%) over 2019. - Despite the exceptional circumstances that the Company went through, it made a profit in a challenging environment by following consistent policies that consider market variables. - Through the planned action to achieve our objectives, your Company has increased its investments in marketing and digitizing fields to meet the present & future challenges. Your Company has expanded its stations to 235 stations, including commercial stations operated by the Company. - Also, your Company has continued its strategic growth by investing in a competitive environment while keeping in mind its high economic returns. The Company has signed several commercial contracts spanning 25 to 30 years. - Your Company was able to enter the African market through the lubricants segment. The African market is considered as one of the promising markets.				
MARKETING PERFORMANCE				
Despite all the odds, we remained committed to protecting the interests of our customers, suppliers, and our employees and recorded some positive results on the way. Retail segment: Your Company secured prominent retail sites for new fuel and service centers, initiated new products and services viz., mobile stations. A fuel station automation project has also started. The first phase of the project will be completed in mid-2021. This project will increase the efficiency and effectiveness of our operations and will enhance the performance of the internal control systems. Commercial segment: Due to the decrease in our main commercial customers' consumption, the commercial sector's growth has been affected due to the reasons mentioned earlier and due to the business slowdown. However, your Company won the much-expected strategic long term PDO project reflecting our total commitment to customer satisfaction and the trust we built with PDO over the years. Further, your Company also secured major commercial contracts viz., Musandam Power Company, Salalah Port, and others. Your company aims and strives to improve its performance by focusing on new opportunities. Aviation segment: is the most affected segment due to pandemic as many flights were grounded and restriction on incoming flights with the closure of Muscat International airport, almost throughout the year since the pandemic breakout. Sales growth in this sector is expected to increase with the return of airport traffic, and the increase in passenger numbers. Lubricant segment posted positive growth during the year due to improved marketing of Petronas products & Al Maha brand lubricants, which have gained popularity in the market. NFR (Non-Fuel Retailing) segment has been accorded the highest priority. Redesigning of C Stores, Commercial buildings, and adopting a new business model for NFR business have been evolved to fully capitalize on the growth opportunity it offers to support our retail business.				
DIVIDEND				
Due to the economic challenges surrounding the prevailing Covid-19 situation, the Board of Directors has proposed not to distribute any dividend for the year ended 31 December 2020 (2019: RO 4,830,000, representing 70% of share capital).				
CORPORATE GOVERNANCE				
Our corporate philosophy on Corporate Governance has been to ensure fairness to the Stakeholders through transparency, full disclosures, empowerment of employees and collective decision making. The Corporate Governance Report highlighting these endeavors has been incorporated as a separate section, forming part of the Annual Report.				
SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY				
Contribution towards society and working for the Society's welfare forms part of the core corporate values of your Company. During the past year, the Company launched many programs within the framework of social responsibility; the most prominent being the financial contribution to the Government's efforts to fight the Covid-19 and the support of several charitable institutions.				
HSE				
Health, Safety, Security, and Environment are the indispensable constituents of our activities. Your Company strives to improve personal and process safety by continuous monitoring and effective management. The target is to achieve zero occupational incidents, and the primary focus is laid on the Safety Management System.				
FUTURE OUTLOOK				
Despite the difficult challenges that the Company witnessed during the year 2020, your Company seeks to follow and develop its main strategies to increase the Company's market share by focusing on customers and their needs and remain optimistic about overcoming the consequences of the pandemic in the near future and exploiting available opportunities to expand our customers base. Your Company also continues to focus on expanding the retail network across the Sultanate and on operational excellence to keep pace with the requirements and modern consumer lifestyle.				
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT				
On behalf of the Board of Directors and Executive Management, I take this opportunity to express our most sincere gratitude and loyalty to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and his efforts in continuing the legacy of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos towards a prosperous Oman. We thank the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, Ministry of Energy and Minerals, OQ Refineries, our shareholders, customers, the officials of Capital Market Authority and Muscat Securities Market for their valuable and continued support and co-operation. We also appreciate the dedicated and committed service of our staff members.				
Dr. Juma Ali Al Juma Al-Juma Chairman 22 February 2021				

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AT 31 DECEMBER 2020

	2020 RO'000	2019 RO'000
ASSETS		
Non-current assets		
Property, plant and equipment	30,366	31,079
Investment properties	588	635
Right of use asset	4,072	3,515
Contract assets	3,708	1,026
Deferred tax asset	2,387	2,157
Total non-current assets	41,121	38,412
Current assets		
Inventories	3,383	4,522
Contract assets	1,159	—
Trade and other receivables	42,301	58,925
Short term deposit	10,000	20,000
Bank balances and cash	31,234	28,722
Total current assets	88,077	112,169
Total assets	129,198	150,581

EQUITY AND LIABILITIES		
Equity		
Share capital	6,900	6,900
Legal reserve	2,300	2,300
Retained earnings	30,032	33,999
Special reserve	2,104	2,104
Total equity	41,336	45,303

Liabilities		
Non-current liabilities		
Non-current portion of lease liabilities	2,946	2,631
Non-current portion of other payables	2,222	—
service benefits	211	333
Total non-current liabilities	5,379	2,964

Current liabilities		
Current portion of lease liabilities	1,329	1,025
Trade and other payables	35,780	45,228
Contract liabilities	255	112
Bank borrowings	44,731	55,032
Taxation	388	917
Total current liabilities	82,483	102,314
Total liabilities	87,862	105,278
Total equity and liabilities	129,198	150,581
Net assets per share	0.599	0.657

STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2020

	2020 RO'000	2019 RO'000
INCOME		
Revenue from contracts with customers	333,762	465,914
Cost of sales	(313,673)	(438,829)
Gross profit	20,089	27,085
Other income	4,907	4,305
	24,996	31,390

EXPENSES		
Operating and administration expenses	11,687	15,411
Salaries and other employee related costs	5,406	5,377
Depreciation on property, plant and equipment	3,894	4,408
Depreciation on investment properties	47	47
Depreciation on right of use assets	1,131	1,010
Finance charges	1,810	1,128
	23,975	27,381
Profit for the year before taxation	1,021	4,009
Taxation	(158)	(601)
Net profit and total comprehensive income for the year	863	3,408
Basic earnings per share	0.013	0.049

Note:
The complete report is available in Muscat Securities Market website and in the Company's website.
The complete report will be sent to any shareholder who requests them either in Arabic or English as required within 7 days of receipt of the request. The request should be sent to the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) at the above mentioned address.



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C.R. No.: 1/96545/2

Oman's budget deficit rises 8% in January

Our Correspondent

Muscat

Oman recorded nearly 8 per cent year-on-year increase in the country's budget deficit in January 2021, mainly due to reduced oil production and lower oil prices during the month.

The sultanate's budget deficit widened to RO370.8mn in the first month of this year against RO344.4mn recorded in January 2020, an increase of 7.7 per cent, the Ministry of Finance said on Sunday.

'In January 2021, the state's general budget recorded a de-

cline in public spending and revenue, with an increase in deficit as compared to the same period of 2020,' the Ministry of Finance said in a tweet.

According to the figures released by the ministry, the government's total revenues dropped by more than 33 per cent to RO384.8mn in January this year compared to RO575.3mn recorded in the same month of 2020.

On the other hand, the total expenditure in January 2021 was reduced by 17.8 per cent to RO755.6mn compared with RO919.7mn in the same

month a year ago.

The Ministry of Finance's figures showed that the increase in January's budget shortfall this year was mainly due to the decline in revenues amid lower oil production and lower crude prices compared to the levels recorded in January 2020.

Oman's average daily oil production in January 2021 stood at around 946,000 barrels per day compared to nearly 970,000 barrels per day in the same month a year ago, a decrease of 2.5 per cent. The sultanate sold its crude oil at an average price of US\$41.11 per barrel during



January this year, which is 32 per cent lower compared to the average price of US\$60.26 per barrel recorded in January 2020.

However, oil prices have significantly recovered in February, reaching to their highest level in more than a year. Oman crude contract price on Friday closed above US\$64 per barrel at the Dubai Mercantile Exchange.

In the general budget 2021, Oman has targeted to further reduce spending this year as the sultanate's government seeks to trim its widening budget deficit amid the coronavirus pandemic and lower oil revenues.

The sultanate's 2021 budget estimates a lower deficit of RO2.2bn for the full year, which is equivalent to 8 per cent of the country's GDP. This year's general budget is based on an average oil price assumption of US\$45 per barrel.

As per the Ministry of Finance's budget statement issued earlier in January, the government plans to fund RO1.6bn of the total estimated deficit by local and foreign borrowings, while the remaining deficit (around RO600mn) will be funded through withdrawals from the reserves.

Raysut Cement reports RO14mn loss for 2020



Our Correspondent

Muscat

Raysut Cement Group has reported a net loss of RO14.06mn for the year ended December 31, 2020 against a profit of RO2.26mn recorded in the previous full year.

The group recorded loss for the year mainly due to decline in sales volume in the local market on lack of projects and lower sales realisation per tonne of cement and clinker sold in export markets due to stiff competition from the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Iran, Raysut Cement said in its report submitted to the Muscat Securities Market on Sunday.

During the year 2020, Raysut Cement Group earned total revenues of RO90.38mn against RO84.05mn in the previous year, recording an increase of 7.5 per cent. The increase in group revenue was due to the sales

from newly acquired company
Sohar Cement Factory LLC,
Raysut Cement said.

'The prevailing COVID-19 pandemic has created an unprecedented situation throughout the globe. All mankind, businesses both at domestic and international levels, are passing through a critical phase, our company is no exception to it, hence has suffered significantly. Raysut Cement's revenues were maintained for the year, however profitability took a severe hit,' the company said.

Despite severe price competition from the UAE suppliers and volatility in the export markets, the parent company achieved an overall sales revenue of RO60.78mn in 2020 against RO60.33mn in 2019, an increase by 0.74 per cent. The loss after tax of the parent company stood at RO12.38mn for the full year 2020 against a profit of RO0.18mn in the previous year.

OABC webinar to introduce EXIM Bank

Muscat – In line with its mission to foster the development of trade and commercial activity between Oman and the United States, the Oman American Business Center (OABC) will host an informational webinar on March 3, entitled ‘Introduction to the Export-Import Bank of the United States (EXIM),’ in partnership with the US Embassy in Muscat.

The session will feature opening remarks by H E Asila binti Salim al Samsami, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Investment Promotion, and the US Ambassador to Oman H E Leslie Tsou and a presentation by Rick Angiuoni, business development specialist and regional director of Africa at EXIM.

Angiouni will discuss the International Buyers Program, with loan guarantees and direct loans for international companies, long-term financing of up to 14 years, and details on specific opportunities: For example, EXIM can support up to 85 per cent of the contract amount (depending upon US content) after a cash payment of at least 15 per cent.

As the event is free of charge and open to all individuals and organisations within Oman's public and private sector, the OABC is encouraging those with interest in trade financing or importing US goods and services to please register and attend. The event will be hosted online from 5-6 pm (Oman Time), Wednesday, March 3.

"The OABC is bringing a unique opportunity to Omani companies by introducing them to the US EXIM Bank," said Ali Daud, chairman of the OABC. "As the official affiliate of the US Chamber of Commerce in Oman, OABC's mission is to support the strong commercial relationship between Oman and the US and to regularly highlight the unique ways in which Omani businesses can take advantage of the US-Oman Free Trade Agreement. In addition to importing and exporting products from the US duty-free, Omani companies can access incredible financing opportunities through EXIM, allowing them to grow their businesses and increase their competitiveness in the region."



VISION INSURANCE SAOG

الرؤية للتأمين

P.O BOX 1882, P.C 114, Jibroo, Sultanate of Oman, Tel : +968 24853900, Fax : +968 24853999
E-mail : investorrelations@insurevic.com, URL: www.insurevic.com

Vision Insurance SAOG DIRECTORS' REPORT – 2020

Dear Shareholders:

I warmly welcome you to thirteenth Annual General Meeting of the Shareholders and present to you the 13th Annual Report together with the Audited Financial Statements of Vision Insurance SAOG for the year ended December 31, 2020. Strong growth in non-motor performance and Underwriting profit compensated for subdued underwriting performance in Motor and life and health segment and lower investment income to post overall Profit after tax of RO 1.12 Million against RO 1.22 Million in 2019. Valuation losses in regional equity investments due to the slide in Oman and GCC markets during 2020 driven by lower oil price resulted in lower comprehensive income of RO 972K against RO 1.54 Million in 2019.

MACRO OVERVIEW

Oman Govt has launched 10th Five-year plan 2021-2025 as part of ambitious Oman Vision 2040, which is based on the key objectives of sustainable human resource development, further diversifying Oman economy beyond oil, developing macro-economic environment, achieving balanced development across all Governorates and increasing the average income of citizens. These initiatives are intended to deliver average GDP growth of 3.5% per annum. The plan accords priority for development of sectors such as agriculture and fisheries, mining and mining products, manufacturing industries, Transport, logistics and e-commerce activities, education and tourism.

Financial year 2020 remained a challenging year for the economy as a whole due to economic slow down on account of Covid -19 pandemic. The global pandemic led to significant impact on oil revenue leading to sharp contraction in economic growth. However, relative to some of the frontline sectors such as airlines, hospitality and construction, the insurance sector achieved sustained performance with mixed responses between Motor and Non Motor lines. While the Motor results mirrored the market trend of lower vehicle sales and impact of economic stress, the non Motor lines achieved premium growth due to extreme hardening of reinsurance market conditions.

On the investment front, three out of the six regional bourses except Oman posted positive performance during 2020 with marginal return in the range from 0.10% to 3.85%. Oman posted (8.10%) negative performance during the year.

INSURANCE SECTOR REVIEW

Overall market premium decreased by 4% over 2019, as per statistics published by Capital Market Authority for 2020. Motor premium decreased by 13% and medical premium by 9% mainly due to impact of pandemic. Non Motor lines, in particular, Marine, Property and Casualty reported growth due to hardening of rates in reinsurance markets. Limited organic growth opportunities in Non-Motor segment have prompted companies to continue their focused to Motor business to seek growth leading to further rate softening. The availability of local capacity for Motor business and the general contraction in the Motor business has led to extreme softening of the motor rates. Whilst the pandemic lockdown has contributed towards lower accident numbers, the extreme softening in the rates is of concern.

FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

Main financial highlights based on results reported for 2020 and 2019 are presented below:

- Profit After Tax of RO 1.12 Million, against RO 1.22 Million in 2019.
- Gross Written Premium dropped to RO 22.85 Million, by 11% over RO 25.64 Million in 2019. Whilst strong growth achieved in Non-Motor segment, premiums dropped in Motor and Life & Health segment in tandem with the macro movements.
- Net Earned Premium of RO 6.80 Million, against RO 8.23 Million in 2019 mainly due to drop in motor premium on reduced car sales due to pandemic situation, controlled underwriting in the face of rate of softening and Covid impact on medical and life segment.
- As a CSR initiative, a contribution of RO 75K was made to the Health Endowment Fund set up by the Government of Oman in March 2020 dedicated to the financing of healthcare services in the Sultanate.
- Excluding CSR expenses, General and Administration expenses was controlled at RO 3.42 Million against RO 3.39 Million in 2019.
- Realized Investment Income was RO 744K, lower by 25% over RO 991K in 2019 due to loss on sale of equities in regional equity markets posting negative performance.
- Shareholders' Net worth strengthened to RO 14.92 Million, growth of 1% over RO 14.76 Million at end of 2019.
- Total Comprehensive Income for the year was RO 973 K against RO 1.54 Million in 2019 due to valuation losses of RO 150K against Valuation Gains of RO 317K in 2019. Whilst MSM Index was down by (8.10%) during the period, overall S&P GCC composite index was down by (1.71%).

