

7,600 get COVID-19 vaccines

Dr Ahmed bin Mohammed al Saeedi, Minister of Health, visited COVID-19 vaccination clinics in Muscat on Sunday as part of the National Campaign for Immunisation against COVID-19. Al Saeedi said 7,600 people have been vaccinated till today. No side effects have been registered other than the expected symptoms for most of the vaccines such as headache, body ache, low fever and skin rash in some cases. **SEE P3**



P10

AL NAHDA, AL NASR, SUR AND MAJEES ADVANCE



P13

RO 215M SUBSIDY SAVING FROM POWER, WATER TARIFFS



P19

"DEMON SLAYER" BECOMES JAPAN'S TOP-GROSSING MOVIE



AL ULA

GCC SUMMIT BEGINS ON TUESDAY

The 41st GCC Summit will begin this Tuesday at Al Ula city of Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The summit coincides with the 40th anniversary of foundation of the GCC, which was established on May 25, 1981 with a view to realising integration among member states in all fields and cementing bonds among its peoples. The Council also aims to establish similar systems for economic, financial, commercial and customs sectors, promoting scientific and technological progress by setting up research centres, implementing joint projects and encouraging the private sector.

MUSCAT

REUSABLE BAGS WILL BE AVAILABLE

The Consumer Protection Authority (CPA) has confirmed its keenness on monitoring the markets to avoid hiking of the prices of reusable shopping bags. CPA affirmed that reusable, environmentally-friendly grocery bags made of paper, cotton, fabric and other organic materials, will be available in some markets and stores at symbolic prices. Commenting on the ministerial decision No 23/2020 prohibiting the use of plastic bags which became effective on January 1, CPA said single-use plastic bags affect people's health and cause serious damage to the environmental and ecosystem.

BUDGET 2021

Priority for social development

SAMUEL KUTTY
@samkuttvyp

While Oman's Budget 2021 aims to achieve fiscal stability through rationalised spending, a large chunk of the revenue will be spent on social development.

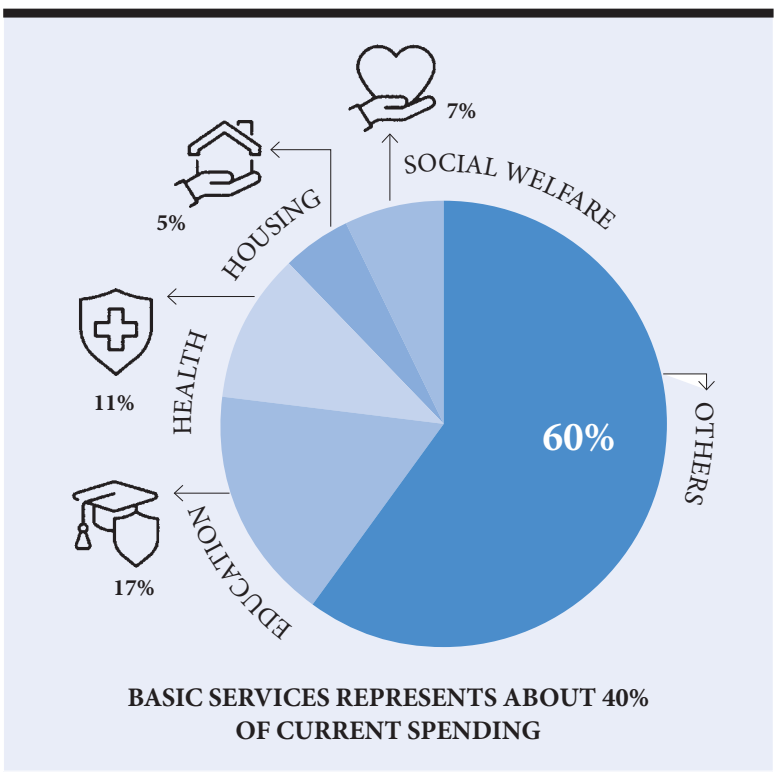
Spending in the budget is designed to maintain the level of priority social services for citizens including education, healthcare, housing and social welfare sectors that account for 40 per cent of the budget.

