



OMAN, US TO BOOST SECURITY COOPERATION

MUSCAT: An official session of talks was held between the Sultanate and the United States. The session dealt with promoting security cooperation. The session also reviewed the joint security training and exercise programmes, scheduled to be implemented in 2021. These programmes aim at upgrading the national capabilities in various joint security fields, as well as sustaining security coordination between the two sides for the interest of regional stability and security. The session comes within the framework of enhancing the strong strategic relations binding the Sultanate and the USA. It was attended by senior officers representing military and security units and officials from the US Embassy in Muscat. - **ONA**

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From January 1 onwards, only Omani lawyers will be allowed to represent their clients in courts



One Rial from every OMR100 earned by Omanis every month will go to the Job Security System



No Objection Certificate (NOC) is to be scrapped from January 1



People found using single-use plastic bags will be fined between OMR100 and OMR2,000



Electricity and water tariffs to rise this year

2021

CHANGES ON THE HORIZON

Times of Oman has compiled a list of big changes that Oman will witness next year

Times News Service

MUSCAT: A number of measures designed to help Oman grow will come into effect from Friday, January 1.

In 2021, single-use plastic bags will no longer be available in stores, as part of the government's plans to safeguard the

environment for the future generations. Expats will also be able to move between companies in a freer manner, with the no objection certificate (NOC) being scrapped.

Electricity and water subsidies could also be steadily phased out, and one Rial out of every OMR100 earned by

Omanis every month will go to the Job Security System. As part of the country's Omanisation efforts, expatriate lawyers will no longer be able to practice in courts.

Taxation

This aside, a value-added tax on selected goods and services is expected to come into effect on 16 April 2021, in addition to many government units expanding their online operations. Shahswar Al Balushi was the head of the Tanfeedh Labour Labs that worked on the processes around the scrapping of the NOC. "The NOC was firstly

brought in to regulate the movement of expatriate labour in the country, because it was felt that there were too many expats in the country, and the need was to prioritise opportunities for Omanis," he said.

"During the COVID-19 pandemic, a lot of expatriates left, so the balance between Omanis and expats has now shifted more in favour of the locals.

"This means there are now more opportunities available for locals, and there will be even more when the economy picks up again, so it was decided to encourage free movement of expat workers again," said Al

Balushi. "Oman is also working towards attracting foreign investment, so free movement of labour will encourage more investors to seek out this market."

Job market

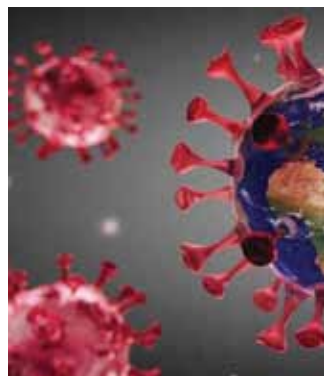
Adding to this, Dr Hesham Magd, the head of the Faculty of Business and Economics at the Modern College of Business and Science, said, "With this, both employer and employee are winners. The employee is happy he can get a better job, the employer can hire from the local market without wasting resources searching abroad for

a candidate and training them all over again."

Commenting on the planned phasing out of the electricity and water tariffs, he said the plans had been drawn up so that customers in the country would be able to adjust to the new rates over the planned five-year period, rather than feel the shock of the increase in cost all at once.

"The electricity and water in our country is subsidised, so that it is affordable to everyone, but the government's cost of bearing this is more than OMR500 million," said Al Balushi. **>A3**

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES



OMAN COVID-19 recoveries reach 94.5% in Oman

2 The total number of positive COVID-19 cases in the Sultanate reached 128,719, while the number of recoveries stood at 121,614, comprising 94.5 percent. The total number of COVID-19 related deaths stood at 1,497. **>A2**

WORLD First COVID-19 variant confirmed in US

1 A new variant of COVID-19 first discovered in UK was identified in Colorado state of the US on Tuesday, according to the state's governor. It is the first time the variant strain has been identified in the United States, according to media reports. **>A6**

MARKET GCC bond and sukuk issuances gain

3 GCC bond and sukuk issuances witnessed year-on-year (y-o-y) gains for the second consecutive year in 2020 and trends for the coming year shows flat to slight decline in issuances in 2021, according to a new report. **>B1**



Oman's distinctive silver designs

A4

PANDEMIC

No side-effects among those vaccinated

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Omanis who've been administered the COVID-19 vaccine have said they've felt no side-effects since, and have urged others in the country to get vaccinated when called upon to do so.

The country began its public vaccination drive against the coronavirus on Sunday, with health-care workers treating COVID-19 patients, the elderly, those with low immunity, and chronic ailments first in line to be vaccinated.

One of them was 85-year-old Musabbah bin Abdullah Al Nasri from the Wilayat of Rustaq in South Al Batinah. Speaking to the *Times of Oman*, he said, "I was vaccinated on 27 December, after being contacted by staff in Tiwi, since I am one of the people



included in the groups of those eligible for the vaccine.

"I am above the age of 65, and suffer from chronic diseases: heart disease, blood pressure and cholesterol," he explained. "I have not been out of the house for nine months, since the start of the pandemic, and I have followed all the precautionary measures that the Ministry of Health, Oman TV and the concerned authorities have been publishing." **>A2**



Dhuhr.....	12.15pm
Asr.....	3:16pm
Maghrib.....	5:36pm
Isha.....	6:51pm
Fajr (Tomorrow).....	5:28am

40TH ANNIVERSARY

Sultanate and Thailand to boost bilateral relations

MUSCAT: The Sultanate and Thailand stressed keenness to promote areas of cooperation and coordination to serve the joint interests.

This came when Sayyid Badr Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister and Don Pramudwinai, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand exchanged congratulations on marking the 40th anniversary of establishing the diplomatic relations between the two countries.

The mutual visits and consultations at different levels have contributed in boosting relations and friendship between the two



countries and people. This, in turn, opened wider horizons in the march of upgrading relations between both sides.

Since establishing the diplomatic relations in 1980, the two countries have consolidated pillars for fruitful cooperation in different political, diplomatic, economic and cultural fields.

This positive cooperation, which is based on mutual respect, also covered areas of energy security, healthcare, tourism and food security.

Sayyid Badr reiterated the Sultanate's continuous keenness on maintaining such relations in a bid to serve the joint interests between the Sultanate and other sisterly and friendly countries.

- ONA

COVID-19

Healthcare employees were very courteous, say vaccinated people

Describing the quality of care shown to him at the health centre, he said, "I did not suffer any discomfort from the vaccine needle, nor was I afraid or worried at all, because I trust the government authorities regarding the safety of the vaccine. I had a normal day, which I spent playing with my children and grandchildren.

"The healthcare staff took good care of me from the time I entered the centre until I left it," Al Nasri revealed. "I would like to thank all the workers at the Ministry of Health for their great concern shown to me. The vaccine is very safe, and taking it is the only way to prevent infection from the disease, while also adhering to the precautionary measures. I encouraged many of my friends over the phone to go and take the vaccine, and fall prey to rumours circulated online."

Another of those who was administered the vaccine was Qasim Mohammed Al Shehhi,



from Wilayat Bukha in Oman's northern Governorate of Musandam. He was eligible for the vaccine as a frontline healthcare worker, and asked people to not be swayed by the unfounded rumours they might see online or hear from friends.

"I was happy to receive the vaccine, which was administered by the Directorate General of Health Services at 10am, which was a part of the celebrations for the inauguration of the Khasab polyclinic," he said. "I received the vaccine on 28 December. So

far, I have only felt a little pain at the site of the injection, but nothing more.

"The hospital staff did inform me of the possibility of developing other side-effects, such as headaches, fever, and body pain, but so far, I have experienced none of them," he explained.

"They also told me to contact them should I suffer from any of these in the next few days. No one advised me to take the vaccine - I knew how important it was to protect myself and those around me."

Al Shehhi once again reiterated the importance of not listening to spurious claims about the vaccine, and taking information from legitimate sources.

"I do not care much for rumours," he said. "I do not listen to them. Please only take news from the Ministry of Health, or your local hospital or clinic. I advise everyone to come forward to be vaccinated."

COVID-19 recoveries reach 94.5%

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The total number of positive COVID-19 cases in the Sultanate reached 128,719, while the number of recoveries stood at 121,614, comprising 94.5 percent.

Meanwhile, the total number of COVID-19 related death cases

stood at 1,497, the Ministry of Health said.

The Ministry also pointed out that 7 cases were hospitalised over the past 24 hours, adding that the total number of current hospitalised COVID-19-infected patients stands at 82, of them 31 are in intensive care units (ICU). -ONA



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NEW YEAR

<FROM A1

Here is what will change in Oman during 2021

OMR100 fine for single use bags

“The money going here could be used for investment into projects for economic expansion, or used for social development, particularly in those areas that most need it.”

“There are some who still need these tariffs – the vulnerable sections of society – for example, but that is not true of those who are earning well among Omanis and expats, or large companies that have more than enough capital to pay for these utilities,” he added. “Consumers feel they might be negatively affected by this, but what it will lead to is more judicious use of our resources, which cost a lot to generate.”

Complementing Al Balushi’s view, Ramanuj Venkatesh, a financial analyst in the country, added that the money could be used to rebalance Oman’s fiscal deficits, and develop infrastructure where needed.

“Phasing this out will make sure the consumer’s pocket is not hit so hard, especially since a change in tariffs will take time to get to grips with,” he revealed. “The revised plan will help Oman boost its local bond ratings, which took a hit because of the pandemic and decline in oil prices.”

Magd said, “A sense of responsibility will begin, and although the employment process could slow down in the private sector, there will be a transition period after this takes place. The government will be able to reduce the fiscal deficit and the debt burden will lighten.”

Value added tax, when it does come to Oman in April 2021, will see a 5 per cent tax introduced on goods and services. 90 essential items, however, have been exempted from this, most of them being food and medical products needed for our daily living.

Al Balushi chose to allay fears about VAT hitting people’s spending capabilities strongly, saying that the tax rate in Oman



will be far lower than it is in many countries around the world. “The alternative was to devalue our currency, which would be very bad for the country,” he admitted. “The common people would’ve been most hard hit by this, because the purchasing power of the Rial would decrease, and that means everything would have become 15 or 20 per cent more expensive. “It is better, therefore, that costs of items only rise by five percent. Even then, many key items are exempt. This will make consumers use their money wisely, instead of spending lavishly where not needed.”

Venkatesh added, “Sectors affected by VAT include supply, logistics, trade, finance, and foreign direct investment. Taxing these will contribute around 1.5 to two percent of the Gap.” And as Magd said, “VAT will provide a permanent, reliable revenue stream for the government. As an alternative source of economic development, VAT reduces economic dependence on oil.”

Job Security System
Starting next year, all Omani employees in the country will need to contribute one Rial of every OMR100 earned every month to support the Job Security System (JSS).

Launched on November 1 to provide decent standards of living for Omani jobseekers, it is jointly run by the Public Authority for Social Insurance (PASI)

and the Ministry of Labour. Customers will also need to get used to shops no longer selling single-use plastic bags to customers. They will be replaced by reusable bags made from cloth, paper, and other recyclable materials. Oman’s Environment Authority has, for the past few weeks, run awareness campaigns in multiple languages, along with a countdown to when the plastic bag ban takes effect.