In summary, despite the macro and sector challenges, your Board is pleased to report that the overall profitable performance has been sustained in 2020.

PROPOSED DIVIDEND

Based on the retained earnings at December 31, 2020, your Board of Directors has proposed Cash Dividend at the rate of 5% of the Paid-Up Share Capital for the year 2020.

Shareholders will receive Cash Dividend of OMR 0.005 Baizas (Five Baizas Only) per Ordinary Share of 100 Baizas each aggregating to OMR 500,000/- (Rials Omani Five Hundred Thousand Only) on the Company's Paid-Up Share Capital of RO 10 Million.

OUTLOOK FOR 2021

Oman's Budget 2021 accords top priority to reducing the budget deficit by 4.7% from projected deficit of 2020 of RO 4.5 Billion. Revenue is expected to increase by 2% boosted by four-fold increase in contributions from indirect taxes to estimated RO 400 Million from budget of RO 100 Million by Implementation of VAT from April 2021. Expected Growth in GDP and increase in consumer demand from increase in employment numbers of Omani nationals will support sustenance of overall business environment in the medium term.

The invention and approval of Covid -19 Vaccines has brought back positive sentiments across the world on economic recovery and revival of equity market in the last quarter of 2020. It is hoped that the threat posed by the new variant to the virus will be overcome with minimal impact to the economy thanks to the proactive measures taken by the Government. The revival of the oil price, increase in non-oil revenue and controlled spending should lead to an improvement in the overall health of the economy.

Your Company continues to focus on enhancing technology capabilities and operational efficiency to continue to sustain the profitable underwriting performance achieved consistently over the years. Investment income is expected to improve over 2020 with improved valuations in regional equities. Management team has been further consolidated with qualified senior Omani professionals inducted to consolidate the executive management team. Your Board looks forward to sustaining the over profitable performance in 2021.

CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

The Board is committed to complying with the requirements of Code of Corporate Governance for Public Listed Companies formulated by Capital Market Authority in December 2015. A separate report on the status of implementation of various requirements under The Code is enclosed together with the related report of the External Auditors.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

On behalf of all Board Members, the Management and employees of the Company, I express our profound sense of respect, admiration and gratitude to His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik Al Said for his visionary leadership for continued stability, growth and prosperity for Oman and the people of Oman. We remain thankful to Capital Market Authority and other regulatory authorities for their support. We greatly value the confidence and support extended to the Company by all our clients and business partners that has been critical to our profitable results in 2020 and we sincerely thank them all. All the Members of the Board of Directors join me in conveying our appreciation to the Management and staff of the Company for their dedication and commitment that has ensured the continued profitable performance of the Company.

We take this opportunity to thank and reaffirm our commitment to our Shareholders. We look ahead with a great sense of pride and self-esteem and reaffirm our commitment to His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik Al Said to work with dedication for the growth and prosperity of our beloved Oman.

Above all, we wish everyone to stay safe and healthy.

Ahmed Said Mohammed Al Mahrizi
Chairman
February 22, 2021

Statement of financial position as at 31 December

	2020 RO	2019 RO
ASSETS		
Cash and bank balances	2,555,847	2,453,638
Deposits	15,104,872	14,248,642
Insurance and other receivables	7,848,449	6,822,621
Reinsurance assets	29,088,095	32,186,830
Available-for-sale investments	6,058,055	6,885,004
Property, furniture and equipment	343,947	490,395
TOTAL ASSETS	60,999,265	63,087,130
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES		
Equity		
Share capital	10,000,000	10,000,000
Capital reserve	87,182	87,182
Fair value reserve	57,745	208,071
Legal reserve	1,185,149	1,072,832
Contingency reserve	2,916,686	2,550,258
Retained earnings	695,563	851,134
TOTAL EQUITY	14,942,325	14,769,477
Liabilities		
Insurance contract liabilities	34,811,741	38,714,724
Employees' end-of-service benefits	342,524	305,929
Trade and other liabilities	10,902,675	9,297,000
TOTAL LIABILITIES	46,056,940	

MSM rises 0.29%; volumes down

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The benchmark index of the Muscat Securities Market (MSM) rose 0.29 per cent to close at 3,612.38 points on Sunday.

Trading activity deteriorated from the previous session as turnover declined 81.74 per cent to RO730,421 and volumes fell 79.55 per cent to 6.13mn shares.

While Services index fell 0.03 per cent, Financial and Industrial indices rose 0.37 per cent and 0.17 per cent, respectively. The MSM Shariah index closed down by 0.06 per cent at 540.55 points.

Market breadth remained positive as 11 companies closed up, while 10 companies closed down. The rest 19 traded

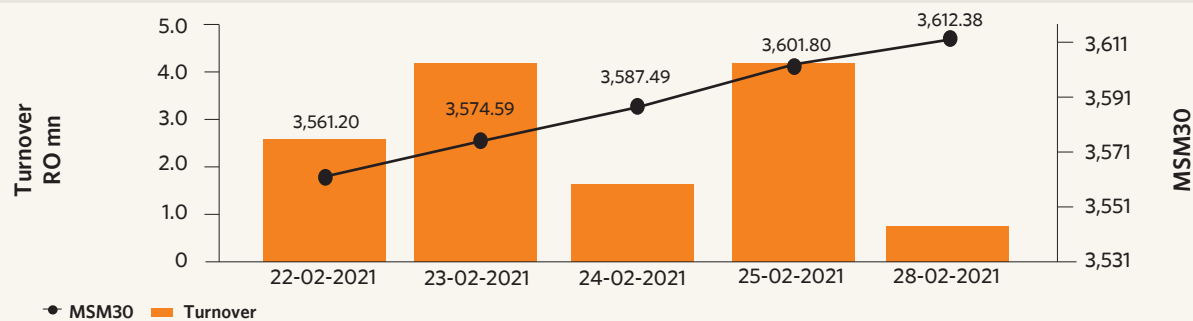


stocks closed flat for the day.

Top gainers were Arabia Falcon Insurance (10 per cent), United Finance (5.13 per cent), Ominvest (3.07 per cent) and Oman Cables Industry (2.38 per cent).

Top losers were Al Madina Investment (-4.0 per cent), Oman REIT Fund (-3.0 per cent), Phoenix Power (-2.13 per cent) and Galfar Engineering & Contracting (-2.08 per cent).

MSM INDEX AND TURNOVER OF FIVE TRADING DAYS



COVID variants to slow air traffic recovery

Paris, France - Global air passenger traffic will recover more slowly than expected this year because coronavirus variants have created strong headwinds, an industry group warned.

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) now estimates that traffic will reach between 33 per cent and 38 per cent of the levels recorded in 2019, an IATA statement said.

The previous 2021 forecast was for traffic to reach 51 per cent of the levels seen before the coronavirus pandemic struck.

Based on actual traffic in January and bookings for February and March, 'we know that the first half of the year is going to be weaker than we had expected in December', IATA's chief economist Brian Pearce said.

'This is because governments have tightened travel restrictions in response to new COVID-19 variants,' a separate IATA statement explained.

'We expect a steep recovery in the second half of the year' however as more people are vac-



Passengers walk through the arrivals hall of London Heathrow Airport in west London, UK (AFP)

inated and governments ease travel restrictions, Pearce added.

Meanwhile, airlines will continue to deplete reserves and 'remain cash negative throughout 2021', or spend more than they take in, the statement said.

'Estimates for cash burn in 2021 have ballooned to the US\$75bn to US\$95bn range from a previously anticipated US\$48bn,' it added.

Even though carriers have cut costs and some have benefited from a pickup on domestic

routes, the sector is unlikely to generate cash and profits before 2022, Pearce said.

IATA director general Alexandre de Juniac added that burning through tens of millions of additional dollars 'is not something that the industry will be able to withstand without additional relief from governments'.

Globally, airlines lost an estimated US\$510bn in sales last year, while receiving US\$160bn in aid. AFP

'Never bet against America,' Buffett advises investors

Washington, US - Ninety year old billionaire Warren Buffett reaffirmed his fervent belief in the American Dream in a letter to investors published on Saturday - advising them never to bet against the country despite its many problems.

"In its brief 232 years of existence, there has been no incubator for unleashing human potential like America," he said in the message to investors in his Berkshire Hathaway conglomerate.

Even after a particularly difficult 2020 - when the COVID-19 pandemic plunged the world's largest economy into recession and pushed millions into poverty - 'our country's economic progress has been breathtaking', he said.

The man known as the Oracle of Omaha added, "Our unwavering conclusion: Never bet against America."

Buffett's annual letter is always highly anticipated by the business world because of his reputation as a prudent investor with a canny view to long-term trends.

But in his latest letter, Buffett did acknowledge a mistake made in 2016 that became evident last year: Berkshire's purchase of



Warren Buffett

Precision Castparts (PCC), which led to an 'ugly US\$11bn write-down'.

"I paid too much for the company," Buffett wrote. "No one misled me in any way - I was simply too optimistic about PCC's normalised profit potential," an error laid bare when the company's aerospace customers fell on hard times last year.

Buffett also announced that Berkshire's annual meeting, which in normal years draws thousands of shareholders to Omaha, will take place virtually on May 1, as it was last year because of the pandemic.

He said he and partner Charlie

Munger would answer shareholders' questions.

Last year, Buffett wrote, the conglomerate they led met neither of two goals, "Berkshire made no sizable acquisitions and operating earnings fell 9 per cent."

"We did, though, increase Berkshire's per-share intrinsic value by both retaining earnings and repurchasing about 5 per cent of our shares."

He voiced confidence that Berkshire's capital gains from its investment holdings would be 'substantial' over time.

Looking ahead, Buffett said Berkshire would remain 'a collection of controlled and non-controlled businesses'.

He said shareholders' capital would be invested in 'whatever we believe makes the most sense, based on a company's durable competitive strengths, the capabilities and character of its management, and price'.

Berkshire had net earnings in 2020 of US\$42.5bn, helped by its insurance business, but the overall figure was down 48 per cent from 2019.

Berkshire last year sold its airline stocks because of the pandemic and invested more heavily in pharmaceutical products.

AFP

President Biden urges quick Senate action on huge stimulus package

Washington, US - US President Joe Biden on Saturday welcomed the overnight passage by the US House of Representatives of an enormous, US\$1.9tn coronavirus relief package, saying it moves the country closer to full COVID-19 vaccination and economic recovery.

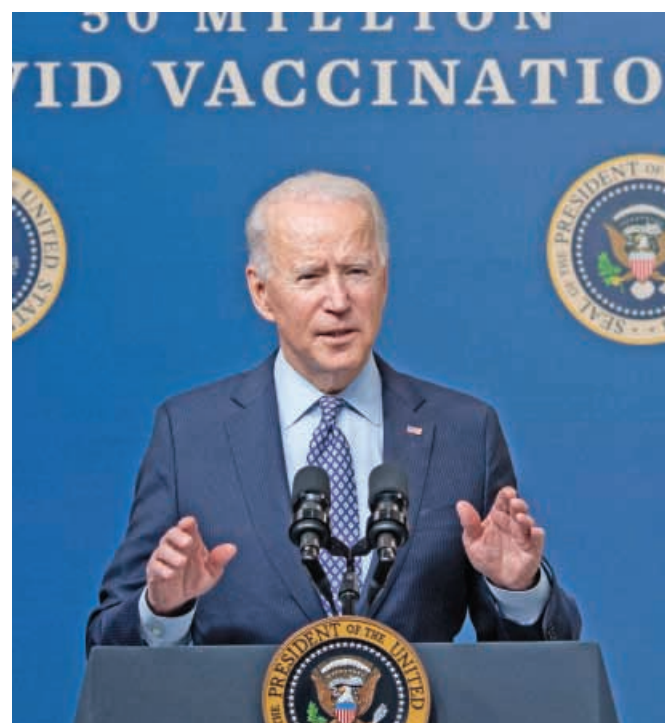
The package passed the House just after 2:00am (0700 GMT) on Saturday, in a 219 to 212 vote, with not one Republican vote, and moves next week to the Senate.

"I hope it will receive quick action," Biden said in a brief address from the White House.

"We have no time to waste. If we act now, decisively, quickly and boldly, we can finally get ahead of this virus."

The vote in the House meant that 'we're one step closer to vaccinating the nation, we are one step closer to putting US\$1,400 in the pockets of Americans, we're one step closer to extending unemployment benefits for millions of Americans who are shortly going to lose them'.

He said the bill - which would be the second-largest US stimulus ever, after a US\$2tn package approved in March - would also help schools reopen safely and allow local and state govern-



US President Joe Biden (AFP)

We're one step closer to vaccinating the nation, we are one step closer to putting US\$1,400 in the pockets of Americans

JOE BIDEN

ments to avoid 'massive layoffs for essential workers'.

The House vote came just days after the COVID-19 death toll surpassed 500,000 in the United States, the world's

worst total.

Democrats have called the aid package a critical step in supporting millions of families and businesses devastated by the pandemic. It extends unemploy-

ment benefits, set to expire mid-March, by about six months.

But Republicans say it is too expensive, fails to target aid payments to those most in need, and could spur damaging inflation.

The administration appears poised to use a special approach requiring only 51 votes in the 100-seat Senate - meaning the vote of every Democrat, plus a tie-breaking vote by Vice President Kamala Harris, would be required.

But progressives suffered a major setback when a key Senate official ruled on Thursday that the final version of the bill in that chamber could not include a minimum wage hike.

Biden campaigned extensively on raising the federal minimum wage to US\$15 an hour, from the US\$7.25 rate that has stood since 2009. Progressives have been pushing the raise as a Democratic priority.

In his remarks Saturday, the President made no mention of the issue, a source of discord within the party.

Most Republicans, and a few Democrats, opposed the higher wage, so having it stripped from the Senate version of the legislation could actually ease its passage.

AFP

COMMENTARY

COVID-19 crisis: Mobility across GCC countries

In September, Saudi Arabia announced a lift in travel restrictions enforced earlier last year due to COVID-19. The long-awaited reopening of the kingdom promoted a sense of relief across many GCC-centered corporations that desperately anticipated the end of lock-down while attempting to mitigate financial damages.

Thousands of jobs were lost, and the unemployment rate among Saudi nationals jumped to 15.4 per cent from 11.8 per cent between the first and second quarters of 2020. This was expected, but dreaded.

The kingdom's Vision 2030 has put a lot of emphasis on eradicating unemployment among Saudis.

Lock-down has derailed much of the Vision's ambitious plans, but it is now coming to an end. With promising talks of vaccines and resuming of travel ac-

tivity, business, not only in the kingdom, but globally also is on the pick-up.

For some sectors, the impact was too grave to recover from. The travel sector may never recover; in April, passenger numbers dropped 94 per cent compared to the year before. Thirty million passengers travelled worldwide that month, a number last seen in the 1970s. Alongside these devastating numbers, tourism crumbled, crashing entire economies.

Much of travel now looks like the old times; border restrictions, paperwork and high expenses.

However, in the UAE and Saudi Arabia, business travel resumed very shortly post-lockdown. The UAE even allowed tourists to enter in July. The kingdom is now issuing business visas, and prioritising business-related travel activity. Many Saudi consulates are issuing business visas now, some in fact

are crowded. The United Arab Emirates has launched a new remote work visa, allowing people from all around the world to live in the UAE while working



ANITA CHALKE

The writer is the regional operations manager, Middle East at Proven

remotely. This is further emphasis that mobility is essential for business, the GCC being a global hub for business practices.