The 2020 budget too witnessed the same percentage of allocations while in 2019, it was 39 per cent of the total spending.

SPENDING CEILING

Also, the 2021 General Budget has been established while setting a limit for each government entity that should not exceed the revised budget in 2020 along with implementation of the procedures aimed at rationalising the spending and control of deficit among other objectives.

The 2021 Budget outlines a ceiling for all government units



that the budget of each unit should not exceed the revised budget of 2020 budget.

"The public spending in 2021", according to the statement issued by the ministry of finance, "is estimated on the basis of the policies adopted by the government to enhance spending efficiency and is in line with the initiatives undertaken in 2020".

SALARY 80%

Accordingly, current expenditures of ministries and government units are estimated at RO

4.1 billion. The salaries and entitlements account for 80 per cent of total current expenditures of ministries and government units, with an amount of RO 3.3 billion.

According to Minister of Finance Sultan bin Salim al Habsi, the budget continues to rationalise public spending and enhance its efficiency. It also seeks to contain deficit and maintain its downward trend.

PROGRAMME BASED

"The 2021 Budget paves the way for Programme Based Budget, and explores innovative means for funding some government projects and services", he said in an interview.

The minister affirmed that, beside these economic incentives, the government seeks to issue a set of measures related to regulating the labour market and incentivising the business climate.

While 17 per cent of the budget is allocated for education, health and housing will get 11 per cent and 5 per cent, respectively and social welfare will receive 7 per cent.

Alarming increase in divorces

ZAINAB AL NASSRI
@zainabalnasseri

Among the total personal status cases received in the courts of the Sultanate from March to October 2020 amounted to 1,239. Out of these 49.5 per cent were divorce cases. Stating these details, a source at the Council of Administrative Affairs of the Judiciary, said the alimony cases were 47.2 per cent, custody and alimony 25 per cent, while the marriage cases stood at 1.9 per cent.

IMPACT ON FAMILIES

Psychological studies from different countries in the world indicate that there has been negative psychological and social impact of divorce on spouses as well as on children. However, in some cases, divorce is the only solution, especially in the event of domestic violence.

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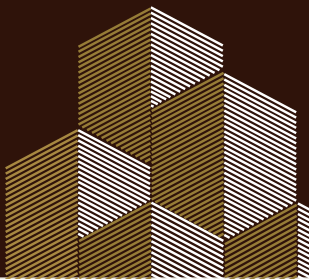
الموج
al mouj
مسقط muscat



صندوق عمان العقاري
OMAN REIT FUND
(Under Formation)

Oman REIT FUND (Under Formation)

**Initial Public Offering of
261,903,576 Units at an
offer price of Bz 102 per unit
(including Offer Expenses of
Bzs 2 per Offer Unit)**