“Plastic bags contain a high proportion of lead,” said the EA. “When exposed to sunlight, toxins harmful to our health are released from the bags. As of January 2021, Royal Decree No. 23/2020 will come into effect, banning the use of non-recyclable plastic bags.”

Other problems posed by plastic bags, per the authority, include animals dying after choking on them, preventing sunlight from reaching the roots of trees, thereby stunting their growth, and the leeching of their chemicals into the environment over the long-term. Female workers who make plastic bags handle chemicals that increase their chances of miscarriage, while lowering testosterone levels in males.

To promote Omanisation in the judicial sector, from 1 January onwards, only Omani lawyers are allowed to represent their clients in court. Expat legal advisors, though, can still provide mediation services outside of the courtroom.

“The rule was brought in to encourage and help more Omanis to take up jobs as lawyers and other associated practices,” said MU Solomon, a legal consultant in Salalah.

“Court cases in Oman are normally held only in Arabic, so clients would hire expat lawyers who spoke Arabic to mediate, while non-Arabic speakers could also assist with the case in the courtroom. That has, however, now ended.”

The fine, which can go up to OMR2,000, is intended to help people realise that following environment-friendly practices is important



Times News Service

MUSCAT: People in Oman found using single-use plastic bags will be required to pay a fine ranging from OMR100 to OMR2,000, after the ban comes into effect on 1 January, 2021. The Environment Authority (EA) decided to impose this fine so that people would understand the importance of following practices that help safeguard environment.

“The authority will go ahead with the decision to ban single-use plastic bags,” said Ahmed bin Zahir Al Hinai, the Director General

of Environmental Affairs at the EA. “This is part of our plans to preserve the Omani environment from pollutants and waste considered harmful to it and the rich wildlife of our country.”

The decision is part of the provisions of the Environmental Protection and Pollution Control Law, which was passed through Ministerial Decision No. 114/2001, to achieve more harmonisation and integration of the objectives of sustainable development, according to its indicators under the national action plan for the management of plastic products and their waste.

“This decision has come after a series of studies carried out by the authority, as well as workshops in co-operation with the relevant govern-

ment and private agencies,” Al Hinai said. “An appropriate and sufficient period had been set from the time this decision was announced, until it comes into force, so that we can make sure it is properly implemented.

“This will help in the decision not having a negative effect on either manufacturers of bags, or consumers,” he went on to say. “It will help them keep pace with the developments and subsequent changes in our policies, which are in keeping with treaties that have an effect at global level.”

The decision by the EA was made to stop plastic bags from polluting the environment, and was signed into law with the issuance of Ministerial Decision No. 23/2020. Oman took this step after observing other countries that implemented similar decisions to prevent single-use plastic bags, with their banning also helping preserve marine and land-based wildlife.

“The authority expects to go ahead with this decision, and, in collaboration with the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MOCIIP), we will ensure all appropriate measures are taken so that companies and individuals follow the law in this matter.”

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OMAN'S DISTINCTIVE SILVER DESIGNS



IF YOU ARE LOOKING to buy some finest silverware, Oman is the ideal place. Silverware industries are among the most important and widespread metalwork businesses in Oman.

According to Oman's Ministry of Tourism, "The silver industry occupies a key place in the history of Oman. Omani silver jewellery is characterised by a rich sense of the aesthetic and reflects the unique taste of the country's authentic art, deeply rooted in its history.

"Silver in Omani society is reflective of its rich social and religious symbols. The Omani dress, whether that of women or men, is never complete without silver jewellery that adds to its beauty, especially apparent in the Omani khanjar (dagger)."

When it comes to jewellery, every region has their own styles. Most of the jewellery pieces have Filigree work done on them. Filigree is an ancient metal-work technique, used by skilled jewel-



lers and craftsmen, to painstakingly create impossibly intricate designs using gold or silver strands which are interwoven to produce unique pieces of jewellery and decorations.

Nizwa, Rustaq, Ibri and Sur are some of the well-known silver centres in Oman, having their own distinctive designs as well as techniques.

To buy good quality silver, one should visit the local souqs which has several shops. These shops sell goods made with pure Omani silver. Silver lamps, jewellery, khanjars and other silver souvenirs are available.





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HISTORICAL RECORD

‘Oman Since Antiquity’ encyclopaedia launched at National Museum

MUSCAT: A ceremony was held at the National Museum yesterday to launch an encyclopaedia titled “Oman Since Antiquity: Photo-illustrated Historical Record”.

The encyclopaedia, consisting of four large relics, reconstructs Omani history and showcases images spanning a period of more than 7,000 years. ‘Oman Since Antiquity’ was compiled in response to the late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said bin Taimour and it has been supervised by Mohammed Al Zubair, the late Sultan’s retired Adviser for Economic Planning Affairs. The National Museum has been the leading institution that lent support to this project and other projects.

The project was launched by Salim Mohammed Al Mahrouqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism, Chairman of the National Museum’s Board of Trustees.

The first part of the four-section encyclopedia chronicles the pre-Islamic era in Oman. The second part extends from the time of advent of Islam into Oman (629-630 AD) to pre-renaissance period that ended upon Sultan Qaboos’s accession to power in the country in 1970. The third and fourth sections cover the modern Oman Renaissance period that concluded upon the demise of Sultan Qaboos and the accession to power by His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik on 11 January 2020. Featuring a collection of pictures and infographics, the encyclopaedia also includes a videotaped film of various stages of compilation.





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First known case of COVID-19 variant confirmed in US

The COVID-19 variant was identified in a Colorado man in his 20s, with no travel history

WASHINGTON: A more contagious variant of COVID-19 that was first discovered in Britain was identified in the U.S. state of Colorado on Tuesday, according to the state's governor.

It is the first time the variant strain has been identified in the United States, according to media reports. The COVID-19 variant was identified in a Colorado man in his 20s, with no travel history, said Colorado Governor Jared Polis in a statement.

The man is in isolation in Elbert County, and will remain in isolation until cleared by health officials, according to Polis.

No close contacts of the man have been identified yet, but health



officials are working on contact tracing, the governor said.

The Colorado state lab was the first in the country to quickly identify the variant through sophisticated analysis of testing samples. The lab confirmed and notified the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) of the case, according to Polis.

"There is a lot we don't know about this new COVID-19 variant, but scientists in the United Kingdom are warning the world that it is significantly more

contagious," he said.

"The health and safety of Coloradans is our top priority and we will closely monitor this case, as well as all COVID-19 indicators, very closely. We are working to prevent spread and contain the virus at all levels," Polis said.

Jill Hunsaker Ryan, executive director of Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, said the state is currently using all the tools available to protect public health and mitigate the spread of this variant.

Countries around the world have tightened their restrictive measures after Britain recently announced the discovery of the new variant of SARS-CoV-2.

Viruses constantly change through mutation, and preliminary analysis in the country suggests that this new variant may be up to 70 percent more transmissible than previously circulating variants, according to the CDC.

A new order took effect in the United States on Monday which requires air passengers arriving in the United States from Britain to test negative, no more than 72 hours before departure.

Passengers are required to get a viral test within three days before their flight from Britain to the United States departs, and provide written documentation of their laboratory test result to the airline, the CDC announced last week.

Airlines must confirm the negative test result for all passengers before they board. If a passenger chooses not to take a test, the airline must deny boarding to the passenger, said the CDC.

The United States has recorded nearly 19.5 million cases with over 337,400 related deaths as of Tuesday afternoon, according to the real-time count kept by Johns Hopkins University. **xinhua**



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COVID-19

Biden criticises slow pace of vaccination in US

WASHINGTON: US President-elect Joe Biden on Tuesday criticised the current administration for the slower-than-expected pace of the nationwide COVID-19 vaccination.

"As I long feared and warned, the effort to distribute and administer the vaccine is not progressing as it should," said Biden, who received his own first dose a little over a week ago in a show of confidence in the vaccine. He added that at the current pace, "it's going to take years, not months, to vaccinate the American people."

The president-elect has pledged to distribute 100 million vaccine shots in his first 100 days in office. "This is going to be the greatest operational challenge we've ever faced as a nation," said Biden, who was speaking from Wilmington, Delaware.

"But we're going to get it done. But it's going to take a vast new effort that's not yet underway," he said. The current pace of vaccine distribution and inoculation has been slower than what officials have hoped. Data tracked by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention showed that as of Tuesday evening, some 11.4 million vaccine doses have been distributed, and only 2.1 million Americans have received their first dose. That left officials only two days to reach the year-end target of vaccinating 20 million Americans.

For the two types of vaccines that have got emergency use authorization in the United States, the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine requires two doses to be given three weeks apart, while the two doses of Moderna vaccine should come four weeks apart. **xinhua**



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Britain approves Oxford-AstraZeneca coronavirus vaccine

The approval by the medicines regulator means the vaccine is classed as both safe and effective

LONDON: British regulators on Wednesday approved a coronavirus vaccine designed by scientists at the University of Oxford.

The UK has ordered 100 million doses from the manufacturer AstraZeneca — enough to vaccinate 50 million people.

The approval, by the medicines regulator, means the vaccine is classed as both safe and effective.

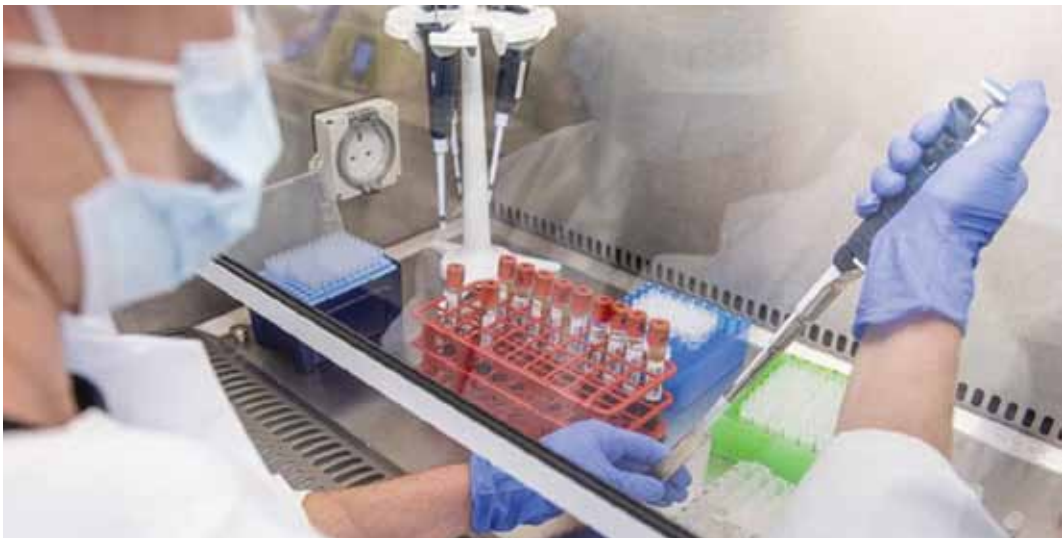
Prime Minister Boris Johnson hailed the “fantastic news” as “a triumph for British science.”