It is noticeable, though, that many of the tech giants are going for a virtual office setup. In a way, our culture of business is now more aware of the potential remote work truly has; any-

one, from anywhere can do almost anything. Microsoft, LinkedIn and IBM are still working from home, almost competitively, in an attempt to prove

that technology is the future of business. The GCC states are a bit more reliant on mobility; tourism and business are crucial to the nutrition of their economies. Most of the UAE's residents are expats; they come from all over the world, and contribute to the economy by living and working in cities like Dubai and Abu Dhabi.

Tourism is another vertical to the Emirati economy. In 2019, MasterCard's Global City Index revealed that Dubai alone welcomed over 16mn tourists from 233 countries. Without these numbers - without growing them, Dubai might struggle.

For Saudi Arabia, it is a lot deeper than just an economic crisis. Hajj and Umrah practices are limited to a great extent without flexible travel activity.

In 2020, Hajj ceremonies were conducted by a socially-distanced crowd. The potentially permanent change travel and mobility are undergoing might permanently change how religious pilgrimage to the kingdom is organised, affecting the lives of the 2mn, or more, annual pilgrims.

The same formula applies to other GCC states, most of which are putting in great efforts to emancipate their economies from natural resources

like oil and gas.

Since July, governments across the region resumed business visa issuance, indicating that the only change occurring is that upon visiting the kingdom or the Emirates, you will see a lot more empty seats to keep passengers socially-distant.

'Barely anything has changed in terms of how the business visa is issued. It varies depending on which consulate one is applying from, but the major changes are exclusive to the act of travel itself,' according to the Proven immigration team.

As for openness, the Gulf region has no plans to shut down.

The views and opinions expressed in this column are solely those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of Muscat Daily or Apex Media Publication

Sohar International's Viewpoints on March 9

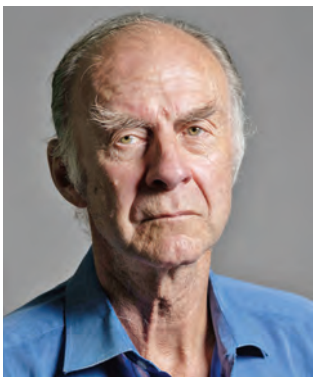
Continuing to bring global experiences to the local market, the latest virtual edition of Viewpoints – Sohar International Chairman's forum, is back with yet another compelling session on Tuesday, March 9 starting at 7pm on Zoom platform.

Chaired by Mohammed Mahfoudh al Ardhi, chairman of the Board of Directors at Sohar International, the 11th edition of Viewpoints will host Sir Ranulph Fiennes and delve into an interesting and currently relevant subject of 'Conquering Human Limitations', explaining the human capabilities and boundaries, offering new dimensions to the subject.

Delving into the choice of this topic, Ardhi said, "Our world today has changed significantly. Everywhere, individuals and businesses have adapted to the new normal continuing to carry forward daily life, demonstrating utmost agility and resilience.



The forthcoming forum will be an ideal session highlighting the many limitations posed by this ever-changing social and economic environment and mankind's resolve in coping with difficulties that the current crisis has placed on all. The session aims to shed light on some thoughts on how the human race can, and has been able to conquer and overcome limits and boundaries for many years." Anyone interested can register for this virtual session free of



cost simply by visiting Sohar International's website (www.soharinternational.com) and following the registration links. The session will provide opportunity for participants to engage with the guest speaker with their valuable inputs and questions. "After witnessing the success of the previous editions of Viewpoints, we are delighted to host Sir Ranulph Fiennes, as a guest speaker, who brings with him experiences and adventures of a lifetime, that have tested the agility and resilience of the human race. His many endeavours have pushed his courage to the very limits and his pioneering spirit will surely strengthen and encourage everyone. Sir Ranulph has truly tested the limits of human endurance, particularly in unusually difficult situations. Throughout these engaging sessions, we hope to bring the best global learnings to the local population of Oman, who can adapt these insightful thoughts to pave the way for a better future of this country," he added. In last few years, Viewpoints – Sohar International Chairman's forum, has witnessed a great turnout of audience, for hosting the best of international experts as speakers. The intriguing conversations has put Viewpoints as a benchmark in events focused at building leadership equity.

Bank Muscat continues Al Mazyona prize draws

In line with its vision 'To serve you better, everyday' and commitment to partnership in promoting a strong savings culture in Oman, Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the sultanate, conducted a number of draws recently at its head office at Airport Heights in Muscat. The scheme is contributing majorly to the development of Oman and encouraging financial prudence amongst the general public. The draws were promoted on the bank's social media channels to raise further awareness about the importance of savings amongst the general public.

The monthly draw for different governorates for January 2021 saw 420 winners win RO500 each. All customers maintaining a minimum balance of RO100 were entered into the monthly draws for different governorates. The draws also saw 10 lucky women customers win RO1,000 each in the Zeinah monthly draw while 100 youths won RO100 each in the Shababi monthly



draw. All Zeinah customers who maintained a minimum balance of RO100 and Shababi customers with a minimum balance of RO10 were entered into the monthly draws for their respective categories. Prize draws were also held for Children's account holders having a minimum balance of RO50, and 100 lucky winners won RO100 each. Abdullah Tamman al Mashani, DGM – Institutional Sales and Product Development, Bank Muscat, said, "Bank Muscat is very happy to share joy and happiness amongst its customers

with its first set of prize draws for the year. As a result of continuous innovation every year, the Al Mazyona savings scheme has witnessed massive growth and is the largest prize draw scheme in Oman. Its innovative customer segmentation based on geographic, lifestyle and demographic segmentation ensures that Bank Muscat customers from across the sultanate has more chances than ever of winning attractive prizes by simply saving more in their accounts."

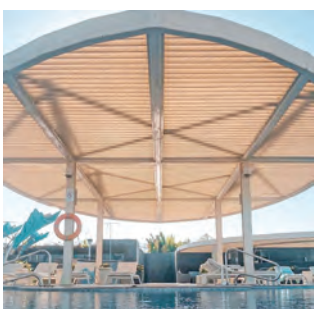
Al Mazyona is the longest-running savings scheme, offering the largest total prize money in the country. The scheme will offer RO11mn to 7,470 winners throughout 2021, with the number of winners up by 12 per cent compared to last year. It will feature several special draws including an Eid al Fitr draw, a National Day draw, Mid-year draw and an End of Year draw. Special prizes have been reserved for high savings customers as well as for women, youth and children.

Grand Millennium Muscat offers 'More with Millennium'

Grand Millennium Muscat, a luxury five-star hotel located in the heart of Muscat, has recently introduced 'More with Millennium' that offers a discount of up to 20 per cent on Flexible (available) Room Rate.

Guests can also have an additional 10 per cent discount if registered as their 'My Millennium' member and earn 2,000 bonus points when booking for a minimum for two nights. This offer includes a set of comprehensive measures to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all guests while staying at the hotel.

Guests can book directly until December 31 and can register as a My Millennium member at Grand Millennium Muscat's official online portal to enjoy more savings and also to take advantage of a wide range of exciting complimentary benefits such as a free upgrade by a minimum of one category (subject to availability), full 24-hour stay benefit with check-in at any time and kids up to 2 years old stay free on existing bedding as well as delectable dining discounts up to 25 per cent to create new unforgettable memories with your loved ones when you stay with us.



Luca Medda, cluster general manager at Grand Millennium Muscat, stated, "We aim to deliver an exceptional guest experience while maintaining a safe and healthy environment. Grand Millennium Muscat's focus is providing an excellent guest experience and ensuring our guests are well looked after; and as such, spontaneous giveaways allow us to keep bringing special moments to our guests at Millennium."

For reservations please call +968 2230 2330 or email Reservations.Gmm@millenniumhotels.com

Ahli Islamic announces tie-up with Al Madina Insurance Company

Ahli Islamic has signed a strategic agreement with Al Madina Takaful to offer a range of Takaful insurance products—travel, home, motor and domestic helper—that will ensure protection and cover for customers under the bank's portfolio.

Yousuf al Rawahi, deputy general manager and head of Ahli Islamic says, "Ahli Islamic is delighted to partner with Al Madina Takaful to offer innovative Takaful solutions to its customers across Oman. We are committed to provide the most beneficial proposition for our customers based on their diverse requirements and it is with these customised plans that we are ensuring that their needs and expectations are met and fulfilled."

The partnership with Al Madina Takaful is expected to widen the bank's portfolio of products, thereby addressing the full range of its customers' safety and welfare needs. ahli islamic's insurance portfolio provides a variety of Takaful insurance products that can be tailored to safeguard policyholder's assets and property from financial risks.

"Ahli Islamic will continue to explore new ways to bring a range of products and services and enhance our customer offerings," Rawahi adds.

The Home Takaful coverage includes protection against natural calamities and offers optional building insurance cover.

Travel Takaful ensures that family vacations or business trips are completely secured with 24/7 worldwide protection. There are several plans, and the customers has a choice based on the needs such as geographical areas, emergency medical assistance and expenses.

A comprehensive Motor Takaful covers the loss or damage of an insured vehicle. It also offers compensation for third-party damages, such as a driver's legal liability arising from the use of the insured vehicle, and UAE extensions and emergency roadside assistance.

The Domestic Helper Takaful provides life and medical cover for domestic helpers and ensures

financial assistance to the insured member or his/her family in case of any eventuality.

Usama al Barwani, chief executive officer of Al Madina Takaful, said, "We are grateful towards the Ahli Islamic team for this strategic association. We are confident that it will enable a better quality and secure life for the people of Oman. With Ahli Islamic's extensive network and customer base, we strive to reach out and serve a wider audience segment."

Ahli Islamic abides by the ethics and values of Islamic finance, helping customers and communities to prosper and grow. It continuously focuses on innovative products and services.

TENDERS ADVERTISEMENT

Oman Electricity Transmission Company (OETC) Announce the following Tenders:

Sr.No	Tender No.	Tender Name	Last Date for Obtaining Tender Documents	Closing Date	Grade	Tender Document's Fees (RO)
1	13/2021 (Extended)	Corporate Agreement for Supply Vehicles Tires for Five Years	11/03/2021	30/03/2021	Local companies with experience in same field, Have a valid tender board registration certificate.	150/=

Participation:	Interested Companies may obtain Tender Document with the necessity of sending a valid Tender Board certificate in the same required field.
Buying the Tender:	The documents required for the purchase of the tender are sent by e-mail to the Tenders, Procurement and Contracts Department, to ensure the authenticity of the documents before purchasing the tender through the official working days of the hour from 8.00 am - 01.00 pm .
Fees:	Against non-refundable payment as mentioned above against each set of document.(Payment Through Bank Transfer)
The deadline for clarification:	Before (21) Days from closing date.
Submission:	Each bid should be submitted in a separate sealed envelope addressed to The Chairman of tender committee mentioning Tender Number and Name on the top of the envelope.
Terms and conditions:	- No other writing or any reference thereto should be mentioned on the envelope. - The bid should be valid for not less than (90) days from closing date. - The Tenderer should enclose a bank guarantee issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman for the value of 1% of the bid value and should be valid for (90) days from closing date, addressed to Oman Electricity Transmission Company (SAOC). - Any bid not comply with the required guarantee, will not be accepted. - OETC is not bound to accept the lowest or any other offers.
Offer:	The complete bid documents should be deposited in Tender Box No. (1) at the company's building before 11:00 am on the assigned date for submission of the Tenders.
Company Address:	Muscat - Al Mawaleh Road No: 2153 - Building No. 4230 Block No: 321 - GSM: 92217856
Email Website:	tenders@omangrid.com www.omangrid.com

إعلان طرح مناقصات

تعلن الشركة العُمانية لنقل الكهرباء عن طرح المناقصات التالية :

م	رقم المناقصة	عنوان المناقصة	آخر موعد للحصول على مستندات المناقصة	آخر موعد لتقديم العطاءات	الدرجة	ثمن الوثيقة (ر.)
١	٢٠٢١/١٣ (تجديد)	توريد وتركيب إطارات جديدة لمركبات الشركة العمانية لنقل الكهرباء لمدة خمس السنوات	٢٠٢١/٠٣/١١	٢٠٢١/٠٣/٣٠	الشركات المحلية العاملة في هذا المجال المسجلة لدى مجلس المناقصات وتسجيلها ساري المفعول.	١٥٠/=

الاشتراك	يمكن للشركات والمؤسسات المتخصصة الحصول على مستندات المناقصة مع ضرورة ارسال شهادة مجلس المناقصات سارية المفعول وفي نفس المجال المطلوب.
طريقة الشراء	يتم إرسال المستندات المطلوبة لشراء المناقصة عن طريق البريد الإلكتروني إلى دائرة المناقصات والمشتريات والعقود . وذلك لتأكد من صحة المستندات قبل شراء المناقصة وذلك من خلال أيام العمل الرسمية من الساعة ٨:٠٠ ص - ١:٠٠ م .
الرسم	مقابل دفع المبلغ المحدد أعلاه للنسخة الواحدة - لا ترد . (الدفع عن طريق التحويل البنكي)
آخر موعد للإستفسارات	قبل (٢١) يوم من تاريخ آخر موعد لتقديم العطاءات
تقديم العروض	تقدم العروض في مغاريف مغلقة ومعنونة بإسم رئيس لجنة المناقصات مع تحديد رقم وعنوان المناقصة فقط
الشروط و الضمانات	- عدم تحديد اسم صاحب العطاء أو ما يشير إليه على المظروف. - أن تكون العروض سارية المفعول لمدة لا تقل عن (٩٠) يوما من تاريخ تقديم العطاء . - إرفاق تأميناً في صورة ضمان مصرفي من أحد البنوك العاملة في البلاد قدره (٢١) من قيمة العطاء ساري لمدة (٩٠) يوما من تاريخ تقديم العطاء . ومعنونا بإسم الشركة العمانية لنقل الكهرباء . - كل عطاء لا يستوفي التأمين المطلوب لن ينظر فيه . - الشركة العمانية لنقل الكهرباء غير مقيدة بقبول أقل العروض أو أي عطاء آخر
العرض المقدم	يجب وضع العروض في صندوق المناقصات رقم (١) بجنى الشركة قبل الساعة ١١ صباحاً من التاريخ المحدد لتقديم العطاءات .
عنوان الشركة	عنوان الشركة: محافظة مسقط - الموالج رقم السكة ٢١٥٣ - مبنى رقم ٤٢٣ - هاتف - ٩٢٢١٧٨٥٦
البريد الإلكتروني	tenders@omangrid.com
الموقع الإلكتروني	www.omangrid.com

All-new Jeep Wrangler now available at Dhofar Automotive



Dhofar Automotive, the official distributor of Chrysler, Dodge, Jeep, RAM, Fiat and Romeo vehicles in the sultanate, announced the arrival of the all-new Jeep Wrangler 2021, the unique vehicle for everyday urban adventures. It offers excellent levels of comfort and superior driving dynamics while remaining true to its legendary off-road capabilities, authentic Jeep styling and advanced technology features.

Commenting on the arrival of the Jeep Wrangler 2021, Hatem el Naggar, general manager at Dhofar Automotive, said, “The Jeep Wrangler has earned the trust of off-road enthusiasts around the globe due to its leg-

endary capabilities. The same holds true here in the sultanate, where even today, the brand has a very strong fan following. With the arrival of the all-new 2021 Jeep Wrangler, we are confident that it will be a valuable addition to the Jeep model line-up in Oman.