Fund Name	Oman REIT Fund (Under Formation)
Address	P.O. Box 176, P.C. 130, Azaiba, Sultanate of Oman
Fund Term	The term of the Real Estate Investment Fund is 99 calendar years from the date of registration in the Funds registry in the Capital Market Authority or until the liquidation of the fund
Fund Structure	Close-ended Fund investing in Oman real estate markets
Fund Objective	To generate Income from real-estate rentals and long term capital appreciation by investing in real estate assets in Oman.
Financial Year	Commences on 01 January and ends on 31 December every year
Issued and paid up number of units	654,758,940 Six hundred and fifty four million seven hundred and fifty eight thousand nine hundred and forty Units
Number of Units offered	261,903,576 Units, representing 40% of the fund units. The issuer can accept upto 392,855,364 Units representing 60% with all Units enjoying equal rights in accordance with applicable law
Type of Offer	Public Offering
Fund Currency	Omani Rial
Fund Capital	OMR 65,475,894
NAV Frequency	Quarterly announcement of NAV
Investment Manager	Shumookh Fund Management LLC P.O. Box 176, Postal Code 130, Azaiba, Sultanate of Oman Tel.: +968 24594695, Email: info@sfm.om
Initial Issue Price	RO 0.102 Rial (including 100 Baisa issue price per unit and 2 Baisa as issue expenses per unit)
Initial Subscription Period	Offer opens on: 17 January 2021 Offer closes on: 31 January 2021
Offer Subscription Period	15 days
Category I Investors	Omani and non-Omani individuals who apply for a minimum of 1,000 Units and in multiples of 100 Units thereafter up to a maximum of 10,000,000 Units
Category II Investors	Omani and non-Omani individuals and juristic persons who apply for a minimum of 10,000,100 Units and in multiples of 100 Units thereafter up to a maximum of 163,689,735 Units which is equivalent to 25% of the issued units, and the issuance manager may allocate a higher percentage, subject to the approval of the CMA.
Proposed Allocation for each Category	Category I Investors: 170,237,325 units, being 65% of the Public Offer, on a pro rata basis Category II Investors: 91,666,251 Units, being 35% of the Public Offer, on a pro rata basis
Issue Manager	United Securities LLC P.O. Box: 2566, P.C. 112, Sultanate of Oman Tel: +968 2476 3300, Fax 2450 3750 Email: tariq@usoman.com www.usoman.com
Collection Agents	Oman Arab Bank National Bank of Oman Bank Dhofar Bank Muscat Ubhar Capital United Securities Global Financial Securities
Custodian	National Bank of Oman SAOG, P.O. Box: 751, P.C. 112, Sultanate of Oman Tel: +968 2477 8288 Email: jena@nbo.om www.nbo.om
Fund Administrator	National Bank of Oman SAOG, P.O. Box: 751, P.C. 112, Sultanate of Oman Tel: +968 2477 8288 Email: jena@nbo.om www.nbo.om
Auditors	Ernst & Young LLC P.O. Box: 1750, P.C. 112, Sultanate of Oman Tel: +968 22504559 Email: m.alqurashi@ey.com www.ey.com
Legal Advisors	Zaid Al Malki & Nasser Al Tabeeb Advocacy & Legal Consultancy P.O. Box: 1118, P.C. 133, Sultanate of Oman Tel: +968 2457 5841, Fax: 2457 5844 Email: zaid_malki@hotmail.com
Registration & Transfer Agent	Muscat Clearing and Depository Company SAOC P.O. Box: 952, P.C. 112, Sultanate of Oman Tel: +968 2482 2222, Fax: +968 2481 7491 www.mcd.gov.om

INVESTMENT OBJECTIVES

Oman REIT Fund's key strategic objectives are to provide investors with a diversified, stable and sustainable income stream, while also benefiting from organic growth and value-add opportunities aiming to maximise Unitholder returns.

Dividend Policy

The Investment Manager proposes to follow a reasonable dividend payout policy, subject to debt repayments, working capital and operational expenditure obligations. The amount of annual dividends and the determination of whether to pay dividends in any year may be affected by a number of other factors, including but not limited to the business prospects, financial performance, free cash availability, covenants under the Finance Documents and the outlook for the sector.

Oman REIT Fund's dividend policy is subject to restrictions contained in the Regulation for Real Estate Investment Funds issued by Oman's CMA, its Articles and the covenants of the agreements with the lender, if any. These are summarised as follows:

- In accordance with the Regulation for Real Estate Investment Funds, in each financial year, shall distribute not less than 90% of its annual realized net profits to the investment unitholders.
- In accordance with the Articles, any profit remaining after distribution to the Unitholders may be carried forward on the Board's recommendation.

Fund Management

The initial fund management will be appointed in agreement with the originator and the founders and whose term will not exceed one year from the date of the fund's registration in the investment funds registry at the Capital Market Authority. After one year from the date of the fund's registration in the investment funds register with the Capital Market Authority, the fund management will hold an ordinary general assembly meeting for unit holders to elect a new board in accordance with the laws and regulations and the applicable articles of association. Members of the fund administration are elected by secret ballot in an ordinary general assembly for unit holders, for a period of five years at most, a member may be reelected for another term.