British Health Secretary Matt Hancock said in an interview that the government “can now accelerate the vaccine rollout.”

“This brings forward the day when we can get our lives back to normal,” he told British broadcaster Sky News. “We can say now with confidence that we can get out of this by spring.”

How effective is the vaccine?

Regulatory endorsement is a welcome boost for AstraZeneca and the Oxford team, which have been accused of a lack of clarity about the results from late-stage trials.



APPROVED: British Health Secretary Matt Hancock said in an interview that the government “can now accelerate the vaccine rollout.”

Pooled results from those trials show it had overall efficacy was 70.4%. Efficacy was 62% for trial participants given two full doses, but 90% for a smaller sub-group given a half, then a full dose.

Researchers said that the finding of 90% efficacy for the low-dose/high-dose regime needed more investigation. AstraZeneca did not specify which dose regime had been approved.

How is the vaccine different from BioNTech-Pfizer one?

The UK already approved the use earlier this month of the BioNTech-Pfizer vaccine, which was developed by German scientists.

Tests began on Oxford-AstraZeneca early in 2020, with the initial clinical trials being carried out in April.

But this second vaccine is expected to lead to a significant increase in vaccination as it is

cheaper and easier to produce than the BioNTech-Pfizer jab.

The German-developed vaccine must keep at -70C, while the Oxford version can be kept in an ordinary refrigerator, making it easier to deliver to those who need it.

Is the new vaccine effective against the new variant?

Britain and South Africa in particular are grappling with new variants of the coronavirus, and many countries have responded by banning passenger flights and blocking trade.

AstraZeneca and other developers have said they are studying the impact of the new variant but expect that their shots will be effective against it.

“Our belief at this point is that this vaccine should be effective against the variant,” AstraZeneca’s Chief Executive Pascal Soriot told the BBC on Wednesday.

Will the vaccine be approved in the EU?

EU regulator the European Medicines Authority (EMA), which moved to Amsterdam from London last year in March before Brexit, says the Oxford jab may not be approved until February at the earliest for use in the EU.

EMA deputy executive director Noel Wathion told Belgium’s Dutch-language newspaper Het Nieuwsblad on Wednesday: “They have not even filed an application with us yet. Not even enough to warrant a conditional marketing licence.”

“We need additional data about the quality of the vaccine. And, after that, the company has to formally apply,” he said.

“We are not just going to give approval based on a press release that they have sent out themselves.” **DW**

YEMENI GOVERNMENT



16 killed, over 60 injured in blast at Aden airport

ADEN: At least 16 people have been killed and 60 more were wounded in an attack on Aden airport, according to local authorities.

The incident happened shortly after a plane carrying the newly-formed and internationally recognised Yemeni government arrived from Saudi Arabia.

Loud blasts and gunfire were heard at the airport shortly after the plane landed in Yemen’s temporary capital, witnesses said.

Cabinet members safe

Members of the new Cabinet made it safely to the city’s presidential palace, according to witnesses and Saudi media reports.

Those transferred to safety were said to include Prime Minister Maen Abdulmalik Saeed, as well as Saudi Ambassador to Yemen Mohammed Said Al Jaber.

“It would have been a disaster if the plane was bombed,” the prime minister said, insisting the plane was the target of the attack as it was supposed to land earlier.

“We and the members of the government are in the temporary capital of Aden and everyone is fine,” he tweeted from Maasheq palace. “The cowardly terrorist

The incident happened after a plane carrying the newly-formed and internationally recognised Yemeni government landed at the airport

act that targeted Aden airport is part of the war that is being waged against the Yemeni state and its great people.”

Yemen’s internationally-recognised government and southern separatists formed a new power-sharing cabinet on December 18. They arrived in Aden days after being sworn in Saudi Arabia.

The government of President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi and the separatists are allies within a Saudi-backed coalition. **DW**

MUD SLIDE

Several injured in Norway landslide, 500 evacuated

OSLO: A large mud- and land slide hit the town of Ask, the administrative centre of Gjerdrum municipality in southeastern Norway, early on Wednesday, police and local media said.

Police reported at least 10 injured, one of them critically.

A total of 26 people are unaccounted for — the number of people who have an address at the landslide site, police said.

Some 500 people were evacuated, according to local reports.

A ‘serious’ situation

“Police are designating this as a disaster,” Pettersen told broadcaster NRK. Emergency calls had come in from people in the Gjerdrum municipality, home to 5,000 people, saying their whole house was moving, Pettersen said. “So there are dramatic reports and the situation is serious.”

“Conditions are challenging. It is dark and the weather is bad,” Pettersen said, adding with more daylight expected soon, assessing the situation would be easier.

Norwegian rescue group Norsk Folkehjelp Follo said they had sent a total of 40 crew and 9 emergency ambulances to assist with



search and rescue efforts.

Prime minister reacts

Norway’s Prime Minister Erna Solberg offered her sympathies, saying: “It hurts to see how the forces of nature have ravaged Gjerdrum. My thoughts go to everyone affected by the landslide.”

“This should have been a New Year’s weekend where we should have had peace and quiet and maybe should have worried most

about COVID-19 and not whether we have missing persons from a landslide,” Solberg told Norwegian broadcaster TV2.

Quick clay region

The area where Ask is located is known for having a lot of so-called quick clay — a form of clay that can change from solid to liquid form. There have been previous landslides reported in the area. **DW**

HEALTH MINISTER

No relaxation of coronavirus measures in Germany soon

BERLIN: The German health minister on Wednesday said he could not envisage a relaxation of coronavirus measures when the current set of restrictions expires on January 10.

Jens Spahn said he could see no end to the lockdown currently in place as the country reported a record number of COVID-19 fatalities for the previous 24 hours.

Germany registered 1,129 coronavirus-related deaths over the past day, the Robert Koch Institute (RKI) of infectious diseases in Berlin said early on Wednesday.

A further 22,459 new infections were recorded for the period.

“These figures prove just how brutally the virus is still pummeling us,” said Spahn, adding that any return to normality was still far off.

Spahn said expected Germany to experience the “quietest New Year’s Eve” in living memory, as the need to reduce contacts became clear.

“1,129 families will be mourning during New Year’s,” he said, referring to the day’s fatalities.

Will there be a lockdown extension?

Even after January 10, said Spahn, there would still need to be significant limitation on the number of contacts that people had. On the question of whether schools and day care centers could be opened, he said this would need to be decided at a meeting of the federal government and state premiers on January 5.

Spahn said he did not wish to anticipate the outcome but that, in case of doubt, he would “rather have one week too long now than one week too little.” **DW**

END OF THE YEAR

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Ajinkya Rahane's name engraved on MCG Honours Board

The middle-order batsman added another feather to his cap as his name was engraved on the MCG Honours Board for the second time



MELBOURNE: India's stand-in skipper Ajinkya Rahane not only led the team to a memorable win in the second Test of the series against Australia on Tuesday, but also joined an elite list after his batting masterclass in the Boxing Day Test.

The middle-order batsman added another feather to his cap as his name was engraved on the MCG Honours Board for the second time after he hit a masterful hundred in the first innings.

"Following a batting masterclass in the Boxing Day Test against Australia, #TeamIndia captain @ajinkyarahane has his name engraved on the MCG Honours Board for the second time," Indian Cricket Team captioned the video on Instagram.

Rahane was also the inaugural winner of the Mullagh Medal after he won the Man of the Match award in the second Test. The Boxing Day Test Player of the Match medal has been named in honour of trailblazing Indigenous

cricketer Johnny Mullagh.

Rahane refused to take credit for his Man of the Match show in the second Test at the Melbourne Cricket Ground.

Having hit the winning run to seal the win on Tuesday, the batsman immediately pointed at the brilliant show put on by the team.

"Really proud of all the players. Played really well. Want to give credit to the debutants (Mohammed Siraj and (Shubman) Gill, the character they showed after

the Adelaide loss was great to see," he said in the post-match presentation.

Harping on the need to show character after being hammered in the pink-ball Test at the Adelaide Oval, Rahane said: "Character was important for us, especially after losing Umesh in the second innings. That (five-bowler plan) worked well for us nicely. We were thinking of having an all-rounder and Jadeja has been brilliant for us."

While Gill didn't put the stands on fire, he definitely weathered the fire thrown at him by the duo of Mitchell Starc and Pat Cummins. And Rahane was quick to point out how the youngster stood tall. He also praised Siraj for standing up and getting counted, especially with India missing Umesh in the second innings.

"Shubman, we all know his first-class career and in this game, he has shown the intent to play shots at this level. Has shown composure. Siraj has shown that he can bowl with discipline. It's really difficult for debutants to bowl with discipline but that's where I think the first-class experience comes in handy," he pointed. **ANI**

NZ VS PAKISTAN



Kiwis snatch late win after Fawad-Rizwan blockathon

TAURANGA: New Zealand boosted their hopes of reaching the ICC World Test Championship final after securing a 101-run win against Pakistan in the first Test here on Wednesday.

With this win, New Zealand not only gained a 1-0 lead in the Test series but also moved closer to the No.1 spot in the ICC Test Team Rankings. The side will confirm their place on the top if they clinch the series. Day five of the first Test was an emotional joy ride. With Fawad Alam and Pakistan skipper Mohammad Rizwan weathering the storm in the first two sessions, it almost looked like the game will be drawn as the duo stitched the eighth-longest fourth-innings partnership of all time.

However, New Zealand pacers denied visitors a draw as Pakistan lost all six wickets in the concluding session of the match. For Fawad, it was like a re-birth as he hit a Test century after 11 years. The left-handed batsman had scored a hundred on his debut in July 2009.

Resuming day five on 71/3, Pakistan suffered an early setback with the loss of Azhar Ali as Trent Boult struck early in the morning. Ali and Fawad had weathered the storm on Wednesday after Pakistan were left reeling at 0/2. Rep-

licating the same, Fawad and Rizwan then took Pakistan to drinks without any further damage.

Despite losing Azhar, Pakistan looked good and had a decent morning session courtesy of an unbeaten 62-run partnership between Fawad and Rizwan. For Fawad, it was all about being patient on day five and hitting the bad balls. The left-handed batsman completed his half-century in 149 balls as the visitors looked to avoid defeat.

A terrific second session for Pakistan saw them scoring 78 runs without losing a wicket. Fawad and Rizwan had held fort, defying the New Zealand pace attack. Meanwhile, Fawad hit his second hundred and Rizwan scored his second half-century of the match and it looked Pakistan had given themselves a genuine shot of saving the first Test.

However, Kyle Jamieson provided New Zealand the breakthrough as he sent Rizwan back to the pavilion. The wicket of Rizwan triggered a collapse as Pakistan started losing wickets at regular intervals. First Neil Wagner sent Fawad back in the 106th over and then 15 balls later Jamieson came back to dismiss Yasir Shah as the Kiwis looked favorites to seal the match. **ANI**

PREMIER LEAGUE

There's no title race after 15 games, says Solskjaer

MANCHESTER: Manchester United manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer said it is too early to talk about his club's chances to claim the Premier League title, stressing that "there is no title race after 15 games."