“From even the simplest of glances, whether it is the interior or exterior, it is clear that this is an all-new Wrangler. It offers an extremely attractive design that is thoroughly modern, yet stays true to its heritage, further reinforcing its reputation of class-leading capability and performance. In fact, the new Wrangler not only meets but also far exceeded even our own expecta-

tions and is a vehicle perfectly suited for both the most extreme of off-road adventures as well as for everyday urban cruising.”

From the roughest terrain to city streets, the all-new Jeep Wrangler is perfectly at ease and delivers a more modern design, that stays true to the original, combined with more open-air freedom and advanced technology features in terms of safety and connectivity. It is offered in three different trim levels: Sport, Sahara and Rubicon - all available in two- or four-door configuration.

The all-new Jeep Wrangler builds on a sculptural design aesthetic that is immediately recognisable with its traditional Jeep

design cues, from the round headlights to the seven-slot grille; from the trapezoidal wheel arches to the visible hinges; from the folding windshield to the sport bar; from the removable doors to the open-air configurations with a hard top or soft top.

The interior of the new Jeep Wrangler combines authentic styling, versatility, functionality and intuitive feature use, in addition to a more stylish and comfortable cabin, thanks to the use of high-quality materials and finishes.

Jeep functionality and versatility are celebrated in the completely restyled centre console which houses the gear shift selection, transfer case and parking

brake. Real bolts are featured on the shifter and grab handles and frame the infotainment screen, highlighting genuine construction methods.

The instrument cluster features a 7-inch / 177.8mm thin-film transistor (TFT) information LED display. Offered as standard on the Sahara and Rubicon versions, the display is full-colour and allows the driver to configure information in more than 100 ways. Integrated buttons on the steering wheel control audio, voice, and speed functions and allow the driver to keep their hands on the wheel at all times.

The centre console features a standard 7-inch/177.8mm touchscreen for the Sport, Sahara and Rubicon. Also available for the Sahara and Rubicon is an 8.4-inch/213.36mm touchscreen, with the latter being the largest and most advanced Uconnect display ever offered on a Wrangler. The fourth-generation Uconnect system enhances the user interface and system performance with quicker start-up times and improved screen resolution. Directly below the touchscreen are functional features such as climate and volume control knobs and media connectivity ports.

Jeep Wrangler has always stood out for its functionality and the ability to give drivers the possibility to enjoy any adventure with the utmost ease.

For more information on Dhofar Automotive visit www.dhofar-automotive.com or call +968 2458 4530.



Anantara Jabal Akhdar Resort celebrates women

To celebrate women, Anantara al Jabal al Akhdar Resort is offering special spa packages for International Women's Day and Mother's Day.

With both key days taking place in March, it is the perfect time to celebrate being a woman and honour the spectacular women in your life. From the nurturing mother to the loyal best friend and supportive spouse, give the lovely ladies in your life an extra special and relaxing treat. On International Women's Day, women can enjoy an amazing 'Spa Getaway Package' and on Mother's Day, 'A Peaceful Escape for Moms' both available at the awards winning Anantara Spa at Anantara al Jabal al Akhdar.

Women's Day

Return to balance and discover the true meaning of tranquillity with the Spa Getaway package, a 90-minute rejuvenating session consisting of a relaxing 60-

minute body massage followed by a hydrating 30-minute body wrap.

Where: Anantara Spa at Anantara al Jabal al Akhdar Resort

When: Valid from March 5-12

Price: RO75 per person, all inclusive of taxes

Mother's Day

For the perfect nourishment of mind, body and soul, mothers can escape from everyday stress and relish in a magnificent spa journey called, 'A Peaceful Escape for Moms'. Begin the wellness session with a lush 60-minute hot stone massage and complete it with a soothing 30-minute Indian scalp massage

What: A 90-minute session with a 60-minute hot stone massage followed by a 30-minute Indian scalp massage

Where: Anantara Spa at Anantara al Jabal al Akhdar

When: Valid from March 15-27

Price: RO70 per person, all inclusive of taxes



Honda Motor announces mega launch

Honda Motor Co (Middle East and Africa) will be revealing new models of three vehicles on March 2 in one of the biggest launches of 2021.

It will be a triple treat event as the brand showcases the latest

advancements of three of its iconic products to get you and your pulses racing.

The entire event will be hosted live on the Honda Middle East YouTube channel and Facebook pages in the

MENA countries, including Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman, Egypt and Kuwait.

The three models are coming up with stunning innovations, cutting-edge features, techno-

logical advancements, amazing exterior and interior design changes

To catch the launch event live log on to <https://www.honda-mideast.com/en-om/honda-virtual-event/Oman>

INDIAN HOCKEY UMPIRES VISIT NAQVI MUSEUM



World Cup and Olympic umpires Javed Shaikh and Raghuprasad R V are regular Indian umpires invited for His Majesty's Cup Hockey Championship. They visited the SAS Naqvi Museum in Ruwi. S A S Naqvi, former technical advisor, OOC, and national hockey coach of India and Oman, felicitated the umpires

Zubair SEC participates in Higher Education Institutions' Induction Forum

Zubair Small Enterprises Centre (Zubair SEC) participated in the 2021 Higher Education Institutions' Induction Forum, organised by the Directorate General of Education in Buraimi governorate in cooperation with the Career Counselling Platform.

The forum was held under the patronage of H E Dr Abdullah bin Khamis Ambusaïdi, Undersecretary in the Ministry of Education, in the presence of Dr Fathia Khalfan Sulaiman al Saddi, director general of Education of Buraimi governorate.

The forum was attended by chairpersons and members of the board of directors of more than 30 higher education institutions in Oman. The forum featured more than 30 presentations and workshops.

The forum began with the speech by the patron of the ceremony followed by a presentation from Ali al Braiki, founder of



Career Counselling Platform, who is also a member of Zubair SEC.

The presentation included a brief about the services provided by the platform to graduates and upcoming graduates.

Thereafter Ali Shaker, advisor, Business Development and

Strategic Partnerships, Zubair SEC, presented a paper on the basics of entrepreneurship and its importance.

He elucidated about the services rendered by the Zubair SEC and how aspiring entrepreneurs can benefit from the centre. The presentation was followed by a

Q&A session on the important role entrepreneurship plays in changing society and about the services provided by the Zubair SEC.

Shaker said, “Zubair SEC is keen to participate in such forums to emphasise the role and importance of entrepreneurship

among school and college graduates. Such forums are a great source of inspiration for young people aspiring to be entrepreneurs.

“We all know that entrepreneurship plays a very important role in enhancing a country's economic growth. When entre-

preneurs build businesses successfully, it shapes the economy in a positive manner. Our education system must concentrate on the development of entrepreneurship and innovation, in line with sultanate's strategy not to rely on employment only in the public and private sector.”

Praising the concept of the forum, Shaker said, “Forums that focus on career and entrepreneurship helps students think outside the box and nurture unconventional talents and skills. It instills confidence among youth who are about to enter the labour market after graduation.

“I would like to congratulate Zubair SEC member and owner of Career Counselling Platform Ali al Braiki for collaborating and organising this forum in cooperation with the Ministry of Education on a relevant topic. As a centre focusing on entrepreneurship and innovation, we look

forward to providing the necessary support to develop such concepts and projects that are of great benefit to the Omani society and youth.”

Zubair SEC member Ali al Braiki, a career guidance specialist at Roudhat Oman School and the owner of the Career Counselling Platform, commended the participation of Zubair SEC in the forum.

He said, “The paper submitted by the centre introduced students to entrepreneurship. The presentation and Q&A that followed will help them to develop their ideas and help them to be more creative and self-confident in whatever they embark on. Teaching and engaging students in entrepreneurship, helps prepare youth for future opportunities in addition to learning advanced studies and curricula offered by higher education institutions.”

Yemen rebels claim Saudi strikes

Sanaa, Yemen - Yemen's Iran-backed Huthi rebels on Sunday claimed the attempted strikes that targeted neighbouring Saudi Arabia overnight and threatened more attacks, as fighting in the grinding civil war escalates.

Huthi fighters have intensified operations against the kingdom as air strikes by the Saudi-led military coalition pound rebel positions in the north of Yemen, in a bid to stop their offensive to seize the government's last northern stronghold of Marib.

Years of war have already pushed Yemen to the brink of famine.

Saudi Arabia - which has been backing the Yemeni government against the rebels since 2015 - said on Saturday it thwarted a Huthi missile that targeted Riyadh.

"The operation was carried out with a ballistic missile and 15 drones... targeting sensitive areas in the enemy's capital of Riyadh," said Huthi spokesman Yahya al Saree, according to the rebels' Al-Masirah TV channel.

"Our operations will continue and will expand as long as the aggression and siege on our country continues."

Fragments of the missile scattered over several Riyadh neighbourhoods, damaging at least one home but no casualties were reported, Saudi's state-run Al-Ekhbariya television said.

AFP correspondents in the Saudi capital reported hearing



Supporters of the Yemeni Huthi rebels take to the streets of the capital Sanaa to protest against the blockade imposed on their country by the Saudi coalition, on Friday (AFP)

multiple loud explosions, with state television footage showing the night sky light up with a bright flash.

Separately, the coalition said it

had intercepted six Huthi drones targeting the kingdom, including the southern cities of Khamis Mushait and Jizan.

Saree on Sunday claimed

those attacks as well, warning residents in the region to 'stay clear from all military airports and sites'.

The Huthis have escalated

cross-border attacks on the kingdom even after the United States delisted the rebels as terrorists, reversing a decision by the administration of former president

Donald Trump.

The designation had been widely criticised by aid organisations, who warned it would hamper their efforts to alleviate a

humanitarian crisis in Yemen.

US President Joe Biden halted support to Saudi offensive operations in Yemen's war, which he called a 'catastrophe' that 'has to end'.

But he has also reiterated US support for Saudi Arabia in defending its territory.

On Sunday, in the latest violence in Yemen, five civilians including a child were killed when their home was destroyed in a bombardment near the strategic rebel-held Red Sea port of Hodeida.

The warring sides traded blame over who was responsible, with the government accusing Huthis of firing a mortar bomb, and the rebels saying the explosion was caused by twin air strikes by the Saudi-led coalition.

Alongside the cross-border attacks, the Huthis are pressing ahead with an offensive to seize the government-held Marib region, where some of the country's richest oil fields are found.

Hundreds of fighters from both sides have been killed in recent ferocious fighting, government source say.

The Huthis now control most of the country's north and the government has been struggling to defend Marib province and the city, which lies some 120km east of the rebel-held capital Sanaa.

Yemen's conflict has claimed tens of thousands of lives and displaced millions.

AFP

Iran, allies could be behind Israeli ship blast, Iranian newspaper

Tehran, Iran - The 'resistance axis' of Tehran and its regional allies may have been behind an explosion that hit an Israeli-owned 'spy' vessel four days ago, an ultraconservative Iranian newspaper said on Sunday.

The *MV Helios Ray*, a vehicle carrier, was travelling from the Saudi port of Dammam to Singapore when the blast occurred on Thursday, according to the London-based Dryad Global maritime security group.

Citing unnamed 'military experts', *Kayhan*, Iran's leading ultraconservative daily, wrote in a front-page report that 'the targeted ship is a military ship belonging to the Israeli army'.

It was 'gathering information about the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman' when it was targeted, the newspaper said.

'This spy ship, although it was sailing secretly, may have fallen into the ambush of one of the branches of the resistance axis,'



The Israeli-owned *MV Helios Ray* cargo ship docked in Mina Rashid cruise terminal, in Dubai on Sunday (AFP)

it added, without offering further details.

The term 'resistance axis' usually refers to the Islamic republic and its allied forces in the region.

Israel's Defence Minister Benny Gantz said on Saturday that the Jewish state's 'initial assessment' is that Iran is respon-

sible for the explosion aboard the vessel.

"This... takes into account the proximity (with Iran) and the context" in which the blast occurred, he added.

"This is what I believe."

Rami Ungar, an Israeli businessman who owns the *Helios*

Ray, told Israeli state television Kan on Friday that the explosion caused 'two holes about a metre and a half in diameter'.

It was 'not yet clear' if the damage was caused by missiles or mines attached to the ship, Ungar added.

AFP

Israel clears Greek tanker over Mediterranean oil spill

Jerusalem - Israeli authorities said on Sunday they had cleared a Greek tanker of suspicion in relation to an oil spill that caused massive tar pollution on the Mediterranean coastline, devastating marine life.

It is seen as Israel's worst maritime pollution incident in decades.

Powerful winds and unusually high waves pummeled Israel's entire Mediterranean coastline on February 17, with tonnes of tar staining 160km of beach from its borders with the Gaza Strip to Lebanon.

Volunteers have teamed up with authorities to clean the beaches, while officials from the environmental protection ministry launched an investigation into the source of the spill.

After an Israeli media report had named the Greek oil tanker *Minerva Helen* as a possible culprit, the ship's owner, Minerva Marine Inc., firmly denied any involvement.



The Greek oil tanker *Minerva Helen*

On Sunday, the ministry said that 'following an inspection conducted in Greece on the *Minerva Helen* tanker, it has been cleared of suspicion of involvement in the severe tar event on Israel's beaches'.

The ship's owner said the Israeli media report was an 'unfounded' inaccurate allegation.

It stated that the ship had been in the Mediterranean in the days before the storm, 'without any cargo on board' and there-

fore could not be linked to a spill.

The company also pledged to 'cooperate with any relevant authority' interested in the *Minerva Helen*'s movements.

On Saturday in the Greek port city of Piraeus, Israeli inspectors conducted 'an extensive examination' of the *Minerva Helen* that 'positively ruled out the vessel as the source of the pollution', the Environmental Protection Ministry said in a statement.

AFP

Celebrated Turkish actor risks jail for 'insulting' President Erdogan

Istanbul, Turkey - Mujdat Gezen's half-century career as an acclaimed Turkish writer and actor has included awards, a stint as a UN goodwill ambassador and a taste of prison after a 1980 putsch.

Now aged 77, the wry-witted comedian and poet with an easy smile and a bad back risks returning to jail on charges of insulting Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

He is in danger of becoming the latest victim in the Turkish leader's years-long battle with what he dismissively calls 'so-called artists'.

"I am even banned from appearing in crossword puzzles," Gezen quipped.

Gezen landed in court with fellow comedian Metin Akpinar (79) over comments the pair made during a television show

they starred in on opposition Halk TV in 2018.

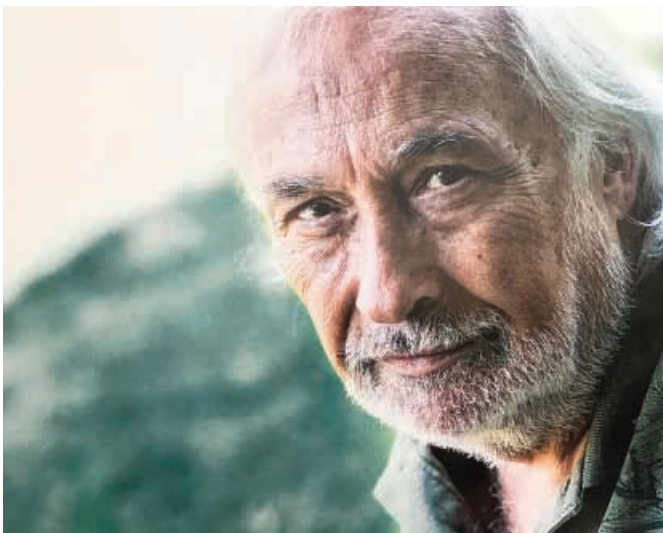
In the broadcast, Gezen told Erdogan to 'know your place'.

'Look Recep Tayyip Erdogan, you cannot test our patriotism. Know your place,' Gezen said on air.