Initial Fund Management Board Appointed by the Founders in Accordance with the Originator

- Hilal Hamed Abdullah Al-Hasani (Chairman)
- Mustafa Ahmed Salman (Member)
- ENG. Mohsin Zahran Al Hinai (Member)
- Hamad Mohammad Al Wahaibi (Member)
- Ahmed Sultan Rashid Al Yaqoobi (Member)

Conditions and procedures for subscription

The Public Offer will be open to Omani and non-Omani individuals and juristic persons. All GCC individuals and juristic persons are treated as Omani individuals and juristic persons for the purpose of applying for and owning Units.

Save in respect of the Units issued to Oman REIT Fund pursuant to the Public Offer and the Private Offer, no one Unitholder, whether an individual or juristic person, may together with an associated company or family member be allocated Units representing more than 25% of the issued capital of the Fund.

In accordance with the Capital Market Law, the following persons shall not be permitted to apply for Units in the Public Offer:

- sole proprietorship establishments: the owners of sole proprietorship establishments may only submit Applications in their personal names;
- trust accounts: customers registered under trust accounts may only submit Applications in their personal names;
- multiple Applications: an Applicant may not submit more than one Application; and
- joint Applications: Applicants may not submit Applications in the name of more than one individual (including on behalf of legal heirs).

All such Applications will be rejected without contacting the Applicant.

Offer on Behalf of Minors

- For the purpose of this Public Offer, any person under 18 years of age on the date of submission of an Application will be determined as a minor.
- If an Application is made on behalf of a minor by any person other than the minor's father, the person submitting the Application will be required to attach a legally valid Shariah compliant power of attorney issued by the competent authorities authorising him or her to deal in the funds of the minor through sale, purchase and investment.

Applicant's Number with the MCD

- Any Applicant who applies for Units must have an account and Investor Number with the MCD. Any Applicant may apply to obtain an Investor Number and open an account by completing the MCD application form. This may be obtained from the MCD or its website at www.mcd.gov.om, or from brokerage companies licensed by the CMA. The completed form may be submitted by an Applicant through any of the following channels:
 - At the head office of the MCD, at P.O. Box 952, Postal Code 112, Ruwi, Muscat, Sultanate of Oman;
 - At the office of any brokerage company licensed by the MSM;
 - By opening an account through the MCD website at www.mcd.gov.om.
- In order to open an account with the MCD, a juristic person will be required to furnish a copy of its constitutional documents, in the form prescribed by the MCD, along with a completed MCD application form in order to open an account and receive an Investor Number.
- Applicants who already hold accounts with the MCD are advised, before making an Application, to confirm their details as noted in the Application Form. Applicants may update their particulars through any of the channels mentioned above.
- All correspondence including allocation letters and dividend cheques will be sent to an Applicant's address as recorded at the MCD. Applicants should ensure that their addresses as provided to the MCD are correct and kept up-to-date.
- Each Applicant should secure from the MCD its Investor Number as the Investor Number will be required in order to complete an Application. Each Applicant is responsible for ensuring that the Investor Number set out in their Application Form is correct. Applications not bearing the correct Investor Number will be rejected without contacting the Applicant.

Oman REIT Fund (Under Formation) is a close-ended Real Estate Investment Fund to be established by Shumookh Fund Management LLC ("Shumookh"), to be registered in the Sultanate of Oman and constituted as a joint investment account as per the Regulations of the Capital Market Authority ("CMA") of Oman under the guidance of the REIT Fund's Management Body. This summary has been extracted from the unofficial translation of the original Prospectus prepared in Arabic and approved by the CMA in accordance with the administrative decision No. 2/84/2020 dated 20 December 2020.

This does not constitute an offer to sell or an invitation by or on behalf of Oman REIT Fund (Under Formation) or its Investment Manager to subscribe to any of the Units in any jurisdiction outside of the Sultanate of Oman where such distribution is, or may be unlawful.