Manchester United secured a 1-0 win over Wolves in the Premier League here on Wednesday.

Marcus Rashford struck a goal in second-half stoppage-time to earn United the victory and with this, the club moved to second in the table. "There's no title race after 15 games. You can lose the chance of being in a race in the first 10 games. But play another 15, get to 30, and then maybe we can start talking about a title

race," Goal.com quoted Solskjaer as saying.

"But the belief is there. We go into every game thinking we can win against anyone anywhere. Away we've shown what we're capable of, we are improving at home as well and this result is massive for confidence and attitude," he added.

Having extended their unbeaten league run to nine matches, Manchester United are now just two points behind table-toppers Liverpool. Also, as this was their final match of 2020, the club will be delighted to end the year on a winning note. Manchester United will now take on Aston Villa on January 2. **ANI**

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OMAN CRUDE PRICE FALLS

The price of Oman oil has decreased, with prices for delivery by February 2020 reaching \$51.07, said Dubai Mercantile Exchange (DME). The DME statement said that the price of Oman declined 3 cents from the price of Tuesday, which was \$51.10. - OMA

MARKET

BUSINESS & FINANCE



MSM INDEX ENDS HIGHER

Muscat Securities Market (MSM) general index (30) added 11.3 points, comprising a rise by 0.31 per cent to close at 3,653.41 points, compared to the last session, which stood at 3,642.12 points.

GCC sukuk issuances witness gain in 2020

Budget spending needs by the government are expected to drive sovereign issuances next year, according to a Kuwait-based investment, strategy and research firm

Times News Service

MUSCAT: GCC bond and sukuk issuances witnessed year-on-year (y-o-y) gains for the second consecutive year in 2020 and trends for the coming year shows flat to a slight decline in issuances in 2021, according to a new report.

"The year 2020 was an exceptional year with extreme events like the steep fall in economic growth rates across the globe and the GCC as well as the historic decline in oil prices that particularly affected the oil-exporting economies in the Gulf countries," Kamco Invest said in its latest report.

The Kuwait-based investment, strategy and research firm said that budget spending needs by the government are expected to drive sovereign issuances next year.

However, with a significantly smaller expected deficit of around \$84.3 billion in 2021 as against \$127 billion in 2020, according to data from the IMF.



INCOME MATURITIES: GCC governments are expected to see \$157.1 billion in fixed income maturities over the next five years (2021-2025) whereas corporate maturities stand at \$164.3 billion. - File picture

Kamco expects government issuances to decline y-o-y in 2020. A number of Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) governments have announced a cut in spending next year and to focus on priority projects.

Meanwhile, issuances from Kuwait could be a game-changer for the region in 2021 if the government passes the debt law. Kuwait completely stayed away from the bond market in 2020 as the parliament failed to renew the debt law.

On the other hand, corporate issuances are expected to fully or partly offset the decline in issuances by governments as a better economic environment is expected to result in higher spending by the private sector.

Moreover, borrowers are also keen on raising funds due to the low cost of borrowing globally. In

addition, with the yield on sovereign bonds reaching an all-time low, governments may be motivated to issue new debt and lock in the low cost of debt, the report said.

Meanwhile, with four out of the six GCC countries having comfortable investment-grade ratings and the assumed support from the group to Oman and Bahrain, we believe this should support and enable raising funds in the region as well as internationally.

Moreover, the sizable sovereign wealth funds for a majority of the sovereigns in the region support the overall credit rating profile, the report.

Bond/sukuk maturities

GCC governments are expected to see \$157.1 billion in fixed income maturities over the next five years

(2021-2025) whereas corporate maturities stand at \$164.3 billion.

A majority of these maturities are denominated in US dollar at 61.3 per cent followed by local currency issuances in SAR (Saudi riyals) and QAR (Qatari riyals) at 17.8 per cent and 7.6 per cent, respectively.

In addition, due to the credit rating profile of the GCC governments, a majority of these maturities are in the high investment grade or A-rated instruments.

In terms of the type of instruments, conventional bonds dominate with \$205.7 billion in maturities over the next five year whereas sukuk maturities are expected to be at \$115.7 billion. While bond maturities show a declining trend over the next five years, sukuk maturities are expected to increase starting from 2022.

BREXIT DEAL CLEARED

European Council approves provisional application of trade deal with UK

BRUSSELS: The European Council adopted the decision on the signing of the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement and its provisional application as of January 1, 2021, according to a press release from the Council.

The agreement would now be signed by the two parties on Wednesday. European Council President Charles Michel and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen will sign in Brussels on behalf of the European Union (EU) while Prime Minister Boris Johnson will sign in London on behalf of the United Kingdom, the release added.

"Next #BrexitDeal hurdle cleared: EU member states have given the final green light by the written procedure to the provisional application of the EU-UK Trade & Cooperation Agreement as of January 1, 2021," Sebastian Fischer, spokesperson for the German Presidency of the EU Council, tweeted.

Next year, the Council will adopt the decision on the conclusion of the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement, once the European Parliament has given its consent and once all procedures necessary for the entry into force have been completed, according to the release.

The fast-track procedures were adopted in the EU as the post-Brexit agreement was only reached one week before the transitional period expires at the end of 2020.

The EU and the UK announced last Thursday the reaching of an agreement that will govern bilat-

“

Next #BrexitDeal hurdle cleared: EU member states have given the final green light by the written procedure to the provisional application of the EU-UK Trade & Cooperation Agreement as of January 1, 2021

Spokesperson for German Presidency of the EU Council

eral trade and security relationship starting from Jan. 1, 2021. The deal will need the approval of the European Parliament, the British Parliament and the EU's 27 member states.

The United Kingdom is the EU's third-largest trading partner in goods, after the United States and China. - Xinhua

PORSCHE

We had the best third quarter results over a 5-year period: CEO of Porsche Middle East, Africa FZE



Manfred Bräunl, CEO of Porsche Middle East and Africa FZE

2020 has been a difficult year for a lot of industries, automotive included. How has Porsche dealt with the issues regionally and what effect, if any, has it had on the business?

It has been a year unlike any other, but I'm pleased to say we've dealt with it head on. Naturally, the safety and well-being of our employees was at the forefront of our decision-making.

Thanks to flexible business plans, fast support measures, creative ideas and above all, the great support of our Porsche partners across the region, we can be proud of what we achieved.

We started the year off well and reported a 5-per cent growth in new car deliveries in the first quarter of 2020. Following the lockdown in the second quarter, which unsurprisingly affected our business, we had the best third quarter results over a 5-year period.

What would you say have been the most significant moments and milestones for Porsche throughout the Middle East in 2020?

Despite COVID-19 presenting a challenge on a scale which we have never seen before, we took big

steps throughout the year that will continue to impact our operations positively in the years to come. What I found most inspiring is how hard my entire team worked to overcome the challenges. Rather than taking the easy way out, we've turned them into opportunities by finding innovative ways to significantly accelerate the implementation of digital technologies across the business.

We were not only the first region amongst all Porsche subsidiaries in the world to introduce an online sales platform at our Dubai importer, but also very exciting projects like the virtual customer consultation.

Electrification is obviously something Porsche is taking seriously as demonstrated with the launch of the highly anticipated Taycan. What has been the reaction to the car across the region to date?

We've seen a positive initial reaction from consumers and enthusiasts, underpinned by a strong order bank. The Taycan is a game changer in the industry with 13 brand-new technical innovations. It's ideal for everyday driving pleasure in the modern age, featur-

ing all the benefits that come with an electric vehicle, such as high-powered electric performance, instant torque, and multiple accelerations at full power for consistent timing. When you see a passionate 911 Turbo owner behind the wheel of a Taycan for the first time, experiencing the instant power release when they put their foot down, you know the future has arrived. The Taycan is proof that our brand continuously excites with groundbreaking and exciting innovations, offering the best product in each segment.

We've already seen some exciting activity around the launch of the Panamera, in particular your campaign for Female Empowerment. Can you tell us more about the campaign and how Porsche are championing workplace diversity in the region?

To mark the upcoming regional release of our latest Panamera, we collaborated with some influential and driven females from across the Gulf region for an inspirational campaign. In keeping with the model's tagline of Drive Defines Us, we present their unique and inspiring stories as leading examples of how highly ambitious women

can make significant strides within their line of work. The campaign shines a spotlight on their achievements, with the aim of encouraging other women in the Middle East to pursue careers in male-dominated professions.

Just recently, we have welcomed two females in senior management roles. Shurooq Zainal's has been promoted to Legal & Compliance Director for the MEA Region. She is our first female Emirati in the Director team. With Aileen Fahr, we have secured our first woman in a senior role in the regional Sales Team, looking after our African markets.

The launch of the new Panamera represents a significant milestone in the development of the model. What would you say are the main USPs?

Quite simply, the new Panamera boasts best-in-class performance, enhanced comfort and chassis management and a sportier visual appearance. Across the new range, it has performance credentials ranging from 330 to 700 PS. With 630 PS, the new Turbo S is a segment leader with 80 PS more power than the previous flagship Turbo with combustion engine.

Fans of the Panamera will certainly enjoy driving it in Sport Plus mode, where the Turbo S accelerates from zero to 100 km/h in just 3.1 seconds.

In line with our growing E-Performance programme, our luxury sports saloon is a trailblazer for electromobility, with three new high-performance hybrid variants available for the first time, each with a significantly increased electric driving range.

Can you tell us about Porsche's measures within the workplace to combat issues following COVID-19?

This year has made us rethink the way we live, work and interconnect with one another. I believe that flexibility and an innovative approach across all areas of business is the only way forward. Manifesting a corporate culture where change is accepted and trusting flexible working systems is equally important. I firmly believe the concept of remote working on a part-time basis is here to stay.

What launches, if any, can Porsche enthusiasts get excited about for 2021?

There are many exciting things to

look forward to as we look ahead to a busy 2021, most notably the conclusion of the Taycan introduction in our markets. We will also welcome the latest 911 Turbo, new additions to the 718 range and, of course, the latest generation Panamera. We are currently offering the most diverse line-up of sports cars in Porsche's history, which accommodate to a variety of individual needs and preference.

In your role as regional CEO, what are your key objectives for the near future?

Our focus is to always put our business partners and customers at the heart of our operations. A certain degree of volatility in the market will remain for the foreseeable future. As a result, regular communication and information exchange with our business partners is more crucial than ever. Good relationship management with our importers is the key to long-term success, as it builds confidence. We will continue to strive for further enhancements and innovation around the business, including new and interesting ways to engage with customers. I'm excited about 2021 and what it has in store for us.



MARKET

MSM index ends higher



The trading value stood at OMR1,735,524, comprising a rise of 22.2 per cent, compared to the last session

MUSCAT: Muscat Securities Market (MSM) general index (30) added 11.3 points, comprising a rise by 0.31 per cent to close at 3,653.41 points, compared to the last session, which stood at 3,642.12 points.

The trading value stood at OMR1,735,524, comprising a rise of 22.2 per cent, compared to the last session, which stood at OMR1,419,903.