His parter Akpinar went one step further, saying that 'if we don't become a (democracy)... the leader might end up getting strung up by his legs or poisoned in the cellar'.

These are risky comments to make in a country still reeling from a sweeping crackdown Erdogan unleashed after surviving a failed coup in 2016.

Their trial is coming with Erdogan rattled by a burst of student protests that hint at Turks' impatience with his commanding rule as prime minister and president since 2003.



Turkish actor Mujdat Gezen in Istanbul (AFP)

Prosecutors want to put the two veteran celebrities behind bars for up to four years and eight months. The verdict is expected on Monday.

Thousands of Turks, from a

former Miss Turkey to school children, have been prosecuted for insulting Erdogan on social media and television.

Bristling at the jokes and comments, Erdogan warned in 2018

that his critics 'will pay the price'.

"The next day," Gezen said, "police turned up and I was summoned to give a statement to prosecutors."

The knock on the door reminded Gezen of how he ended up being dragged before the courts after spending 20 days in jail when a military junta overthrew Turkey's civilian government at the height of the Cold War in 1980.

Gezen's book about Nazim Hikmet - perhaps Turkey's most famous 20th century poet, who happened to be a communist who died in exile in Moscow in 1963 - was taken off the shelves after that coup.

"I was chained up while being taken from prison to court with a gang of 50 criminals, including murderers and smugglers," he recalled.

He was freed by the court in 1980, and may yet be acquitted on Monday.

Still, Gezen is uncomfortable with the similarities, and with Turkey's trajectory under Erdogan.

"There is a record number of journalists in jail - we have never seen this in the history of the republic. That's what upsets me," he said.

An author of more than 50 books and founder of his own art centre in Istanbul, Gezen says he has 'either criticised or parodied politicians to their faces' for decades without going to jail.

His popularity and resolve earned him a role in 2007 as a goodwill ambassador for the UNICEF children's relief fund.

But he fears that Turkey's tradition of outspoken artists - 'art is by its nature opposi-

tional', he remarked - is wilting under Erdogan.

"We now have self-censorship. But what is even more painful to me is that (some artists) prefer to be apolitical," he said. "The President has said how he expects artists to behave. But it cannot be the president of a country who decides these things. It's the artists who must decide."

To be on the safe side, Gezen's lawyers now read his books before publication to avoid legal problems.

"It is risky in Turkey," he observed.

Many of the opposition media outlets that once flourished have been either closed or taken over by government allies, leaving independent voices with even fewer options.

AFP

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

New hope in COVID crisis as US approves third vaccine

Washington, US - The COVID-battered United States authorised Johnson & Johnson's vaccine for emergency use Saturday, offering a glimmer of hope as Britain said farewell to fundraising war veteran Captain Tom Moore who died of the virus earlier this month.

US President Joe Biden hailed his country's announcement of its third available vaccine but said the nation's battle was far from over.

"This is exciting news for all Americans, and an encouraging development in our efforts to bring an end to the crisis," Biden said in a statement, but warned Americans "cannot let our guard down now or assume that victory is inevitable".

The single-shot J&J vaccine is highly effective at preventing severe COVID-19, including against newer variants, the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) said before giving it a green light.

The news comes following passage in the House of Representatives of a vast US\$1.9tn package - including US\$1,400 payouts to most Americans and billions of dollars to boost vaccine delivery, help schools reopen and fund local governments - which will now move to the Senate.

The bill is on track to be the second largest US stimulus ever, illustrating the huge effort needed to tackle the multiple



US President Joe Biden speaks about the American Rescue Plan from the Roosevelt Room of the White House in Washington, DC, on Saturday (AFP)

crises unleashed by a pandemic that has killed more than half a million in the United States, with the toll climbing by another 1,849 fatalities in 24 hours on Saturday.

Meanwhile Europeans continue to live under some of the world's strictest restrictions - and in France they just got tougher.

Two cities, northern Dunkirk and southern Nice, locked down over the weekends to halt the spread.

"We have to do something as COVID is getting worse in

the region," Charlie Kentish, a British resident taking an early morning walk in Nice, told AFP. He was resigned to spending his weekends playing video games with his teenage children.

In Britain, 100-year-old war veteran Tom Moore helped lift the COVID-induced gloom last year by staging fundraising events including completing 100 lengths of his back garden using a walking frame.

After his campaign went viral, he raised nearly £33mn for healthcare charities, and was

knighted for his efforts.

His funeral, a small family ceremony, was shown live on national television and he was honoured with a flypast of a World War II plane.

The rollout of vaccines has improved the prospects greatly for many older people, with Britain excelling in its distribution to vulnerable groups.

With the pandemic now having killed more than 2.5mn people worldwide, restrictions are being reimposed and tightened in countries ranging from Brazil to the Czech Republic.

Even in relatively unscathed New Zealand, the biggest city Auckland was thrust back into lockdown on Saturday shortly after a three-day shutdown ended.

A small cluster has been linked to a school, but the country's caseload still pales in comparison with the numbers seen in Europe and the Americas.

But globally there is growing concern over cases of 'long COVID', where people suffer symptoms for months after the initial illness.

AFP

Iran deaths cross 60,000: Ministry

Tehran, Iran - Iran's Health Ministry said the country's coronavirus fatalities broke the 60,000 mark on Sunday.

The grim milestone comes after several Iranian officials, including President Hassan Rouhani, warned of a COVID-19 'fourth wave' with cases rising in certain areas of the country.

"Sadly in the past 24 hours, 93 people lost their lives to COVID-19, and total deaths from this disease reached 60,073," Health Ministry spokeswoman Sima Sadat Lari said.

Iran has registered a total of 1,631,169 infections, according to the ministry.

The coronavirus taskforce spokesman Alireza Raisi on Friday said Iran is 'very concerned' about the more contagious British variant, which has already 'circulated in the country'.

"We have identified 112 people infected with the British variant in the country, eight of whom have died," he said. He noted that the variant was seen in many provinces including the capital Tehran.

Philippines receives vaccines from China

Manila, Philippines - The Philippines received 600,000 vaccine doses from China on Sunday, kickstarting the country's inoculation drive despite concerns over the Sinovac jab's effectiveness.

Top government officials and health workers will be the first on Monday to receive the Chinese-made vaccine - called CoronaVac - just days after the drug regulator approved it for emergency use.

President Rodrigo Duterte, whose government has been under fire over delays in procuring vaccines, oversaw the delivery of the doses at a

military air base.

Around 525,000 doses of the AstraZeneca jab were also due to arrive Monday as part of the COVAX global inoculation programme and will also be offered to healthcare workers.

The regulator did not recommend CoronaVac for healthcare workers due to its comparatively low efficacy.

An advisory group to the Philippine government allowed it to be offered to those willing to take it, but many nurses and doctors are reluctant and have opted to wait for other vaccines.

Eight arrested after protest in Denmark

Copenhagen, Denmark - Danish police said they arrested eight people in an anti-lockdown demonstration in Copenhagen late on Saturday.

Organised by a group calling itself 'Men in Black', the rally of around 1,200 people in the Danish capital was the first since the government announced last week that it was extending many anti-coronavirus restrictions.

Police said the rally remained largely peaceful, but eight people were arrested for allegedly using fireworks and for rowdy behaviour.

Initially, around 600 people

took part in the demonstration, but the crowd had swelled to around 1,200 by the end of the evening on the square in front of Copenhagen's town hall, police said.

Denmark, which has been under a partial lockdown since late December, announced last Wednesday that it would ease some virus restrictions but keep the majority in place despite protests from the opposition.

Many restrictions have been extended until April 5, including the closure of bars and restaurants.

AFP

Prince William says social media 'awash' with lies

London, UK - Prince William has warned that anti-vaccination messages are rife on social media and urged those eligible to get jabs, following a similar appeal by his grandmother, Queen Elizabeth II.

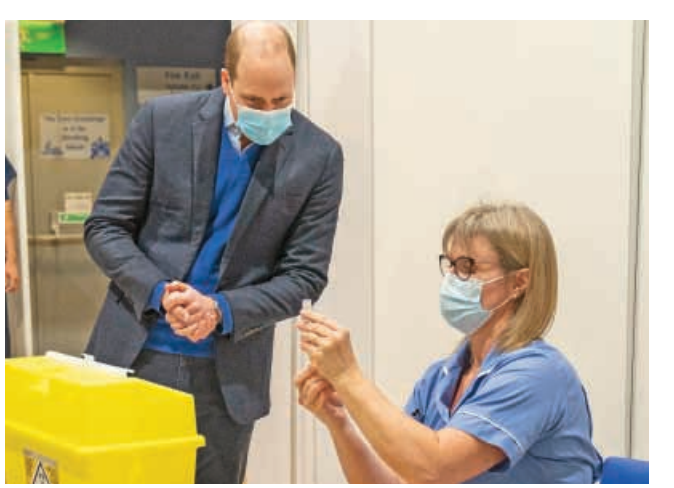
"Social media is awash sometimes with lots of rumours and misinformation," the Duke of Cambridge said in video footage released by Kensington Palace on Saturday evening.

It showed him and his wife Catherine, the Duchess of Cambridge, speaking to two women who are clinically vulnerable and

eligible for first jabs soon.

In one video call, a woman called Shivali, who has type 2 diabetes, said she had read a lot of social media posts that made her 'a bit nervous' about getting vaccinated initially, but she was now confident about getting the jab. The Prince told her: "We have to be a little bit careful who we believe and where we get our information from, especially for those who are clinically vulnerable as well, it's so important that these vaccinations are done."

"Catherine and I are not medical experts by any means



Britain's Prince William, Duke of Cambridge (left) with a healthcare professional at a vaccination centre, in King's Lynn on February 22 (AFP)

but if it's any consolation we can wholeheartedly support having vaccinations, it's really, really important."

Vaccine uptake so far has been 'amazing', the Prince said, while the task now is to ensure that younger generations 'feel that it's really important for them to have it'.

The video came after the 94 year old Queen on Thursday urged people to take up the vaccine, saying it 'didn't hurt at all', when she received it in January, along with Prince Philip.

AFP

Six dead as Myanmar junta intensifies crackdown

Yangon, Myanmar - Myanmar security forces shot dead at least six protesters on Sunday in the bloodiest action so far to smother opposition to the military coup four weeks ago.

The junta is battling to contain a massive street movement demanding it yield power and release ousted civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi, who was detained along with top political allies at the start of the month.

Police and soldiers had already fired rubber bullets, tear gas and water cannon on demonstrations in recent weeks in an effort to bring the civil disobedience campaign to heel, with live rounds used in some isolated cases.

Large numbers were again mobilised on Sunday morning to scatter crowds in several parts of the country, after online calls for protesters to once again flood the streets.

Three men were killed and at least 20 others injured when security forces moved on a rally in the southern coastal hub of



Protesters choke amid tear gas as security forces crack down on demonstrations against the military coup, in Yangon on Sunday (AFP)

Dawei, a volunteer medic and a media outlet based in the city said.

Rescue worker Pyae Zaw Hein said the trio were 'shot dead with live rounds', while the injured were hit by rubber bullets. "More wounded people keep coming in," he told AFP.

Two teenagers were also gunned down in Bago, a two-hour drive north of commercial capital Yangon.

Ambulance driver Than Lwin Oo told AFP he had sent the bod-

ies of the 18-year-olds to the mortuary at Bago's main hospital.

The deaths were confirmed by media based in the town.

Officers in Yangon began dispersing small crowds minutes before the slated beginning of the day's protest, with one 23 year old shot dead in the city's east.

"His wife is heartbroken," Win Ko, a social worker who visited the man's widow, told AFP.

AFP

Bangladesh police fire rubber bullets, tear gas at new protests

Dhaka, Bangladesh - Dozens were injured on Sunday as Bangladeshi police fired rubber bullets and tear gas in a third day of protests sparked by the death of a prominent writer and government critic in jail.

Mushtaq Ahmed (53) collapsed in a high-security prison and died late on Thursday, ten months after being arrested under a 'digital security' law that critics say is being used to silence dissent in the country of 168mn people.

Live footage on Sunday from local television station Channel 24 showed a road and footpath in front of the National Press Club - a favourite protest site in Dhaka - turning into a battleground as police beat protesters with batons to disperse them.

Student activists from the main opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) hurled rocks and attacked officers with bamboo and plastic pipes, prompting police to retaliate by 'firing rubber bullets and tear



Policemen clash with the activists of opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) during the third day of protests following the death of a writer in jail, in front of the National Press Club in Dhaka on Sunday (AFP)

gas', Deputy Commissioner of Dhaka police Sazzadur Rahman told AFP.

"They did not take any permission (for the protests)," he added, defending the police's

move to clear the protesters.

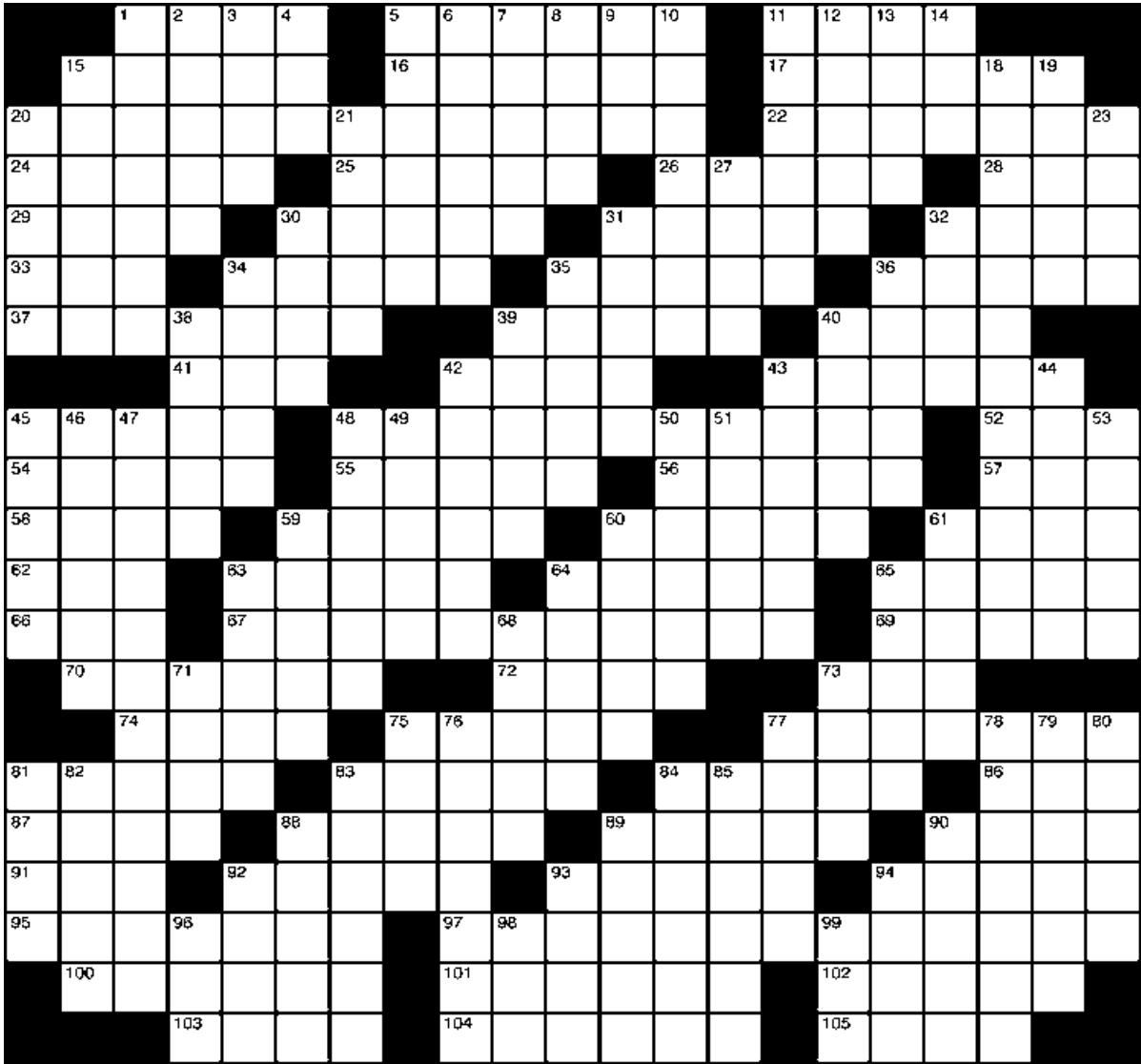
BNP spokesman Rizvi Ahmed said about 30 student activists of the party, including a senior leader, were injured in the clashes. Several policemen were

also hurt, including an officer who was rushed to hospital.