For more information on these procedures, Applicants should contact the MCD: Muscat Clearing & Depository Co. SAOC P.O. Box 952, Postal Code 112, Ruwi, Muscat, Sultanate of Oman, Tel: +968 2482 2222; Fax: +968 2481 7491, Web: www.mcd.gov.om.

Offer Subscription Period

The Offer Subscription Period shall commence on:

Offer Opens on: 17 January 2021

Offer Closes on: 31 January 2021

Allocation Basis

- If the total number of Units applied for by Category I Investors is equal to or less than 170,237,325 Units (65% of the Public Offer Units) (the "Category I Allocation"), all Category I Investors will be allocated the number of Units they have applied for. Any remaining offered Units from the Category I Allocation, after allocation to Category I Investors, will be allocated pro-rata to Category II Investors who were not allocated the full number of Units each Category II Investor applied for;
- If the total number of Units applied for by Category II Investors is equal to or less than 91,666,251 Units (35% of the Public Offer Units) (the "Category II Allocation"), all Category II Investors will be allocated the number of Units they have applied for. Any remaining offered Units from the Category II Allocation, after allocation to Category II Investors, will be allocated pro-rata to Category I Investors who were not allocated the full number of Units each Category I Investor applied for; and
- If the total number of Units applied for by Category I Investors exceeds 170,237,325 Units and the total number of Units applied for by Category II Investors exceeds 91,666,251 Units then:
 - The Category I Investors shall be allocated in aggregate 170,237,325 Units, being 65% of the Public Offer, with each Category I Investor being allocated Units on a pro-rata basis based on the number of Units it applied for as against the total number of Units applied for by the Category I Investors;
 - The Category II Investors shall be allocated in aggregate 91,666,251 Units, being 35% of the Public Offer, with each Category II Investor being allocated Units on a pro-rata basis based on the number of Units it applied for as against the total number of Units applied for by the Category II Investors.
- In the event that the total number of Units applied for in the Public Offer is less than the total number of Units on offer, the Units not applied for by Applicants will be allocated to the founders and issued to them, contemporaneously with the issuance of the Units applied for by the Applicants, pursuant to the terms of the Founders Undertaking at a price per Unit representing the value of 100 Baizas per Unit as part of the purchase price under the Master Sale and Purchase Agreement.
- The final allocation of Units on the above basis will be decided by the Fund Management Body, the Issue Manager and the MCD in consultation with the CMA.
- If fewer than 50% of the Units offered pursuant to the Public Offer are applied for by Applicants then the Fund and the Issue Manager reserve the right to cancel the Public Offer after the approval of CMA and, at the Fund's discretion and subject to regulatory requirements, thereafter undertake a further offer of Units by way of IPO at the same or a different (which may be higher or lower) Public Offer price. In the event that the Public Offer is so cancelled, refunds of Application Funds will be made on or by the 3rd of February 2020.

Minimum and Maximum Limit for Category I of Public Offer

The minimum number of Units for offer for first category will be 1,000 units, in multiples of 100 units thereafter, with maximum of 10,000,000 units. Notwithstanding this description of the minimum offer, the Fund Management Body may reduce the minimum capital participation from time to time to allow for maximum investor participation, and the Fund Management Body may accept multiples of less than 100 Units, in its sole discretion.

Minimum and Maximum Limit for Category II of Public Offer

The minimum number of units offered for the second category will be 10,000,100 units, in multiples of 100 units thereafter, with a maximum of 163,689,735 units, equivalent to 25% of the offered units, and the Issuance Manager may allocate a higher percentage subject to approval by the Authority. For the purposes of calculating this number and maximum number of units, the request of the father (or guardian) is combined with any requests made by the father (or guardian) on behalf of any relevant minor (minors).

None of the Fund, the Financial Advisor to the Fund and the Issue Manager is liable for any changes in applicable laws or regulations that occur after the date of this Prospectus. Applicants are advised to make their own independent investigations to ensure that their Applications comply with prevailing laws and regulations.