The report released by MSM pointed out that the market value rose by 0.112 per cent to reach about OMR20.21 billion.

The report added that the value of shares bought by non-Omani investors reached OMR305,000, comprising 17.57 per cent. The value of shares sold by non-Omani investors reached OMR299,000, comprising 17.23 per cent. The net non-Omani investment rose by 0.34 per cent to OMR6,000. — **ONA**

MUSCAT SECURITIES MARKET

MUSCAT
SECURITIES
MARKET

INDICES							
Index	High	Low	Value	Prev. Value	Diff	Diff%	
MSM30 Index	3,655.73	3,643.02	3,653.41	3,642.12	11.29	0.31	
Financial Index	5,630.64	5,620.30	5,629.33	5,620.30	9.03	0.16	
Industrial Index	4,305.77	4,245.66	4,301.55	4,240.57	60.98	1.44	
Services Index	1,584.60	1,578.88	1,581.55	1,581.33	0.22	0.01	
MSM SHARIAH INDEX	521.89	520.16	520.42	520.16	0.26	0.05	
MSM TOTAL RETURN	4,172.02	4,157.51	4,169.36	4,156.48	12.88	0.31	
Trading Summary							
Volume	Turnover	Trades	Market Cap	Up	Down	Equal	Sec. Traded
11,744,431	1,735,524	530	20,209,616,355	13	5	18	36

SHARE PRICE BULLETIN FOR WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 30

	SECURITY NAME	VOLUME	TURNOVER	TRADES	OPEN PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE PR.	PREV. CLOSE	DIFF (RD)	DIFF %	LAST PR	LAST RD	LAST OFFER	PUR VALUE	MARKET CAP
REGULAR MARKET																
OM0000001160.....	NATIONAL GAS	112,750	16,173	13	0.144	0.145	0.142	0.143	0.140	0.003	2.143	0.144	0.142	0.144	0.100	12,155,000
OM0000003224.....	RENAISSANCE SERVICES	530,775	179,316	60	0.332	0.340	0.332	0.338	0.332	0.006	1.807	0.340	0.342	0.344	0.100	79,906,580
OM0000001772.....	AL ANWAR HOLDING	422,950	26,065	21	0.061	0.062	0.061	0.062	0.061	0.001	1.639	0.061	0.060	0.061	0.100	12,400,000
OM0000001749.....	OMAN CEMENT	222,540	54,688	19	0.244	0.248	0.244	0.246	0.243	0.003	1.235	0.246	0.246	0.248	0.100	81,394,687
OM0000001418.....	RAYSUT CEMENT	419,892	145,048	48	0.350	0.354	0.346	0.350	0.346	0.004	1.156	0.346	0.344	0.346	0.100	70,000,000
OM0000003026.....	OMAN TELECOMMUNICATION	55,000	39,460	3	0.720	0.720	0.716	0.716	0.712	0.004	0.562	0.716	0.712	0.716	0.100	337,000,000
OM0000003968.....	OOREDOO	63,903	25,063	42	0.390	0.396	0.390	0.392	0.390	0.002	0.513	0.390	0.390	0.392	0.100	255,170,138
OM0000002440.....	AL SHARQIA INVESTMENT HOLDING	405,556	28,967	22	0.072	0.073	0.070	0.071	0.070	0.000	0.000	0.070	0.070	0.072	0.100	6,390,000
OM0000002796.....	BANK MUSCAT	406,531	160,173	29	0.394	0.394	0.394	0.394	0.394	0.000	0.000	0.394	0.394	0.396	0.100	1,280,311,880
OM0000003398.....	SOHAR INTERNATIONAL BANK	306,632	28,209	6	0.091	0.092	0.091	0.092	0.092	0.000	0.000	0.092	0.091	0.092	0.100	223,974,620
OM0000005005.....	ALMAHA CERAMICS	107,312	23,599	7	0.218	0.220	0.218	0.220	0.220	0.000	0.000	0.218	0.218	0.220	0.100	12,100,000
OM0000002176.....	AL JAZEERA STEEL PRODUCTS	172,000	23,573	14	0.138	0.138	0.136	0.137	0.138	-0.001	-0.725	0.136	0.135	0.136	0.100	17,111,021
OM0000001525.....	OMAN INVESTMENT AND FINANCE	673,593	60,426	29	0.091	0.091	0.088	0.090	0.092	-0.002	-2.174	0.088	0.088	0.089	0.100	18,000,000
Total	13	3,893,234	810,780	313												
Parallel Market																
OM0000001426.....	OMAN REFRESHMENT	11,640	12,338	3	1.060	1.060	1.060	1.060	0.964	0.096	9.959	1.060	1.060	0.000	0.100	53,000,000
OM0000003521.....	GULFAR ENGINEERING AND CON.	2,586,459	110,763	98	0.044	0.044	0.042	0.043	0.042	0.001	2.381	0.042	0.041	0.042	0.100	12,469,167
OM0000005260.....	OMAN ARAB BANK	500,000	89,495	6	0.177	0.182	0.177	0.179	0.175	0.004	2.286	0.182	0.167	0.179	0.100	298,824,390
OM0000001483.....	NATIONAL BANK OF OMAN	2,663,733	426,094	17	0.159	0.160	0.158	0.160	0.157	0.003	1.911	0.160	0.158	0.160	0.100	260,151,417
OM0000002168.....	AL ANWAR CERAMIC TILES	126,100	32,155	5	0.250	0.255	0.250	0.255	0.252	0.003	1.190	0.255	0.255	0.256	0.100	75,534,489
OM0000001707.....	OMAN CABLES INDUSTRY	68,616	28,942	11	0.418	0.424	0.418	0.422	0.418	0.004	0.957	0.422	0.410	0.422	0.100	37,853,400
OM0000001519.....	NATIONAL ALUMINIUM PRODUCTS	63,000	5,441	7	0.087	0.087	0.086	0.086	0.086	0.000	0.000	0.086	0.083	0.086	0.100	2,897,145
OM0000001517.....	HSBC BANK OMAN	1,000	90	1	0.090	0.090	0.090	0.091	0.091	0.000	0.000	0.090	0.090	0.090	0.100	182,028,464
OM0000001566.....	OMAN FISHERIES	1,000	86	1	0.086	0.086	0.086	0.088	0.088	0.000	0.000	0.086	0.086	0.092	0.100	11,000,000
OM0000001681.....	OMAN AND EMIRATES INV HOLDING	400,550	18,019	6	0.045	0.045	0.044	0.045	0.045	0.000	0.000	0.044	0.044	0.045	0.100	5,484,375
OM0000001962.....	AL MADINA INVESTMENT	1,000	23	1	0.023	0.023	0.023	0.023	0.023	0.000	0.000	0.023	0.023	0.024	0.100	4,764,482
OM0000002226.....	AL JAZEERA SERVICES	38,914	9,068	9	0.240	0.244	0.227	0.233	0.233	0.000	0.000	0.227	0.227	0.238	0.100	14,260,596
OM0000002275.....	SHELL OMAN MARKETING	291	277	3	0.952	0.952	0.952	1.000	1.000	0.000	0.000	0.952	0.920	0.952	0.100	95,000,000
OM0000002549.....	BANK DHOFAR	40,000	3,840	1	0.096	0.096	0.096	0.096	0.096	0.000	0.000	0.096	0.096	0.097	0.100	287,649,738
OM0000003000.....	ALMAHA PETROLEUM PRODUCTS MAR.	5,000	3,100	1	0.620	0.620	0.620	0.616	0.616	0.000	0.000	0.620	0.612	0.620	0.100	42,504,000
OM0000003661.....	VOLTAMP ENERGY	24	3	1	0.117	0.117	0.117	0.125	0.125	0.000	0.000	0.117	0.117	0.123	0.100	10,175,344
OM0000004420.....	BANK NIZWA	150,943	14,501	8	0.096	0.097	0.096	0.096	0.096	0.000	0.000	0.096	0.096	0.097	0.100	144,000,000
OM0000004788.....	AL MADINA TAKAFUL	748,511	56,213	20	0.075	0.075	0.075	0.075	0.075	0.000	0.000	0.075	0.074	0.075	0.100	13,125,000
OM0000004925.....	AL BATINAH POWER	9,300	465	4	0.050	0.050	0.050	0.050	0.050	0.000	0.000	0.050	0.049	0.050	0.100	33,744,372
OM0000004933.....	AL SUWADI POWER	45,060	2,298	4	0.051	0.051	0.051	0.051	0.051	0.000	0.000	0.051	0.051	0.052	0.100	36,434,723
OM0000006912.....	AL AHLIA INSURANCE	298,530	107,471	2	0.360	0.360	0.360	0.360	0.366	-0.006	-1.639	0.360	0.352	0.366	0.100	36,000,000
OM0000005963.....	PHOENIX POWER	32,540	1,660	4	0.051	0.051	0.051	0.051	0.052	-0.001	-1.923	0.051	0.052	0.054	0.100	74,592,674
OM0000002374.....	UNITED FINANCE	57,986	2,402	4	0.041	0.042	0.041	0.041	0.043	-0.002	-4.651	0.042	0.041	0.043	0.100	14,314,921
Total	23	7,851,197	924,744	217												

OFFICIAL DATA

China revises preliminary calculation of 2019 gross domestic product

BEIJING: China's gross domestic product (GDP) in 2019 was revised to 98.65 trillion yuan (about \$15.1 trillion), official data showed. The amount represents a reduction of 435 billion yuan, or 0.1 percentage points, from the preliminary cal-

ulation, data from the final verification conducted by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) showed. At constant prices, the 2019 GDP increased 6 per cent from one year earlier, according to the NBS. The bureau revises each year's GDP

through two procedures, the preliminary calculation and final verification. The preliminary calculation of GDP is revised in a final verification based on the annual statistical data, fiscal final accounts and related departments' financial records. — **Xinhua**

ACWA Power signs three pacts for wind power project in Azerbaijan

RIYADH: Following the signing of the implementation agreement for the \$300 million Independent Power Project in January 2020, ACWA Power executed the official agreements for the 240 MW wind power project that will be located in the Absheron and Khizi regions.

Key agreements signed by ACWA Power, a leading Saudi developer, investor and operator of power generation and water desalination plants in high growth markets, included the signing of the Investment Agreement with the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan, represented by the Ministry of Energy. ACWA Power also signed the Power Purchase Agreement and Transmission Connection Agreement with "Azerenerji" OJSC, the national electrical power company and off-taker for the project.

Though Azerbaijan has relied largely on natural gas to meet its energy needs, the focus is now on

diversification and boosting of alternative energy resources. Renewables offer the most prominent solution to meeting Azerbaijan's ambitious climate targets.

The company has committed to reducing its greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 35 per cent by 2030, under the Paris Agreement, which emphasises the use of alternative and renewable energy sources to achieve this target. With its excellent wind resources, Azerbaijan's move towards effectively harnessing wind as a sustainable energy source is being fast-tracked by key public-private partnerships.