Ahmed said more than 500 protesters were at the press club, trying to form a human chain.

AFP

DAILY CROSSWORD



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ACROSS

- 1 Resound
- 5 Lariats
- 11 Pre-owned
- 15 Receipt
- 16 In existence
- 17 Amerindian blanket makers
- 20 Gordon Hathaway/Louis Nye line
- 22 Eradication
- 24 Guinness and Templeton
- 25 Danger
- 26 Expert: var.
- 28 Tool
- 29 Saga
- 30 Magna ____
- 31 '20s VP Charles
- 32 Luncheon ending
- 33 Self
- 34 Shoe adjuncts
- 35 WY mountain range
- 36 Oasis fruit
- 37 TV's Jerry Robinson
- 39 Kind of code
- 40 Netting
- 41 Baseball great
- 42 ____ vidi, vici
- 43 Downier
- 45 Bible land
- 48 Steve McGarrett

line

- 52 Charge for services
- 54 Gunwale pin
- 55 "Waste Land" author
- 56 Winged
- 57 The entire amount
- 58 Hauls
- 59 Doubly
- 60 Love: It.
- 61 Fraudulent scheme
- 62 Switch positions
- 63 Barber service
- 64 Become unfit for use
- 65 Davis or Midler
- 66 Use a needle
- 67 Ed McMahon line
- 69 Goose genus
- 70 Modest
- 72 Canal
- 73 Dash
- 74 One: Ger.
- 75 Bergen's Mortimer
- 77 Hair dressings
- 81 Church composition
- 83 Narrative
- 84 USMA freshman
- 86 Hollywood's Lupino
- 87 Idi
- 88 Facing the glacier: Geol.

89

- 89 Greek assembly
- 90 Short, projecting part
- 91 Posed
- 92 Not fresh
- 93 Tennis term
- 94 Vanzetti's partner
- 95 Barn board
- 97 David Brinkley line
- 100 Sagacious
- 101 Bruise tincture
- 102 Rowed
- 103 War god
- 104 Sycophants
- 105 Small nail
- DOWN**
- 1 Level of command
- 2 Singer Jim or son A.J.
- 3 Alger ____
- 4 Elect
- 5 1775 rider
- 6 Puts forth
- 7 Courtyards
- 8 Animal appendage
- 9 Massachusetts cape
- 10 Leaf apertures
- 11 Not level or flat
- 12 Indian garments
- 13 Author Thomas
- 14 German article
- 15 Stored fodder

18

- 18 Sgt. Friday line
- 19 Declaim
- 20 Despised
- 21 Age of new moon Jan. 1st
- 23 Lambs' moms
- 27 Military acronym
- 30 Hurl
- 31 Jeans material
- 32 Bridge position
- 34 Metric volume unit
- 35 Belief
- 36 "Moll Flanders" author
- 38 Labors
- 39 Kind of tea
- 40 ____ Carlo
- 42 "Other __, other rooms": Capote
- 43 Snappish
- 44 Tell
- 45 Preminger and von Bismarck
- 46 Called
- 47 Jackie Gleason line
- 48 ____ of the dog!
- 49 Miss Oyl
- 50 Singer of yore, Vic
- 51 Bitter purgative
- 53 Lewis's Gantry
- 59 Not here
- 60 Plant louse
- 61 Cathartic drug

63

- 63 Sidetrack
- 64 Word of regret
- 65 Hydrometer scale
- 68 Gibes
- 71 Bearing
- 73 Dressing gown
- 75 Aircraft type: abbr.
- 76 Bouquet
- 77 Genesis man
- 78 Got rid of: sl.
- 79 Drew forth
- 80 Wooden shoe
- 81 Lots of stuff
- 82 Midwestern city
- 83 Ear bones
- 84 Swoop down suddenly
- 85 Anc. Greek satirist
- 88 Assert
- 89 Use a rheostat
- 90 Pelvic bones
- 92 Asperion
- 93 Cheadle and Johnson
- 94 Luminary
- 96 School organization
- 98 Bauxite, for one
- 99 Fireplace shelf

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

You'll be feeling quite magnanimous, ready to forgive anyone who's wronged you and eager to rise above petty squabbles. This means it's a great day to reach out to those people who are always cold or rude to you. Show them that you are the bigger person. You'll be able to do it without making them feel like you're making fun of them or putting them on the spot.



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

You have the guts, now it's time for you to go for the glory! Do something that will get you noticed and appreciated. It's time to remind people just how awesome you are. Even if you just do something small, you'll be noticed and appreciated for the effort you make and the generosity you exhibit. It feels good to be the hero, no matter how modest your actions are.



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

Press the pause button on any travel plans you've been making. Something is still up in the air, and you need to wait for it to come down before finalising anything. You should definitely not sign any paperwork or make any deposits even if time seems to be an issue. But don't worry. At some point, key information will come to light that lets you know where to go from here.



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

You might think that when you're in the midst of a power struggle you need to be full of bluster and aggressive energy, and some of the time that is wise. But today, when you're stuck trying to negotiate getting your way, the worst thing would be to act too pompous or confident. Let this person know that you want to find a solution that makes both of you happy.



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

You like to root for the underdog just as much as anyone, but today that might not be as rewarding as following the leader. There's something very attractive about a person who really knows what they're doing, so who could blame you if you suddenly don't feel sympathy for the person who's struggling to catch up? Align yourself closely to the winners.



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

It'll feel like your eyes are playing tricks on you when they're trained on someone whose opinions you value. This person is saying things you never thought you'd hear come out of their mouth! It looks like they're turning into someone you don't recognise. This person is trying to be someone they aren't, and they're acting like that in order to try to impress someone else.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

Making tough decisions will be easy as pie for you because there will be plenty of obvious signs pointing you in the right direction. So relax and feel free to turn off your intuition. It's exhausting for you to try to sense things and read between the lines all the time, so give yourself a break. Accept what you see and hear as the truth because it probably is. Don't get too intellectual or analytical.



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

A co-worker could be looking to you for the answers, yet again. If you haven't already talked to them about sharing responsibilities, do it now. And if you have already had the 'do your fair share' conversation, then it might be time to go over their heads. It's not about tattling on a colleague. They aren't carrying their weight, and that fact has to be made known before you get blamed for it.



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

You might be dealing with a hot-headed person. But the best way to defuse an angry bomb of a person is to toss them a task that will keep them busy and make them feel more useful. Otherwise, if you entertain their arguments and listen to their complaints, you'll only end up encouraging an ugly power struggle. This person just wants attention and is using their emotions to get it.



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

Why hide what you have to offer? Being shy and coy can be cute, but these aren't effective tactics for showing the world what you can do, especially if you're looking for a romantic connection. You need to take a bigger risk. Reveal your inner thoughts and ideas and you won't be disappointed. You're a lot more intriguing than you realise. Be yourself and you'll attract a lot of people to you.



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

It is a wonderful day for coasting along life's path. Your recent accomplishments have set you up nicely for a nice, long period of calm, so why not sit back and enjoy it? Go ahead and rest on your laurels. You deserve a break after all the hard work you've done. Relax and just enjoy the view from the mountain you've climbed. You will have plenty of time to look for the next peak.



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

Make yourself your priority. That means if you haven't been to the doctor or dentist lately, make an appointment! You need to take care of yourself, and keeping your physical self in good shape is critical. But make sure you're taking care of your emotional needs too. If you crave more affection from your partner, let them know. They've been busy lately.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. To which of the following country does Olympic Airways belong?

- a. France
- b. Greece
- c. Hong Kong
- d. Indonesia

2. Velocity of wind is measured by

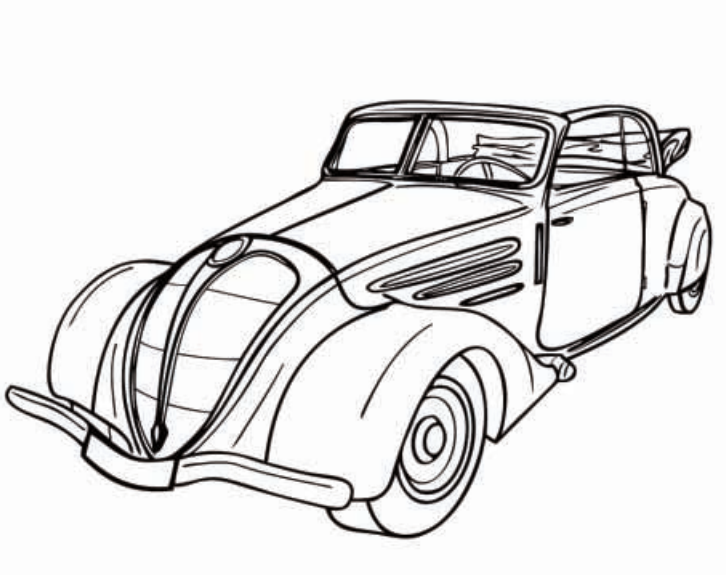
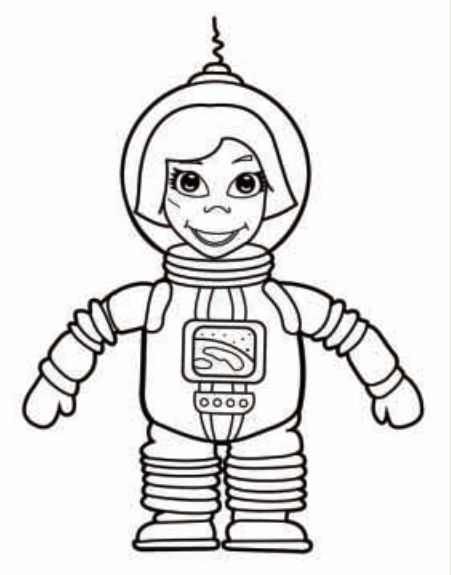
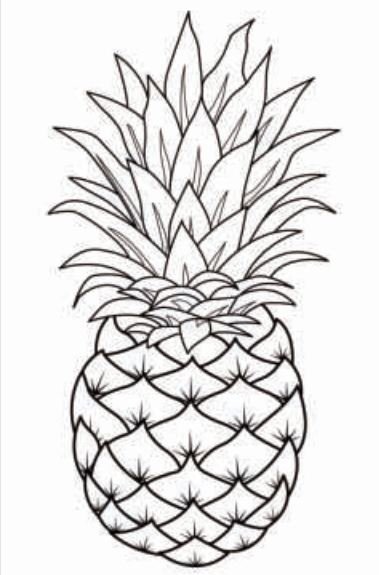
- a. speedometer
- b. tachometer
- c. anemometer
- d. audiometer

3. The term used to describe money that flows into a country to take advantage of high rates of interest is called

- a. hot money
- b. hard sector
- c. hard currency
- d. None of the above

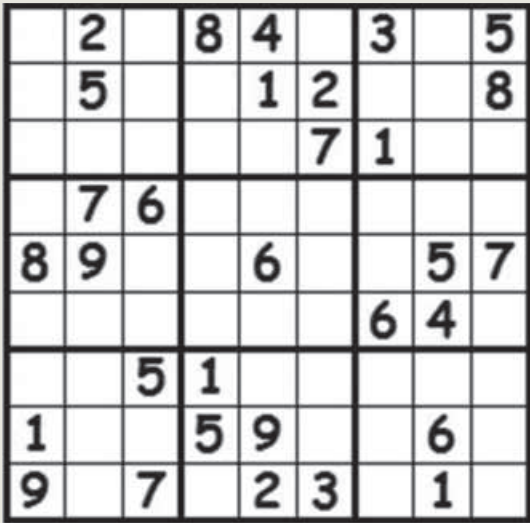
Answers: 1: b 2: c 3: a

KIDS COLOURING



DO YOU SUDOKU?

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



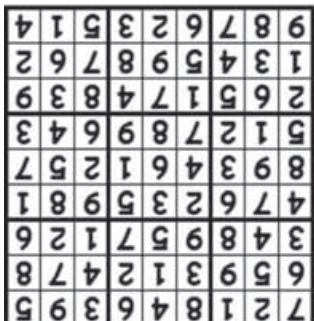
BOGGLER



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

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER



DAILY CROSSWORD ANSWERS (FEBRUARY 28)



WORD BUILDER

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

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



VISIT JAPAN



Kinkaku-ji Temple, Kyoto

The Tokyo Olympics rescheduled for late July 2021 may be one reason to consider visiting Japan this year. However, Japan's borders are still closed to international tourists and no one knows when they will reopen.

There are very tentative plans to open borders before the games - reportedly to small tour groups from countries with low infection rates in April 2021 at the earliest. The situation is still very uncertain, though. The best times to visit Japan, however, are spring (March-April) and autumn (October - early December) when the weather is ideal.

Kyoto

Travel buffs say, if you only have time for one Japan destination, make it Kyoto, considered the heart of Japan. This is traditional Japan as you imagined it - geisha in brightly coloured kimonos emerging from wooden teahouses, forests of bamboo, temples and shrines in gold and silver and scarlet, raked gravel Zen gardens, intricate feasts served on

The best times to visit Japan, however, are spring (March-April) and autumn (October - early December) when the weather is ideal

lacquered plates, graceful tea ceremonies, and markets full of intriguing but unidentifiable ingredients.

If you find the concrete highrises of downtown Kyoto disappointing, it is better to head out towards the mountains to the surrounding neighbourhoods where you'll find narrow stone streets, old wooden houses, monks in flowing robes, and the sounds of chanting and gongs from the many temples and shrines.

Gion is the place to spot geisha, Higashiyama has many beautiful temples to

explore, and Arashiyama, up in the western hills, is one of the most traditional neighbourhoods and home to bamboo groves, quirky temples, and monkeys.

Kyoto is one of the top Japan tourist spots, so try to visit the popular temples early in the morning as they do get crowded. A trip of three nights is good enough for Kyoto but, if you have five nights, you can do much more.

In Kyoto, don't miss wandering through the red torii gates of Fushimi Inari shrine, taking the train to the village of Kibune, retreating from the busy streets of Gion to the magical Yasaka-jinja at night, strolling the Philosopher's Path, experiencing Zen Buddhist cuisine at the Tenryu-ji temple and exploring the magical Kyoto cherry blossom spots in March-April.

Tokyo

If Kyoto is the heart of traditional Japan, Tokyo - its ultramodern counterpart - can be considered the soul. Japan's busy capital, mixes the ultramodern and the traditional, from neon-lit skyscrapers to historic temples. It's here you'll find noisy arcades and malls, busy pedestrian



Tokyo city

crossings, crazy youth fashions, and many many delicious restaurants.