Terms of Payment

- The Collection Agents will open escrow accounts entitled the "Oman REIT Fund (under formation)" for the collection of the Application Money from each Applicant. These escrow accounts will be managed by each Collection Agent which will on the next working day after the receipt of a payment against each Application transfer the collection proceeds to the common escrow account maintained by MCDC.
- Each Applicant can pay by demand draft, pay by an account transfer or pay by his/her own brokerage account with a licensed broker (provided the broker has been appointed as a Collection Agent for Oman REIT Fund (under formation)) for their individual Application Money at the time of submission of their Applications. Payments through cheques may not be accepted unless the Application money is credited to the Collection Agent's escrow account before 12 PM on the Offer Closing.

Particulars of the Bank Account of the Applicant

- In accordance with the instructions of the CMA, each Applicant needs to verify the details of the bank account listed in the records of the MCDC. The bank account listed in the records of the MCDC will be used for the transfer of refunds.

Documentation Required

The prospectus contains a list of the documentation which each Applicant is required to submit as part of a valid Application.

Submission of a document confirming the accuracy of the bank account number provided in the E-Application is only required where the Applicant's bank account is registered with a bank that is not a Collecting Bank.

A copy of a valid power of attorney duly endorsed by the competent legal authorities must be included in the event the Application is on behalf of another person (with the exception of an E-Application made by a father on behalf of his minor(s), in which case a certified copy of the passport (or civil card) of the father and the passport of the minor(s) must be included with the E-Application).

In the case of Applications by juristic persons (non-individuals) which are signed by a person in his or her capacity as an authorised signatory, a certified copy of adequate and valid documentation evidencing such authority must be submitted to the relevant Collecting Bank along with the E-Application.

Mode of E-Application

The Applicant will be responsible for furnishing all particulars and will ensure the correctness and validity of the information set out in, and enclosed with, the E-Application. Each Applicant must, before completing the E-Application, carefully read this Prospectus, including the conditions and procedures governing the offer for Units.

The Applicant will be required to fill in the E-Application and furnish copies of all particulars as noted in the E-Application.

The Applicant will be required to submit the E-Application to one of the Collecting Agents at the same time as paying the Application Funds and submitting the required documents in support of the Application.

Any payment of Application Funds by way of cheque or demand draft will be made in favour of "Oman REIT Fund (under formation)".

Collecting Banks and Agents Receiving the Applications

Applications will be accepted by any one of the Collecting Agents during official working hours only, being 10 AM to 2 PM. The Collecting Agent receiving the Application Form is required to accept the Application Form only after confirmation of compliance with the procedures set out in this Prospectus and the Application Form. The Collecting Agent must instruct an Applicant to comply with and fulfil any requirements set out in the Application Form and this Prospectus.

Applicants wishing to make an Application must submit an Application Form to one of the Collecting Agents, and at the same time make payment of the relevant Application Funds into an Escrow Account, during the Offer Subscription Period and by no later than on the Closing Date. The Collecting Agent shall refuse any Application received after 2 PM on the Closing Date.

Payment into Escrow Account and Refunds

All Applicants must, with the submission of the Application, pay the Application Money by demand draft, instruct an account transfer or pay through his/her brokerage account with a licensed broker (provided the broker has been appointed as a Collection Broker for "Oman REIT Fund (under formation)").

Where an Applicant has been allocated fewer Units than applied for in the Application Form or at a price lower than the price at which the Application Funds were calculated, the excess amount, if any, paid on Application, will be refunded to the Applicant by the relevant Collecting Bank from the relevant Escrow Account immediately on receiving orders from the Issue Manager and on or by 14th of February 2020.