Foreign investment

As the first foreign investment based independent wind power project in Azerbaijan structured as a public-private partnership, the plant will contribute to reaching Azerbaijan's target of 30 per cent of renewable energy capacity by 2030. Once complete, it

will power 300,000 households. 400,000 tonnes of emissions will also be offset each year, supporting the country's green ambitions.

As a renewable energy leader, ACWA Power's global expertise in delivering transformative solutions at an affordable cost will strongly support Azerbaijan in realising its renewable energy development goals.

Global expertise

"ACWA Power continues to leverage its global expertise and capabilities to deliver large scale renewable projects that bring sustainable, socio-economic benefits to communities and markets where we operate. I express my sincere thanks to H.R.H Prince Abdulaziz Bin Salman Al Saud, Saudi Minister of Energy for his guidance and presence and patronage of this signing ceremony with the Azerbaijani Ministry of Energy," Abunayyan added.

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India exporters facing shortage of containers

MUMBAI: Exporters from India are facing a huge shortage of containers for exports. "The situation is becoming very serious as exporters are finding it difficult to adhere to shipment schedules which is a matter of serious concern," said, Manoj Patodia, Chairman of The Cotton Textiles Export Promotion Council.

One of the reasons being attributed to the shortage is the low volume of imports, especially from China. Further, exporters face a shortage of containers not only at the Gateway Ports but also at the ICDs.

In the initial months of the lockdown, Patodia pointed out that exports were low. However, after a period of intense lockdown for more than six months, exports of textiles and clothing have started picking up sharply.

Many exporters are holding export orders for shipments till March 31, 2021. Patodia also mentioned that delays in shipments are leading to the cancellation of orders in many cases and if the issue is not resolved on a priority basis, exporters of textiles and clothing may lose business by an estimated 20 per cent.

"It takes more than two weeks for the exporters to get the containers for shipments of export cargos which is resulting in delays and non-fulfilment of terms and conditions as agreed with the overseas buyers," said Patodia. — **ANI**

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Indian Male, Bcom, MBA 19 years experience in Budget,Banking,Audit, MIS,Payroll,ERP(Epicor,Sage,Tally, Oracle). NOC available. ready to join immediately. GSM 91190552.

M.Com/CA, 10+ yrs of experience in accounts, finance, banking, taxation, MIS seeking suitable opening. DL, NOC available. Contact 92930407, 79202015

Assistant Accountant, Indian male, B Com 12 years experience in Oman with D/L and NOC seeks suitable placement. Contact 96395258

Looking for Senior Accountant Position .Having 10 Years Experience, and driving license also . Mob - 79202007

Sudanese 32 yrs,6 yrs experience in Oman in Accounting & Administrative assistant.contact 94050251. email danygalaxy184@gmail.com

Accountant, office administration, back office.Contact 93403636.Email munafshaikh22@gmail.com

Indian male senior accountant with 20 yrs experience of accounting upto finalisation on SAP, tally, excel, Noc & DL available seeks suitable position. Contact 97887472, 71206125
Email asifkoman786@gmail.com

Accountant Indian Male, M.com 13 years experience in Oman with good knowledge in Focus ERP seeks placement. NOC available # 99757409

Indian female, M.com (Finance) & MBA (HR), 6 years experience seeking an opening in Muscat. Contact 95340104; sunilasunil30@gmail.com

Part time accountant with more than 12 yrs expereinece in different financial sectors.Good working knowledge of ERP softwares & advanced excel.Can do audit & cerification & consultancy work. Contact 94197499.
Email ma.abdul1988@gmail.com

Indian, Male working as Senior Accountant over 16 years of experience in Accounts looking for a Job Contact: 95851920,78258270

Available 31 years Oman experienced Data Entry Operator in English/Hindi/Marathi & knowledge of Accounting. Contact +968 92720543

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Email: DolphinOcean367@gmail.com

SR. Manager/GM/VP (Plant)

Indian Male,with more than 23 years exp. in repair/ maint/deployment/logistic/procurement of Vehicles/Heavy construction equipment in a large reputed construction industry seeks suitable placement in senior management level. NOC available.

Contact: 79198709

Moroccan Sales Engineer with over 6 years of industrial experience in Oman looking for suitable opportunity.

GSM: 93823132
Email: mehdikassen@yahoo.com

Project Manager/Engineer Structural/Civil Engineer

with 14 years of experience (8 years in USA and 4 years in Oman) in PEB, RCC, Pipeline, Offshore, and Marine structures and have Master degree from USA. Seeking for placement as Project Engineer or Manager.

Please contact me on +968-93368626
Irfan.sanjari.syed@gmail.com

ELECTRICAL MANAGER

Graduate Electrical Engineer & MBA (Project Management) with 28 years' experience in Industrial Projects & Maintenance looking for senior role. NOC Available and can join immediately.

Contact: 968-94029112
Email: sakthiveljothi@gmail.com

Project Engineer

32 yrs old - Having 10 years of experience (6 yrs in Oman) in oil & gas field - Intense work experience in fabrication of Pressure Vessels, Structural Steel fabrication & erection, Manufacturing of Skid Packages, Piping Spools & supports, Storage Tanks, Stack & Ducts, Pig Traps. EPC & Turnaround projects.

Having DL & Current Visa expires in Feb'2021.
Contact # boopathiraja88@gmail.com / 97412105

QUALITY MANAGER

Indian, Quality Manager, 18 years exp.4.3 years at Abu Dhabi, looking for top/senior management position in quality. Coordinating RFQ to Mass production, Time, Resource & Quality planning, Process design, Project execution, etc. Available to join shortly.

Contact: 91-9952022345,
venkatavaradu@rediffmail.com

HSE Eng/Advisor, Msc Env & NEBOSH IGC with 10 years extensive construction, safety exp. Immediately available with NOC.

Contact 95193937

Execution Architect/ Finishing Manager

36, Male in design/ execution at consultancy & contracting with 13 Work experience in Hotel/Office/ Airport/ retail in Construction/Interior fit-out Space seeking Suitable placement. Knowledge on CAD/ MS office/ Planning/ Tendering/ Estimation. D/L and NOC available immediately.

Contact: 78371040;
architdesign2020@gmail.com

FINANCE MANAGER

Group-Finance Manager, 19 years' experience in Strategic planning, Finance, Accounting, Income tax, VAT etc. Qualified CPA, CMA, CIA. Looking for Senior management position in finance/ internal audit. Available to join shortly.

Contact 92148608 /
soji_ansu@yahoo.com

OMANI HR/PRO

Omani, 15 yrs experience, PRO, Relation development, Labour & Crime law, HR & Time Management. Fluent in English, Arabic & Hindi seeks Part Time job.

Contact 97264447

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Indian Male With 16 Years' Experience in all aspects of Accounting. NOC & Oman DL Available, seeks Suitable placement.

Contact: 97741485
Email: stm.crg@gmail.com

SENIOR MANAGER / PROJECT DIRECTOR - CIVIL ENGINEERING

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Mobile/WhatsApp 95150850, 79163390

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Email: muhdfahiz007@gmail.com

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Indian, Male, having bachelor's degree looking for position in Office Administration/ Document Control, total 22 years of experience, 19 years in Oman with Oman driving licence. NOC available.

Contact No. 99757759

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Contact: 99137115
Email: adimurali7@gmail.com

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Indian Male 10+ yrs experience in Oman (Currently available in Oman). Experience in Engineering / Construction, Manufacturing, Trading Concern & Structural Steel Projects. Materials Management with administrative skills. Looking for suitable placement and ready to join immediately with D/L & NOC.

Contact: 78235621/bsda@ymail.com

Smart Indian, excellent English, Research & Technical Writing Skills, Double Masters (Finance, Journalism & Mass Communication), Arabic Speaker, 17years Oman experience in Airport Project, Hospital, Media, EPC seeks role in Admin/HR/Projects/Corporate & Marketing Communications/Operations/Customer Relations/Role in Chairman/CEO Office. Immediate joining. NOC.

99283938 / rajansampath@hotmail.com

FINANCE

Indian, Group-Finance Manager, 19 years' world class experience in Strategic planning, Finance, Accounting etc. Multiple Professional qualifications in Accounting and audit. Looking for Top/Senior management position in finance/ internal audit. Available to join shortly.

Contact 99455353

EXPERIENCED IN MATERIAL MANAGEMENT

(MATERIAL COORDINATION, CONTROL PRO-CUREMENT, LOGISTICS, INVENTORY CONTROL) PLUS , MARKETING, NEED PLACEMENT D/L, NOC AVAILABLE. (MBA - International Business + Diploma in Materials Management).

GSM: 95491377, psjanesh@gmail.com

GM / NSM / Head Of Sales

Male 49 - Proven Business Manager with exceptional sales management skills. Chartered Institute of Marketing - UK, MBA in Marketing,15+ years of FMCG sales & business management experience in GCC & OMAN. NOC/DL available.

Email: sljobseeker72@gmail.com
Contact: 96223114

I T

BCA Graduate looking for placement in suitable IT company, having Oman Driving License. Presently on family joining visa.

Contact on 93339660 for further details

Omani DL holder Indian from Kerala looking for a job in F M C G sector.

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Interested please Contact 94022634

JOB WANTED

ADMIN/HR

Indian Male 43.yo seeking a suitable opportunity in Admin/Mktg/Ops Noc & D/L available. PH. 98274545

Indian male with 21 years' experience in Oman seeks job for HR/Admin. Contact 95425764

Indian male, 13yrs Oman Experience in Stores, Purchase, Operation, Admin. D/L.Immediate joining. # 78363835

Looking for HR & Admin Manager / Executive or Secretarial postions. Knows custom clearance and costing also. Over 15 years of experience, please call 91732334

Office manager / Business coordination / project administration Indian Graduate Male Experienced in Engineering Consultancy & Construction Contacting Companies looking for a suitable placement. Ready to join immediately with Oman DL & NOC. Contact: 79705674
Email: pramoda.online@gmail.com

Indian Male seeking Admin/HR Job having 23 years of experience in Oman with Valid DL and NOC available - Contact: 99578192

Indian female with 10 yrs experience in payroll, executive secretarial,general admin/HR with valid D/L,looking for suitable placement. Contact 96441865. Email reeteequ1779@gmail.com

Omani Male 35 yrs old, looking for a PRO job. Has experience 14 yrs in the same field. Contact 92049106, 95422144

Indian Female 10 years' experience in Muscat, for the post of Sales Coordinator, Secretary or Office cum Commercial Assistant. Contact 94048550, 95431427. E-mail: bmnair27@yahoo.com

Indian Male, MBA,BCOM having 6 years Gulf & 4 years India experience in HR / ADMIN & Purchase looking for suitable placement. Contact 97914340, 92369044. Email: sampathrajkv@gmail.com

Indian female 29. Experience in telemarketing/secretarial/office admin work. On family visa. Ready to join ASAP. Muscat. 93605361

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IT Administrator, Indian Male Looking for Job. 12years of Exp.in Oman with D/L. CCNA Certified Work Exp. in POS system, CCTV, IT Network. 95059065 / 95147348 / jaxonnj@gmail.com

Mobile app developer - MCA graduate with 5 years exp in Mobile App development.Interested can contact below. Contact 96879202545