Tokyo is also home to some of the weirdest activities, from themed cafes to sensory-overload shows and arcades for go-karting. The capital offers a seemingly unlimited choice of shopping, entertainment and dining options to its visitors. Three to five nights in Tokyo are good enough to let the lures grow on you.

In Tokyo, don't miss driving a go-kart on real roads, dressed as your favourite character, eating in a tiny restaurant on atmospheric Memory Lane, gazing at the night skyline from the free Tokyo Metropolitan Government Building in Shinjuku, viewing crazy fashions of Takeshita Street in Harajuku, visiting Tokyo Disneyland, and immersing yourself in the colourful digital arts museum.

CLASSIFIEDS

SITUATION WANTED

Female ACCA qualified
member, 4+ years work experience in Oman, driving licence, NOC available, looking to join a finance and accounts team. Contact 95785272

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BIRTHDAY WISHES



SYED AYAAN RIZVI
March 01

Dear Ayaan,
Wishing you a very Happy Birthday. May God bless you always!
With lots of love and blessings -
Grandparents, Papa, Mamma & Rida

Send your request for Birthday/Anniversary wishes to wish@apexmedia.co.om with your resident card copy (It's free of cost)

وزارة التجارة والصناعة وترويج الاستثمار
دائرة الملكية الفكرية

إعلان

تعن دائرة الملكية الفكرية عن طلب تسجيل العلامة التجارية المقبولة وفقا لاحكام قانون (نظام) العلامات التجارية لدول مجلس التعاون لدول الخليج العربية الصادر بالمرسوم السلطاني رقم 33 /2017

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MAKING WAVES

CALL OF THE OCEAN

First professional lady yacht captain in Oman



Photo by Syed Fasiuddin

Hubert Vaz

If you're looking for a day charter, a weekend trip or are keen on an overnight adventure on the high seas, Muscat Yacht Club promises to get you on the water, in luxury and style, safely and affordably. But there's also a pleasant surprise awaiting guests who seek unique revelry on a boat.

MYC offers to create the perfect charter experience that suits all needs and all budgets, off Muscat's shores, where the placid Arabian Sea presents itself in all its majesty and glory. But the icing on the cake is its new lady yacht captain, Madiha Madny al Bakri, who has embarked on an interesting turn in her life with this challenging hobby.

"I have a passion for anything that involves the sea, everything about it," Madiha told Muscat Daily, adding, "My father used to be a diver and a competitive swimmer, so the apple doesn't fall too far from the tree! I enjoy diving, fishing, all kinds of water sports and as a part-time job I also teach women and kids how to swim in the convenience of their residential private pools. I also very briefly learnt how to sail with OmanSail."

Upbeat about wearing this new hat on weekends, since all through the week she works in project management for an international bank in Muscat, Madiha says, "I think, me becoming the first female Omani Captain will be very fulfilling as there is a high demand for females in this line. I also think that there is a very supportive community in Oman that empowers women and I

believe that this is a great direction for me."

Some of my her responsibilities as captain include navigating, driving and parking the yacht, operating the yacht's equipment and, most importantly, being a host to guests on board and ensuring their safety and enjoyment. She will not only be ferrying guests on pleasure trips but also providing interesting information about Oman and sea routes undertaken as well as sharing interesting facts about water sports, diving, etc to those interested in romancing the waves off Muscat's shores.

Tackling with ease the cliched query about getting her nose into a male-dominated profession, Madiha asserts, "In today's world, I think this discrimination is proving more and more ineffective as there are a lot of females taking on roles that are mainly 'male-dominated'." She also admits not coming across any lady yacht captains of commercial services in Oman and adds, "I believe, my role will inspire more women to take on new roles, and I hope to be one of the first to influence women out there."

About training undertaken for the role, Madiha revealed that she has been quite comfortable with the sea having been involved in swimming and water sports from a very young age. She has now equipped herself with skills needed for manoeuvring commercial craft as well as confidence of ferrying people safely for leisure at sea.

"Practice makes perfect! My training involves going out on the yacht every weekend and learning more and more each time I go out. I'm currently in Project Management so it's obviously very different to what I am doing now. One is an office job and the



Madiha's appointment is a clear indication of our commitment to making yachting increasingly inclusive and encouraging for more women at sea

AMR ABDULLAH BAABOOD
Founder, Muscat Yacht Club

other is a very 'hands on' task that requires lots of effort, especially the anchoring part." Madiha said, adding that she does not foresee any particular hurdles in her path. "I am very optimistic and I think that everyone will welcome the idea of having a female captain onboard."

As a lady captain, she hopes to make every trip interesting by doing things differently so that guests return with an experience to cherish. The pleasure trips include those for dolphin watching, fishing, sunrise/sunset cruises which are tailored differently for different guests. These are conducted on Yolo (You only live once) a fishing and cruising powerboat that can seat 12 persons plus the captain.

Refreshments as well as lunch/dinner is provided on board, depending on the duration and type of trip. Guests also have the option of bringing their own food and beverages along or specifying the type of food they would prefer while paying for it separately.

For overnight stays, Lovelli - an air-conditioned yacht of the Quicksilver Activ Weekend yacht range is taken out. The super deluxe yacht has two bedrooms to sleep four, a toilet, as well as a deck space to seat 12 persons, besides the captain.

People can book the boat/yacht to themselves for private trips or join with other guests for shorter pleasure trips. The cost for hiring the boat for a short private trip is RO120 while one also has the option of paying RO10 per head, if joining others on weekends.

While experimenting with a new chapter in her life, Madiha believes that life is all

about challenges and one must have the will to take them on. Nevertheless, she smiles to add, that she can switch to being totally feminine and 'girly' when among her tribe, and totally tough and resilient when out at sea. As for her fitness quotient, she says, "I am in the water everyday and therefore swimming and being on the sea is a second nature to me."

Madiha's mind

I love... The sea, good food, and music.

I hate... Dishonesty

I am always ready for... The sea

My biggest strength... Determination

My weakness... I'm very impatient

Most recurring dream... To some day own a yacht and retire on it.

My ambition... It is said, life without ambition is a ship sailing without a destination. My ambition is to enjoy life and do what I do best!

To me, the sea is... Where I belong.

I can spend... Every moment of every-day out at sea.

My most fearful experience... Thankfully, I have not come across any experience that I could say was 'fearful'. However, the sea is unpredictable and one should always be prepared.

My happiest moment... Catching a mahi mahi, which took over 30 minutes to reel in.

Oman, to me, is... Home, where I belong!



Appointed on merit

Amr Abdullah Baabood, founder of Muscat Yacht Club, who was excited to offer Madiha an opportunity to pursue her dream of becoming the first professional yacht captain in Oman, said, "We are so pleased to welcome Madiha to Muscat Yacht Club. I would like to thank all who have joined us in embracing such an innovative and positive initiative. This is a key moment in shaping the careers of future female captains in Oman. We are a young but ambitious organisation and Madiha will progress along with us as we grow and develop together. Her appointment is a clear indication of our commitment to making yachting

increasingly inclusive and encouraging for more women at sea."

Amr is not new to female empowerment, and despite being happy to provide more opportunities for women, he believes that it is not her or her gender that really matters, as women commonly outperform their male counterparts in many professions. "Madiha was appointed on merit and we can make this statement for all to see that women can achieve a lot in previously male-dominated professions."

About Madiha's qualities, Amr said, "We were impressed with her dedication and preparation from both, a mental and physical

perspective, and also with her approach to safety and hospitality. This attitude, along with her performance, on and off the seas, as well as her open and determined personality, led us to conclude that Madiha is ready to start her adventure with us at MYC."

MYC also has initiatives on education, youth and environment. "We see our responsibility as not only providing exciting adventures to our guests but also to provide an ocean education, engaging people with the ways of the ocean from communities and wildlife which rely on it. We want to inspire and build the next generation of ocean ambassadors."

Wales down England to clinch Triple Crown



Wales' players celebrate their victory over England in Cardiff, UK, on Saturday

SIX NATIONS RUGBY

Cardiff, UK - Wales surged clear in the closing stages to beat England 40-24 in Cardiff on Saturday to clinch the Triple Crown and stay on course for a Six Nations Grand Slam.

Defeat all but ended reigning champions England's hopes of a successful title defence.

England, in a match where French referee Pascal Gauzere controversially allowed two of Wales' four tries to stand, battled back from 17-6 down to 24-24 with 18 minutes left.

But England indiscipline, a long-running problem for Eddie Jones' men, allowed Wales replacement Callum Shedy to kick three penalties before Cory Hill's late try rounded off victory.

It was the latest chapter in a remarkable Wales turnaround after they won just three of ten matches in 2020 under coach Wayne Pivac.

Wales led 17-14 at the break following two controversial tries scored by Josh Adams and Liam Williams.

England wing Anthony

Watson's try, however, reduced the deficit before captain Owen Farrell's penalty on the stroke of half-time cut the gap to three points.

England, however, could have no complaints when scrum-half Kieran Hardy crossed for Wales' third try early in the second half.

But from 24-14 behind, England hit back with a Farrell penalty and a try by Ben Youngs just after the hour.

And with Farrell adding the conversion, England were level heading into the last quarter.

But Wales responded by finishing with their highest points score against arch-rivals England.

"I'm very, very pleased for the players," Pivac told the BBC.

"Some people will say it (luck) has been on our side the last three matches but you have to be in games to win them," the New Zealander added.

Wales captain Alun Wyn Jones said, "I have played in a few games on the end of those decisions, it is up to the officials to make them."

Fellow skipper Farrell was equally wary of discussing Gauzere's display, saying, "We will control what we can control".

He added, "I thought the intent was good but we can't let teams off that many times like we did today."

Wales' first try came while Farrell, at Gauzere's request, was still talking to England about their discipline.

And the build-up to their second appeared to feature a knock-on.

But Gauzere did not send an England player to the sin-bin, with Pivac saying they had been 'lucky' in not being yellow-carded once.

'Can't argue with referee'

Meanwhile England counterpart Eddie Jones insisted: "We can't argue with the referee. The result's there and we've got to accept it. Wales were worthy winners."

England knew they had to win to maintain their title hopes after a shock opening loss to Scotland was followed by a comfortable victory over perennial strugglers Italy.

Jones said Gauzere's early try calls were 'huge decisions'.

"We can't debate it, we are not allowed to debate it. All I will end up with is a fine and that won't help anyone," Jones told reporters.

The veteran Australian coach added: "The dog won't be able to eat its food, wife won't be able to eat, so I can't say anything."

AFF



Saul 'Canel' Alvarez celebrates his win on Saturday

Saul Alvarez retains WBC-WBA super middleweight title

Miami, US - Saul 'Canel' Alvarez demolished Turkey's Avni Yildirim in three rounds to retain his WBC and WBA super middleweight titles by knockout on Saturday.

Mexico's Alvarez dominated underdog Yildirim from the opening bell and sent the Turk crashing to the canvas with a crisp left-right combination in the third round at Miami's Hard Rock Stadium.

The outclassed Yildirim then failed to emerge from his corner for the fourth round as Alvarez once again demonstrated why he is regarded as the best pound-for-pound fighter in boxing.

"I wanted to have a great fight here and I did what I had to do," Alvarez said.

"I needed a knockout and that's what I did. It doesn't matter if they're taller, if they've got more reach, or they've got a good trainer. I came to do my job, I came here to win."

Alvarez, who improved to 55-1-2 with 37 knockouts, had got back into the ring on Saturday a little over two months after beating Britain's

Callum Smith in December.

After the fight, promoter Eddie Hearn said the 30 year old Mexican star will next seek to add the World Boxing Organisation (WBO) belt to his collection with a May 8 fight against Britain's Billy Joe Saunders.

The Saunders fight will be the next step in Alvarez's quest to become the first undisputed super middleweight champion in boxing history. "No one has done it," Alvarez said. "I want to make history. No-one has done it at 168."

Alvarez meanwhile brushed off suggestions that he wants to be remembered as the greatest boxer Mexico has ever produced.

"I respect everyone but I want to make my own history," Alvarez said.

Saturday's bout will give Saunders plenty of food for thought after Alvarez produced his trademark blend of technical skill and punching power to overwhelm mandatory challenger ,the 29 year old Turk Yildirim.

AFF

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America's Cup on hold amid NZ's lockdown

Wellington, New Zealand - The America's Cup final between Team New Zealand and Italy's Luna Rossa on Auckland's Waitemata Harbour was pushed back on Sunday as a coronavirus outbreak plunged the city back into lockdown.

The first four races in the best-of-13 showdown were scheduled for next weekend but 'will not occur before at least Wednesday, March 10', America's Cup Events chair Tina Symmans said.

"We need to understand all

likely scenarios so that an updated racing schedule can be put in place whilst also ensuring the regulatory requirements are met."

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern ordered a seven-day, level-three, lockdown in Auckland from 6am Sunday (1700 GMT Saturday).

However, Symmans said America's Cup organisers would apply for an exemption to start racing if the lockdown continued longer than expected.

AFF

Muscat and Renaissance post impressive victories

LOCAL CRICKET

Sandeep Goud's allround performance guided Muscat CT to a four-wicket victory against Arm Alpha in an Oman Cricket Premier Division (50-over-a-side) game at Al Amerat on Saturday.

The victory helped Muscat reach 16 points from nine games with eight wins and one loss while Al Turki NMC and IT Works have 12 points each from eight matches.

Meanwhile in a Premier Division T20 game, Mohammed Bilal's four for 26 helped Renaissance CT register a thrilling ten-run victory over Al

Turki NMC at the same venue on Saturday.

BRIEF SCORES

Premier Division (50-over-a-side): Arm Alpha 187 in 46.3 overs (Sanuth Ebrahim 50, Aqib Ilyas 36; Ayaan Khan 3-17, Goud 2-26) **lost to Muscat CT 192-6 in 44.2 overs** (Goud 47, Siddharth Bukkapatnam 41).

Premier Division (T20): Renaissance CT 150-6 (Sufyan Mahmood 49, Pruthvikumar Damubhai 33; Mehran Khan 2-13) **beat Al Turki NMC 140-8** (Prateek Athavale 51, Jitenkumar Ramanandi 35; Bilal 4-26).

A Division (50-over-a-side): ARTT 236-9 (Zeeshan Siddiqui 61, Pranav Mehta 58, Adeel Abbas 49; Rajesh Devashya 3-33, Mohammed Zeeshan 3-41, Toseef ul-Hassan 2-43) **lost to ACT 237-8 in 48 overs** (Iftikhar Ahmed 65, Mohammed Zeeshan 47, Zeeshan Siddiqui 3-33, Mohammed Moshin 2-57).

B Division (30-over-a-side): Bank Muscat 188 in 29.5 overs (Asghar Khan 49; Shameer Karidan 3-30, Noushad Haneefa 3-43) **lost to LC Tech 192-5 in 26 overs** (Rahul Rajeev 57, Jayaprakash Narayan 40).



Sandeep Goud



Ayaan Khan



Siddharth Bukkapatnam



Mohammed Bilal

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FOOTBALL ROUND-UP

Arsenal rout Leicester, Bale shines for Spurs



Tottenham Hotspur's striker Gareth Bale (L) scores his team's fourth goal against Burnley during their English Premier League match at Tottenham Hotspur Stadium in London on Saturday (AFP)

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE

London, UK - Arsenal delivered a hammer blow to Leicester's faint hopes of winning the English Premier League (EPL) with an impressive 3-1 win, while the revitalised Gareth Bale struck twice in Tottenham's 4-0 rout of Burnley on Sunday.

Mikel Arteta's side fell behind to Youri Tielemans' early goal at the King Power Stadium, but David Luiz equalised and Alexandre Lacazette's penalty gave Arsenal the lead.