Acceptance of Applications

The Collecting Banks will not accept Applications in the following circumstances:

- If the Application Form does not bear the signature of the Applicant;
- If the Application Funds are not paid by the Applicant in accordance with the terms and conditions set out in this Prospectus;
- If the Application Funds are paid by cheque and the cheque is dishonoured for any reason whatsoever;
- If the Application Form does not include the Applicant's Investor Number registered with the MCD;
- If the Application is submitted in joint names;
- If the Applicant is a sole proprietorship or trust account;
- If the Investor Number furnished in the Application Form is incorrect;
- If the Applicant submits more than one Application in the same name (in which case all of the Applications made by that Applicant may be rejected);
- If the required supporting documents are not enclosed with the Application Form;
- If the Application Form does not contain all the particulars of the bank account of the Applicant;
- If the particulars of the Applicant's bank account provided in the Application Form are found to be incorrect, inaccurate or not to be a bank account in the name of the Applicant, in the last case with the exception of Applications submitted in the names of minor(s), which are allowed to make use of the particulars of the bank accounts held by their fathers or guardians;

- If the relevant power of attorney is not attached to the Application Form in respect of an Applicant who applies on behalf of another person (with the exception of fathers who apply on behalf of their minor(s) in which case a certified copy of the passport (or civil card) of the father and the passport of the minor(s) must be included with the Application);
- If the Application does not comply with the legal requirements as provided for in this Prospectus or otherwise under applicable law or regulation.
- If a Collecting Bank receives an Application that does not comply with the procedures set out in this Prospectus, due effort will be taken by the relevant Collecting Bank to contact the Applicant so that the mistake may be corrected. If the Applicant does not rectify the Application within a specified period prior to the Closing Date, the relevant Collecting Bank will return the Application Form together with the relevant Application Funds to the Applicant.

Investor Undertakings

By submitting an Application, an Applicant shall be deemed to have agreed, and accordingly the Fund and the Issue Manager shall be entitled to presume, that the Applicant has:

- clearly and unambiguously understood all contents of this Prospectus;
- sufficient knowledge (including of applicable laws and regulations), experience and expertise as an investor, to make the investment in the Units;
- received all information it believes to be necessary, appropriate and material in connection with, and for, the investment in the Units;
- not solely relied on the Fund, the Issue Manager or any of their Affiliates for any information, advice or recommendations of any sort about the terms of the Units appearing in this Prospectus;
- conducted independent evaluation, due diligence and obtained appropriate financial, tax, accounting and legal advice of all merits and risks associated with the investment in the Units; and
- obtained all necessary internal, external, regulatory and other approvals required to make an Application and invest in the Units.

Refusal of Applications

The Issue Manager may reject any Application under any of the conditions referred to above, subject to securing the approval of the CMA and submission to the CMA of a comprehensive report furnishing the details of the Applications that are rejected and the reasons behind the rejections.

Enquiry and Complaints

Any Applicant who intends to seek clarification or make a complaint with regard to issues related to the allocation or rejection of Applications or the refund of excess Application Funds may contact the branch of the Collecting Bank where the Application was made. If there is no response from the relevant Collecting Bank, the Applicant may contact the person whose details are set out below:

Collecting Bank	Contact Name	Postal Address	Contact Details
Bank Muscat SAOG	Sarah Al Kalbani	P.O. Box 134, P.C. 112 Ruwi, Sultanate of Oman	T: +968 24768044 F: +968 24787764 Email: sarahk@bankmuscat.com
Oman Arab Bank SAOC	Riyadh Moosa Al Lawati Saker Al Harassi	P.O. Box 2010, P. C. 112 Ruwi, Sultanate of Oman	T: +968 24754288 Email: riyadh.lawati@omanarabbank.com +968 2475426 Email: saker.alharasi@omanarabbank.com
National Bank of Oman SAOG	Reem Said Al Abri Salim Masoud Al Musalami	P.O. Box 751, Postal Code 112, Ruwi, Sultanate of Oman	T: +968 24778754/94000087 +968 24778075/99625152 F: +968 24778993 Email: nboackoffice@nbo.co.om
Bank Dhofar SAOG	Aisha Al Khanjari	P.O. Box: 1507, P. C. 112 Ruwi, Sultanate of Oman	T: +968 24726371 F: +968 24797246 Email: askhanjari@bankdhofar.com
Ubhar Capital	Talal Al Balushi	P.O. Box: 1137, P.C. 111 CPQ, Sultanate of Oman	T: +968 24949051 +968 99267286 F: +968 24949099 Email: talal@u-capital.net
United Securities	Ayman Al Lawati	P.O. Box: 2566, P. C. 112 Ruwi, Sultanate of Oman	T: +968 24763300 F: +968 24503750 Email: ayman@usoman.com
Global Financial Securities	Rawan Al Jabri Mohammed Saad Kamal	P.O. Box: 110, P. C. 112 Ruwi, Sultanate of Oman	T: +968 24822725 +968 24822737 F: +968 24822733