MEDICAL

Indian Male 43.yo seeking a suitable opportunity in medical centers for Admin/Mktg/Ops.Noc & D/L available. Contact 98274545

Indian 30yrs, MSW [Medical & psychiatry] MSC Psychology,6 yrs experience seeks job.Contact 79308281,91920758008

MANAGER

Indian, Finance Manager 20Yrs Experience, Tradefinance - MIS - Budget - Planning - Auditing - Finalisation - Banking: 90473368, devan801@gmail.com

Smart Indian Manager, Excellent English, Arabic Speaker, 17years Oman experience, seeks Corporate Communication/Operations/Management/Administration/HR/Suitable Role. Immediate. 99283938

ENGINEER

Quantity Surveying, preparation of documents like BOQ. 23 years in Oman searching a job from contractor or consultant has experience in Civil, MEP, landscaping and interior decorations. Contact 93072517

Senior Civil Engineer with 8 years' experience in government and private construction projects with NOC/DL looking for a suitable job , GSM : 93352004

Electrical Engineer B.Tech, 15 years exp in Oman seeks job. NOC and Release available. Contact 92254336
Email ameen1667@gmail.com

B.E Civil engr with 14 years of Oman experience mainly in building construction looking for a suitable position. Contact: 72132426

Project engineer experienced in aluminium Industry with valid Oman DL,seeks job. Contact 79500069

Indian 22/Male, B.Tech (Comp. Science) from SRM University, Chennai, Interned at Uniq Technology, Chennai as an Android App developer is looking for an immediate placement. # 95495877

HVAC engineer with 1 year Experience seeks job. Contact 79027224

Mechanical engineer of Car diagnostic and maintenance with experience three years. Contact 93521100

Civil Engineer with 17 years experience in construction field and site supervision for bridges, infrastructure-projects and buildings with overseas consulting companies. Contact 96292267

Site and Planning Coordinator -12+ years Oman exp - Oil and Gas sector-knowledge of PDO rules and specifications, - work experience with large projects, multi-cultural teams, and MS Office. Contact - moinduddins18@yahoo.com / 0091-7032030093.

Indian Female Structural Engineer (B-Tech Civil), 18 Years Gulf Experience is seeking for suitable placement. Having valid visa and driving license. Ready to join Immediately with necessary documents. Contact: 79858363.

Indian Civil QA/QC Engineer, Inspector (BE Civil, PDO approved, QMS Auditor, Oman Driving licence, NOC) with 10 years of experience looking for new job. 96359447, +919901059827

Facility engineer. (BE) 12 years exper. in electrical or maint.engineer field, valid Oman DL. Seeking facility or maint.engineer job. Contact 94493654 or syamsk2255@gmail.com

Senior Planner for Infra projects highway and buildings (B.Tech.Civil with 17 yrs Exp) Immediate join. local transfer -NOC. Contact : 91170802. Email: vvirrammu@gmail.com

Sri Lanka male QS Having 6 years Experience and looking for a suitable job in Oman and ready to join Immediately contact 79473123

M/48, PM Civil Engineer, Indian 28 yrs exp (18 yrs in Oman) with consultants/client seeks placement. contact 92370274

Electrical engineer, experience 12 year in Oman. Contact 98148034

B.Tech Civil Engineer with 10+ yrs experience valid Oman DL, looking for suitable position. Available for immediate join. Noc available. Contact 79023001

Project/Civil engineer with 8 yrs experience in construction projects, gulf experience & DL available. Contact 97906770

Looking for a job for the post of Electrical Engineer with B.Tech and 15 years exp in Oman. NOC and Release available. Contact 92254336. Email ameen1667@gmail.com

B.E civil engineer having 12 plus years of Oman experience in building construction looking for a suitable position. Contact: 72132426

B.Sc in Civil Engineering having more than 12 years experience in Oman. Hand on experience in Ministry of Health, MOD,ROP and RCA prestigious project. Available in Oman with NOC and Valid DL. Contact 92180869. E-mail: mamuns02@yahoo.com.

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Indian male experience in Sales and Marketing for 12 years with Driving License looking for suitable placement. Contact 92085257

MBA,7 yrs experience in Marketing seeks job with Oman DL. Contact 97200806. Email haleemkply@gmail.com

Indian Sales/Marketing manager selling of Constructional,building material products with 14 yrs experience in Oman with DL,looking job. Contact 95952066

Indian male, bachelor's degree seeks job in Sales, customer service,administration.12 yrs experience in Oman with Oman DL.Contact 97268429.Email dinojthomas@gmail.com

23 yrs old indian male experience in sales & logistics seeking for suitable job opportunities. #79964123. Email raheelrahman123@gmail.com

Indian male B.com graduate, PG Diploma in logistic (Air cargo and supply chain management) & Digital Marketing. Valid Oman DL. Looking for suitable placement. Contact: 79748272 Email: shazil.sadique@gmail.com

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PURCHASE/PROCUREMENT

Diploma civil Indian male 26 yrs 5 yrs oman exp, NOC ready, sales/procurement/stores. E.mail vijju.asp7777@gmail.com, GSM/WA 00918712330030

Senior Procurement Engineer, M.tech-Civil, Looking for a job, NOC Available, Immediate Joining, Indian Male, 38yrs, have over 16+ years UAE& Oman experience. E. syed-kamaalsaba@yahoo.com, Watsapp +96871144578, GSM +917766019519

Indian/Male(29)/MBA/6 years' experience in procurement and sales coordination with valid Oman D/L. Available for immediate joining. Contact: 92536194



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ROUND-UP

Minister visits OAB Innovation Lab

The visit included a tour of the lab's facilities, during which the Minister of Higher Education, Scientific Research and Innovation was briefed on the services it provides to students and entrepreneurs

MUSCAT: As part of the private sector initiative, aimed at spreading a culture of innovation among different segments of society, Dr Rahma bint Ibrahim Al Mahrouqiyah, Minister of Higher Education, Scientific Research and Innovation visited the Oman Arab Bank Innovation Lab, the first-of-its-kind facility in the banking sector within the Sultanate.

Rashad Al Musafir, CEO of OAB, and Leen Al Atassi, Head of Innovation at OAB, welcomed Al Mahrouqiyah. The visit also saw members of the executive management of OAB and officials from the ministry in attendance. The visit included a tour of the lab's facilities, during which the minister was briefed on the services it provides to students and entrepreneurs.

Welcoming the guests, Rashad Al Musafir said, "We are pleased to receive Dr Rahma Al Mahrouqiyah at the Innovation Lab and give her an insight on the bank's efforts to promote a culture of innovation among students, entrepreneurs and OAB employees. We wish the Ministry of Higher Education, Scientific Research and Innovation all the best in their national project of establishing a comprehensive Omani platform aimed at nurturing and empowering innovation."

Leen Al Atassi gave a presenta-



tion, during which she highlighted the various facilities and services provided by the Lab to members, students and entrepreneurs.

She also spoke about the annual competition organised by the Lab, entitled the 'Innovation Hub', which is one of the largest hackathon events aimed at driving innovative thinking within the youth and helping them turn it into viable products.

The idea of establishing the lab stemmed from the belief of the bank that it was vital to foster innovation in every aspect, to enable the youth to keep pace with

rapid developments in various fields. Since OAB is one of the institutions that invest heavily in employing modern technologies and innovative new solutions to enhance customer experience, the management decided to establish the Innovation Hub.

This way, the bank can provide talented youth with a professional platform and simultaneously support their innovative efforts. Additionally, the bank signed several agreements and entered into partnerships with companies and institutions specialised in new technologies and various means of

self-development, both within and outside the Sultanate. This way the Bank was able to provide the targeted segment of society with access to their services.

The Lab is committed to ensuring sustainability and continuity, in accordance with the Sultanate's efforts to promote innovation. Following Leen's presentation, the guests were given a tour of the various facilities present within the Innovation Lab.

Commenting on the objective of the visit, Al Mahrouqiyah said, "At the Ministry of Higher Education, Scientific Research and Innova-

tion, we are working to establish a national digital platform that will support and promote innovation among students of higher education as well as within all segments of society. As part of this strategy, the ministry continues to visit various institutions in the public and private sectors, to gain insight into relevant experiences and develop a comprehensive plan for the digital platform.

"We are pleased with OAB's initiative to set up this specialised Learning Hub, which is well-equipped with facilities that are needed to provide an innovative environment and are capable of

A LOOK BACK AT 2020

Anantara Resort celebrates success in 2020 and predicts a fruitful 2021

MUSCAT: With the end of the year approaching, Anantara Al Jabal Al Akhdar Resort reflects on its performance in 2020 and celebrates areas of success despite a challenging year all whilst looking forward to the full recovery of Oman's travel and tourism industry in 2021.

As with all hotels in the travel and tourism industry, globally, the secluded mountain haven experienced setbacks during the year. As the entire industry works to rebuild and restructure following the pandemic, Anantara Al Jabal Al Akhdar has been able to mitigate the impacts on the resort, since it's reopening on July 4, 2020, by adopting proactive solutions as well as responding and adapting to changing industry dynamics.

In Q3 2020, during the summer season, the resort was also able to capitalise on its unique location and mountain climes to draw guests from across the country for a relaxing getaway, generating a revenue stream which surpassed the previous year's results within the same period.

Capitalising on the downtime imposed by the initial lockdown in Oman, the resort took the opportunity to make upgrades to its property including the new Extreme Jabal Activity Wall, improved main infinity pool, revamped private villa pools, refurbished spa facilities, and most anticipated of all, The Royal Edge. Additionally, the resort was able to dedicate time to strategise a multitude of operational practices to ensure the highest hygiene standards upon its impending reopening.

The popular mountain destination also celebrated a wide range of wins throughout the year, most noteworthy the efficacious Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives undertaken by team members. Located within the spectacular Hajar mountain range, home to beautiful heritage sites and historical destinations, Anantara Al Jabal Al Akhdar is dedicated to appreciating



team members, giving back to its immediate community and fostering the preservation of neighbouring villages.

The resort completed a total of 15 CSR activities in 2020, with three of these activities involving the clean-up of surrounding areas, including an initiative for World Clean Up Day 2020, culminating in approximately 3,600kg of waste cleaned up by the team during the year.

From a health and wellness day for female team members during Breast Cancer Awareness Month to a donation for the purchase of essential hospital supplies at the local Al Jabal Al Akhdar Health Centre, some of the most noteworthy initiatives include the contribution of second-hand linens to

the Jabal Akhdar Hospital and Al Wafa Rehabilitation Centre and the repair and donation of 120 recycling bins to nearby villages.

Ending the year on a strong note, the resort also received a string of accolades from the industry's top awards programmes, affirming its position as a strong contender within the travel and tourism sector. Some of the most notable award recognitions include Oman's Leading Luxury Presidential Villa in the World Travel Awards 2020, Best 50 Hotels in the Middle East in the Hotelier Middle East Awards 2020 and 2nd place in the Middle East as well as Top 50 worldwide in the Condé Nast Traveller (US/UK) Readers' Choice Awards 2020.