Nicolas Pepe's second half goal sealed the Gunners' second win in their last six league games and their first success at a team in the Premier League's top three since 2015. Leicester remain in third place and trail leaders Manchester City by 13 points with 12 games remaining.

After five defeats in their previous six league games, Tottenham eased the pressure on Jose Mourinho with a significant contribution from Bale, who made just his third league start of the season.

The Wales forward's most impressive display since his season-long loan move from Real Madrid gave him four goals in his last four appearances.

Bale, who had clashed with Tottenham boss Mourinho over his fitness earlier in February, took just 68 seconds to showcase his quality. The 31 year old met Son Heung-min's cross with a clinical close-range finish.

In the 15th minute, Bale's superb long pass picked out Harry Kane's run and the England captain's shot deflected off James Tarkowski for his 22nd goal of the season.

Lucas Moura netted with a predatory finish after Sergio Reguillon's cross was deflected into the Brazilian's path by Tarkowski in the 31st minute.

Bale was finally giving a glimpse of the talent that once made him the world's most expensive player. The four-time Champions league winner, in his second spell with Tottenham after leaving for Madrid in 2013, scored again with a cool strike

from Son's 55th minute pass. Tottenham are up to eighth as they try to climb back into the battle for a top-four finish.

In Sunday's other early match, Fulham had to settle for a 0-0 draw at Crystal Palace.

OTHER RESULTS:

Saturday: Leeds 0 Aston Villa 1, Newcastle 1 Wolves 1.

SCOTTISH LEAGUE CUP

St Johnstone lift title for first time

Glasgow, UK - St Johnstone lifted the Scottish League Cup for the first time in the club's history on Sunday as Shaun Rooney's goal earned a 1-0 win over Livingston at Hampden.

The Perth-based Saints had never won a major trophy until winning the Scottish Cup in 2014, but have now engraved their name on both Scotland's major cup competitions. Rooney's first-half header came against the run of play as Livingston had started the brighter.

FRENCH LEAGUE

Mbappe on target twice in PSG cruise

Paris, France - Kylian Mbappe scored twice to take his tally to 18 goals in Ligue 1 this season as Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) eased to a 4-0 victory at bottom club Dijon on Saturday to keep the pressure on leaders Lille in the title race.

Moise Kean and Danilo Pereira also scored for Mauricio Pochettino's team, who bounced back from a 0-2 home defeat by Monaco last weekend and moved back up to second in the table, a point behind Lille.

OTHER RESULTS:

Sunday: Monaco 2 Brest 0, Angers 2 Lens 2, Lorient 2 Saint-Etienne 1, Nimes 1 Nantes 1, Reims 0 Montpellier 0; **Saturday:** Bordeaux 1 Metz 2.

ITALIAN LEAGUE

Inter win to stay ahead

Milan, Italy - Serie A leaders Inter Milan beat Genoa 3-0 on

Sunday. Romelu Lukaku opened the scoring after only 32 seconds with a surging run and finish from the edge of the box, his 18th league goal of the season.

He then set up Matteo Darmian to drill home Inter's second in the 69th minute. Alexis Sanchez headed in the third, with his first touch since coming off the bench, after Lukaku's shot was saved eight minutes later.

Earlier on Saturday, Cristiano Ronaldo scored his 19th goal this campaign but champions Juventus had to settle for a 1-1 draw at Hellas Verona.

OTHER RESULTS:

Sunday: Sampdoria 0 Atalanta 2, Crotone 0 Cagliari 2, Udinese 1 Fiorentina 0; **Saturday:** Spezia 2 Parma 2, Bologna 2 Lazio 0.

SPANISH LEAGUE

Sunday: Celta Vigo 1 Real Valladolid 1, Cadiz 0 Real Betis 1; **Saturday:** Eibar 1 Huesca 1, Alaves 0 Osasuna 1, Getafe 3 Valencia 0.

AFP



A file photo of India's Rohit Sharma

Rohit attains career-best eighth spot

ICC RANKINGS

Dubai, UAE - Rohit Sharma has climbed six places to a career-best eighth position in the ICC men's Test batsmen's rankings, while R Ashwin has progressed four places to third position on the bowlers' rankings on the back of their performances in the third Test against England in Ahmedabad that India won by ten wickets.

Left-arm spinner Axar Patel, who was named Player of the Match for his 11-wicket match haul in what was only his second Test, gained 30 slots to reach the 38th position.

Rohit, who top-scored in the first innings with 66 and carried India over the line with an unbeaten 25 in the second, now has 742 rating points, 20 more than his previous best of 722 in October 2019 when he was ranked tenth.

Rohit, Patel, and Ashwin, who

took seven wickets across the two innings and crossed 400 Test wickets, were the chief architects of India's resounding win in a low-scoring contest on a tricky Ahmedabad pitch, which helped keep them in contention for the final of the inaugural World Test Championship.

From the English side, left-arm spinner Jack Leach broke into the top-30, moving up three places to 28th after taking four wickets.

Captain Joe Root's maiden five-wicket haul helped him advance 16 places to 72nd among bowlers. He also made gains in the allrounders' rankings, claiming the joint-13th position with New Zealand's Tim Southee.

Opener Zak Crawley's 53 in the first innings lifted him 15 places to 46th in what was the only notable gain for any England batsman.

Cricinfo

Schalke sack Gross in major clear out

GERMAN LEAGUE

Berlin, Germany - Bundesliga crisis club Schalke sacked almost their entire sporting leadership on Sunday, including coach Christian Gross, after an alleged player revolt and a 16th league defeat plunged their nightmare season deeper into crisis.

"The decision had become unavoidable after results against Dortmund and Stuttgart," said Schalke chairman Jens Buchta in a statement following Schalke's 5-1 loss to Stuttgart on Saturday, a week after defeat to local rivals Borussia Dortmund.

"The team now owe it to the club and the fans to be as successful as possible in the last third of the season."

Coach Gross, sporting director Jochen Schneider and team coordinator Sascha Riether were all relieved of their duties in Sunday's mass clear out.

Gross' assistant Rainer Widmayer and fitness coach Werner Leuthard were also fired. The move comes with Schalke bottom of the league and nine points adrift of safety, having won just one of their 23 league games this season.

Having been in the Champi-



Christian Gross

ons League two seasons ago, Schalke are now hurtling towards their first relegation since 1988.

Veteran Swiss Gross, 66, had been in the job for only two months, having taken over from interim boss Huub Stevens at the end of December. Victory in his second game in charge saw Schalke narrowly avoid equalling a 54 year old Bundesliga record of 31 games without a win, but Gross was unable to stop the rot.

OTHER RESULTS

Sunday: Union Berlin 1 Hoffenheim 1, Mainz 0 Augsburg 1; **Saturday:** Borussia Dortmund 3 Arminia Bielefeld 0, Wolfsburg 2 Hertha Berlin 0, Stuttgart 5 Schalke 1, RB Leipzig 3 Borussia Moenchengladbach 2.

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Ahli-Sidab set up HM's Cup summit clash with Bausher

Semifinals: Ahli-Sidab defeat Seeb 6-3; Sukhjeet scores only goal in Bausher's victory over Sohar

Ashok Purohit
Muscat

Hockey powerhouse Ahli-Sidab is on the verge of a record 12th His Majesty's Cup title when they meet Bausher in the final of the 50th edition of the prestigious tournament at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex (SQSC) on Monday. The final will begin at 7pm.

Ahli-Sidab got the better of arch-rivals Seeb 6-3 in a nine-goal thriller in the first semifinal at the SQSC on Sunday while Bausher made it to their second final after a hard-fought 1-0 win over Sohar in the second semifinal later in the evening.

Dubbed as Oman's hockey 'Clasico', the match between Ahli-Sidab and Seeb, who share 22 titles between them, began at a fast-pace with the first of the nine goals scored in the opening minute of the match through Ahli-Sidab's Indian recruit Affan Yousuf.

Seeb had hardly overcome the shock of conceding the opening goal before Yousuf, who has been with Ahli-Sidab for the past five years, hammered in the

second goal in the third minute of the match.

A lightning start, and two goals in the first three minutes, stunned Seeb but they came back hard with a goal just before the end of first quarter through their Pakistani player Muhammad Ateeq. Seeb's strong fightback saw them draw level 2-2 at the stroke of the first quarter when Fahad Hassan al Lawati scored.

The fast tempo of the match continued and Ahli-Sidab went ahead through Aseel al Maini who found the back of Seeb's net in the 17th minute and they led 3-2 at the interval.

The match looked to go into Ahli-Sidab's favour soon after resumption as Ashraf al Nasri got the team's fourth goal (33rd min) and four minutes later, C R Kumar-coached Ahli-Sidab made it 5-2 as Ali Salim al Zadjali converted a penalty corner.

Seeb, coached by Khalid al Raisi, rallied back with their third goal as they earned a penalty stroke with nine minutes remaining. Pakistan's Mubashar Ali reduced the margin to make it 3-5 but as they went all out, a



Ahli-Sidab players celebrate their win over Seeb in the first semifinal of the 50th His Majesty's Cup Hockey Championship at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex on Sunday night

quick counter-attack from Ahli-Sidab got them their sixth goal with Maini scoring his second.

In his remarks to *Muscat Daily* after the match, Ahli-Sidab's coach C R Kumar said, "It was a good team effort by my players.

I am very happy to see my boys in the final. The club has a glorious history and we would try to achieve a record 12th title tomorrow."

Kumar's assistant, Khalid Khalfan, who has himself been

part of many Ahli-Sidab's title victories in the past said, "I am very very happy and I hope to win the 12th title tomorrow. We are confident and our players are excited to be in the summit clash. We will go all out."



Ahli-Sidab and Seeb players in action during the semifinal on Sunday



Action from the match between Bausher and Sohar at the SQSC on Sunday

Sukhjeet makes the difference

Bausher, coached by Saleh al Farsi, overcame a tough rival in Sohar in the second semis as they eked out a solitary goal win.

The all-important goal was scored by Bausher's in-form Indian recruit Sukhjeet Singh 'Kaka' in the third quarter (40th minute) of the match. Sohar tried hard to score but failed as a gritty Bausher defence stood firm to hold on to the narrow lead.

Bausher have reached the final only once in 2016 when they lost to Seeb and they will be the underdogs when they face 11-time winners Ahli-Sidab in the final tomorrow.

Speaking after a hard-fought semifinal win, Bausher coach Farsi told *Muscat Daily*, "It was a very tough game and Sohar made it very difficult for us. I wish them luck for the third place playoff tomorrow."

"It was a great team effort and these games are meant to win. I told my players to play to a plan and they did. We are ready to go for the title."

Ahli-Sidab will be the favourite but Farsi said, "Tomorrow is a new day and another big challenge. My players have made me proud so far and I think they can make me one more time tomorrow."

Ahli-Sidab's last title came in 2018 when they beat Seeb to become joint record holder of 11 titles. In the previous edition in 2019, Ahli-Sidab went down to Al Nasr 1-2 and they will hope to overcome that disappointment with a record title.

The final will be held under the auspices of H E Dr Abdullah bin Nasser al Harrasi, Minister of Information. Prior to the final, the third-place playoff between Seeb and Sohar will take place at 4pm.

@ashokmuscat

Ivankovic picks 17 from Dhofar, Seeb clubs for Dubai trip

26 players called up for the domestic and overseas camp beginning on March 8 in Muscat



A file photo of a match between Dhofar and Seeb clubs

Ashok Purohit
Muscat

Omantel League champions Seeb and His Majesty's Cup holders Dhofar have been displaying impressive form in the ongoing domestic football season. Expectedly, both the clubs provided the majority of players among the 26 called up by the national team's head coach, Branko Ivankovic of Croatia, for the forthcoming domestic and overseas camp to Dubai, UAE.

Ivankovic's Red Warriors will gather for a short camp in Muscat on March 8 before proceeding to Dubai on March 11 for a 15-day camp during which Oman will play international friendlies against Jordan and India.

Addressing a press conference at the Oman Football Association (OFA) headquarters in Seeb on Sunday, Ivankovic expressed his concerns on the disruption caused by the coronavirus pandemic while announcing the list of 26 players.

Among the 26 selected, nine are from Dhofar, who are unbeaten this season, in the Omantel League and in HM's Cup so far, while eight players



Branko Ivankovic (right) and Maqbool al Balushi at the press meet

have been drafted from Seeb, who lead the Omantel League standings after ten rounds.

Both Seeb and Dhofar are also in fray for HM's Cup title as they drew goalless in the first-leg semifinal at the Seeb Sports Stadium on Friday. The two powerhouses meet again in a do-or-die clash in the return-leg in Salalah on Tuesday.

Besides the players from these two clubs, two players each have been called up from Al Rustaq and Al Nasr clubs while one player each has been picked from Al Nahda, Oman, Nizwa and Al Suwaiq clubs. Mohsin al Ghassani, whose contract with Iran's Sepahan was

mutually discontinued recently, and is without a club, has also been selected.

However, Ivankovic has been unable to call up Oman captain Ahmed Mubarak 'Kanu', and another talented player Jameel al Yahmadi, both of whom are currently playing in Qatar with Al Markhiya Club keeping in mind the travel restrictions due to COVID-19. Also missing is defender Mohammed Faraj al Rawahi due to the same issue.

Though the clubs are mandated to release the players during the FIFA days in March, quarantine rules have forced clubs to advise players to avoid travel to other countries.

Ivankovic said few players missed out as they were not fit and named four of them who are injured - Mundhir al Alawi, Basil Rawahi, Mohammed Ramadhan and Juma al Habsi.

Ivankovic said, "We hope to have a nice preparation for our forthcoming FIFA World Cup and Asian Cup qualifiers in June with the friendlies against Jordan and India. In current scenario, arranging friendlies and travel is a challenge. So we are happy to travel to Dubai and play two games, which will help our preparations for the June qualifiers, where Oman will meet Qatar, Afghanistan and Bangladesh in Group E.

"The qualifiers will be at a single venue, most likely Qatar, and though it may not be my preferred option, given the pandemic this looks to be the only option and we are ready for it."

The 67 year old Ivankovic said that 'the national team doors are always open for deserving players and we are also closely following up the progress of our injured players'.

The Croatian coach said the coronavirus outbreak severely impacted the team's preparation plans last year and he was looking ahead for the first official

engagements with the team in Dubai. The friendly against Jordan will be the first game for the Red Warriors with Ivankovic at helm followed by the match against India on March 25.

Maqbool al Balushi, national team manager, said that 'travel curbs' have forced the coach to avoid calling captain Kanu and other players playing in Qatar.

The nine Dhofar players picked for the Dubai trip are Faiz al Rusheidi (gk), Mohammed al Musalami, Ahmed al Khumaisi, Ali Salim al Nahar (all defenders), Abdullah Fawaz, Harib al Saadi, Yazid al Mashani (all midfielders), Khalid al Hajri and Omar al Malki (both forwards).

Among the eight Seeb players called up are Ahmed Faraj al Rawahi (gk), Khalid al Breiki, Abdulaziz al Ghailani, Ali al Busaidi (all defenders), Amjad al Harthy, Zahr al Aghbari, Salah al Yahyaei (all midfielders) and Abdulaziz al Miqbali (striker).

The other players selected are: Ibrahim al Mukhaini (gk), defenders: Fahmi Durbin, Ahmad al Kaabi, Abbas al Hashami; midfielders: Omar al Fazari, Mohsin Jawhar and Yaseen al Sheyadi; forwards: Mohammad al Ghafri, Mohsin al Ghassani.

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