Speaking of the resort's performance over the year, Rami Farhat, Acting General Manager at Anantara Al Jabal Al Akhdar mentioned, "We are incredibly proud of how our property performed in response to the challenges faced over the year. Our dedicated team members were instrumental in maintaining our operational stability and ensuring that we remained afloat regardless of the obstacles that presented itself throughout the year. It is so great to see our hard work and perseverance pay off and we hope for much brighter days in 2021."

In anticipation of the new year, Siraj Memon, Director of Sales and Marketing at Anantara Al Jabal Al Akhdar added, "With Oman being one of the safest countries to travel, we expect local travel to forge ahead and are optimistic that the industry will bounce back in the new year, thereby presenting growth opportunities for our property. Given that airlines are now ramping up their operations in 2021, we predict the industry fully bouncing back by the fourth quarter." Siraj continued, "This coupled with our continued efforts, dynamic strategies and new improvements to upgrade the resort, we are optimistic of a fruitful year ahead."

HYBRID ELECTRIC VEHICLE



Own Toyota Highlander with exclusive benefits

MUSCAT: Toyota's all-new Highlander Hybrid Electric Vehicle makes a fine impression with its Hybrid Electric performance, comfort and range of advanced features and technology. Available exclusively with an HEV powertrain, the all-new Toyota Highlander takes its place at the pinnacle of Toyota's electrified SUV line-up.

Those looking forward to owning the Highlander can benefit from cash gift OMR4,200 and 1-year comprehensive insurance or OMR300 instead of benefits. (Prospective buyers are advised that the benefits vary between model variants, model year and manufacturing year. Terms & conditions apply. Please visit the nearest Toyota showroom for exact details).

Toyota has combined its leadership in HEV development and extensive experience in the SUV market with its legendary Quality, Durability, and Reliability (QDR) to create the all-new Toyota Highlander HEV. The innovative vehicle builds on a legacy of more than 23 years at the forefront of eco-friendly technology, 15-million satisfied HEV customers and the most extensive HEV line-up in the region.

The all-new Highlander combines all the familiar Toyota SUV attributes of comfort, drivability, and safety with low emissions, greater fuel efficiency, All-Wheel

Drive (AWD), space on demand, and an impressive 1,500 kg towing capacity.

The Highlander's sophisticated body is based on the brand-new Toyota New Global Architecture (TNGA-K) vehicle platform. This robust foundation is complemented by a lightweight high rigidity bodysell with a low centre of gravity, which provides the SUV with exceptionally nimble handling and comfortable highway cruising characteristics.

The all-new Highlander's thrilling drive personality is brought to life by a new electrified hybrid system that combines two power sources. The combined power of the petrol engine & electric motor is 240 hp, they are capable of delivering a maximum torque figure of 231 nm. The system is mated to an electronically controlled continuously Variable Transmission (CVT), which contributes to a fuel consumption value of 20.0km/L while delivering enhanced driving pleasure. Drivers can also select from ECO, NORMAL, SPORT and TRAIL driving modes to suit their driving styles.

The launch of the all-new Highlander comes in line with Toyota's continuous commitment to play a leading role in constantly innovating and developing technologies that protect the environment, which forms a cornerstone of the company's business.

ROUND-UP



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Bank Muscat inaugurates four Green Sports football fields in Al Dakhiliyah

The stadiums were opened in accordance with safety standards and physical distancing measures to prevent COVID-19

MUSCAT: Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate, recently inaugurated 4 football fields as part of its Green Sports programme to teams in Al Dakhiliyah governorate.

In line with the bank's commitment to community development and promoting Oman as a sporting nation, the official opening of the Wadi Kalbooh Sports Team's Green Sports Field in the Wilayat of Nizwa was held.

The event was held in the presence of Abdullah Mohammed Al Obaidani, Team Manager, and Abdullah Said Al Roshdi, Regional Manager - Dakhiliyah North, Bank Muscat.

The bank also celebrated the opening of the Al Ahli Sports Team's Green Sports Field in the Wilayat of Izki, in the presence of Faisal Saeed Al-Rawahi, the vice president of the team. The bank also inaugurated the Tawi Mansoor Sports Team's Green Sports Field in the Wilayat of Bidbid, the opening was attended by Salem Hamad Al-Haddabi, the honorary



president of the team.

In addition to the opening of the Al-Nasr Sports Team's Green Sports Field in the Wilayat of Samail, in the presence of Saif Saeed Al-Siyabi, the president of the team. Hamdan Humood Al Bimani, Regional Manager - Dakhiliyah

South, Bank Muscat, participated in the opening of the stadiums.

It is noteworthy that the stadiums were opened in accordance with safety standards and physical distancing measures to prevent COVID-19.

On this occasion and Abdullah

Said Al Roshdi, Regional Manager - Dakhiliyah North, Bank Muscat, congratulated the management, players and fans of the teams and said: "The landmark Green Sports programme from Bank Muscat has been contributing substantially to strengthening its role in the field



of corporate social responsibility and encouraging Omani youth by providing green sports fields to develop their talents and skills. The programme also helps in the organising of various sporting events and activities in communities all across the country. Bank Muscat is very happy to celebrate the opening of these new green sports fields and wish for the Teams all the very best." The stadiums opened by the bank reached 100 teams, stressing that the program is continuing, and the teams can register in the programme to win support for the next year 2021.

It is worth noting that the number of Green Sports fields that Bank

Muscat has officially inaugurated is 100 playgrounds so far distributed in the various governorates and the number of sports teams benefiting from the program until this year reached 123 teams across different governorates since the launch of the programme in 2012.

Recently, the bank announced that applications for the 2021 edition of Green Sports programme will be accepted till 6 January 2021. All teams applying for Green Sports support should note that applications will be accepted only online. The registration process is user-friendly and can be easily completed using a computer, a mobile phone or even a tablet.

HEALTH CARE

Iranian Advanced Medical Center: The best care for you and your family

MUSCAT: Advanced Medical Center is a multi-specialised polyclinic which aims to providing world-class health care in Oman.

Tell us briefly about the journey of Advanced Medical Center (AMC) so far and its vision, aim, and mission? How long did it take to build?

Advanced Medical Center is a multi-specialised polyclinic run by well experienced, compassionate, and world-class Iranian doctors and consultants. AMC is run and operated by international partners to give quality health care to all its patients.

Our mission is to improve the quality of life by providing world-class health care in a caring, patient-centred environment. Our vision is to bring state-of-the-art healthcare to the patients we serve in the Sultanate of Oman.

Our aims are to give the ultimate level of satisfaction for our visitors, deliver the highest level of medical proficiency, transform the feelings of pain to joy during medical visits, provide the best workplace for our staff and specialists, develop services for better quality, reach and ease of use.

We started to build our dream to have the best Iranian medical center here in Muscat in 2016. Now we can't wait to serve people in the best way possible we can.

What are the services offered at AMC?

Our center is open from 8am to 9pm, so we have 13 hours services at the clinic, as well as 24 hours response and counselling for the patients who need this service. We



Dr Behzad Ghodsinia, Chairman

have a VIP department for our loyal customers that includes quick and out-of-turn services, door-to-door transfer of the patients to the center, as well as childcare services for anybody or mothers who come to the centre with their children. We have on-site laboratory and pharmacy services with free delivery for our VIP patients.

We utilise the most modern medical equipment and the highest quality consumables for the treatment of patients, which increases the level of patient satisfaction by considering the expertise and

experience of the physicians in our centre. Our team is constantly monitoring the patient's treatment process even after leaving the clinic to achieve complete recovery of the patient.

Tell us about the medical staff? Where are they from and what are their specialisations?

We have hired highly experienced physicians in different fields such as dermatology, internal, paediatric, gynaecology, dental. With most of them being from Iran and having more than 20 years of ex-

perience, it is important to say that they are prominent university professors, so they are well-known members of Iranian Medical Society who have an exclusive treatment method and scientific arguments in their field.

What expectation patients can have when they visit AMC?

When patients visit our centre, they forget the feeling of being sick at first, because the atmosphere of our clinic is so comfortable and specially designed. From early admission stages to final discharge procedures, we will provide a journey of comfort and joy for all our patients.

Are there any online services?

Due to COVID-19, we care for the safety of our patients and doctors. Patients can get their appointment online on AMCpolyclinic.com as well as 91717395.

We have online consultation on our website for people who have limited time and are at distance from our center.

Any plans of opening more branches in Oman?

I think all establishments would like to have more than one branch, especially for a polyclinic center. We don't like our patients travelling far away to see our doctors. We want our facility to be within their reach.

What are the future plans?

We intend to upgrade from a specialised daily polyclinic to a specialised boarding hospital in Muscat. We are planning to open another branch in Oman.

MILESTONE

Huawei launches HarmonyOS 2.0 Developer Beta for smartphones

MUSCAT: HarmonyOS 2.0 Developer Beta for smartphones was officially released at Huawei Developer Day Beijing 2020, representing a milestone in the construction of the all-encompassing HarmonyOS ecosystem. Smartphone app developers with interest in the 2.0 beta can apply for it on the Huawei Developer official website.

Comprehensive HarmonyOS system capabilities, a multitude of APIs, and powerful tools such as the optimised DevEco Studio simulator, have all been made publicly available, facilitating efficient HarmonyOS-compatible smartphone app development. Huawei hopes to welcome more partners to the ecosystem, and give users access to the full range of benefits offered by Seamless AI Life, with smart services that interact with, entertain and educate them in new and profound ways, at home, in the gym and the office, on the go and the road.

Wang Chenglu, President of Huawei's Consumer Business Group Software Engineering Department, remarked, "HarmonyOS is a true milestone, as it has redefined how people and devices interact with each other in every facet of daily life. Devices and services are no longer limited to specific life scenarios, now that users can freely customize how their devices work to account for any setting. HarmonyOS will create 'super devices' that come with more enriching apps than ever, as well as life-altering 'super services'."

HarmonyOS and its underlying distributed technology are designed for this futuristic Internet of Everything paradigm. By helping create 'super devices', which are formed by pooling software and hardware resources from previously physically-independent devices, the system has been making the lofty ambitions in Seamless AI Life a full-blown reality. HarmonyOS helps ensure that all devices are responsive to the user's every whim, and equipped to handle any conceivable usage scenario.

HarmonyOS encourages all developers to release their imagination and come up with promising ideas on how to create Seamless AI Life services for all users. Therefore it's no small wonder that over 120 mainstream app builders, including JD.com, China UnionPay, Youku Video and iFlytek, have opted to make HarmonyOS their system of choice.

Today's vast array of IoT devices share little in common, as they can be subdivided into different device types and operating systems. This reality has hindered traditional app development, as apps needed to be adapted to fit all of the different screen sizes and systems before release. Huawei has made IoT fragmentation a thing of the past, by opening all of HarmonyOS's frameworks and platform toolchains to developers.

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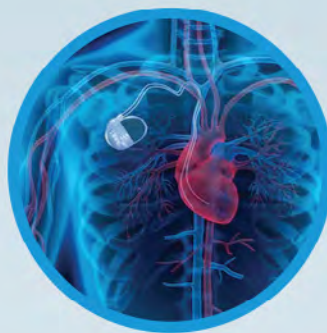


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