If the relevant Collecting Bank fails to resolve the requested clarification or complaint with the Applicant, it will refer the subject matter to the Issue Manager and it will keep the Applicant informed of the progress and development in respect of the subject matter of the clarification or complaint.

Mode of Application

The Applicants will be able to submit E-Applications either through Collection Banks or through Collection Brokers:

1. Application through Collection Banks

I. E-IPO channel by the Collection Banks:

The Applicant will need to get in touch with their respective bank which has been appointed as a Collection Bank for Oman REIT Fund (under formation) for further guidance on the E-IPO channel provided by the respective bank.

The Application Money will be paid by the Applicant as per the terms of the E-IPO collection process utilised by each Collection Bank. The Applicant will be required, before completing the Application through E-IPO, to carefully read this Prospectus, including the conditions and procedures governing the E-IPO Application.

II. E-IPO Platform:

The Applicants can furnish all particulars in the E-IPO platform at the following website.

www.mcd.gov.om. After verifying all the particulars, the Applicant will need to print the E-IPO Application. The Applicant needs to submit the E-IPO Application along with supporting documents and Application Money to one of the Collection Banks. The Collection Bank in turn after verifying the supporting documents and confirming the receipt of the Application Money will validate the E-IPO Application in the E-IPO platform and share a copy of the acknowledgment of the E-IPO Application with each Applicant. The Applicant needs to ensure that they receive a copy of the acknowledgement from the Collection Bank as a valid proof of their Application. Each Applicant can make payments through the following routes: (i) by cash; (ii) by cheque or demand draft in favour of "Oman REIT Fund (under formation)"; or (iii) instruct their bank to debit their bank account (provided the bank has been appointed as a Collection Bank for Oman REIT Fund (under formation)) for the Application Money at the time of submission of the Application.

2. Application through Collection Agents

The Applicants will provide instructions along with supporting documents and Application Money to their brokers (provided the broker has been appointed as a Collection Broker for Oman REIT Fund (under formation)) to apply in the IPO on their behalf. The Collection Brokers on receipt of such instructions along with supporting documents and upon confirmation of the receipt of Application Money will create an E-IPO Application on behalf of the Applicant on the E-IPO Broker Platform. The Collection Broker who makes the Application on behalf of the Applicant will download and share a copy of acknowledgment of the E-IPO Application to each Applicant. The Applicant needs to ensure that they receive a copy of the acknowledgment from the Collection Broker as a valid proof of their Application. Each Applicant can make payments through the following routes: (i) by cheque or demand draft in favour of "Oman REIT Fund (under formation)"; or (ii) instruct their broker to debit their brokerage account (provided the broker has been appointed as a Collection Broker for Oman REIT Fund (under formation)) for the Application Money at the time of submission of the Application.

Allocation Letters and Refund of Money

The Issue Manager will arrange to allocate the Units to Applicants within 5 Business Days of receiving the approval of the CMA on the basis of allocation. The Issue Manager will also procure the refund by the relevant Collecting Banks of any excess Application Funds to applicable Applicants as set out in section "Payment into Escrow Account and Refunds" of this Prospectus after the end of the Offer Subscription Period. The Issue Manager will arrange to send allocation letters to Applicants who have been allocated Units through the MCD to their addresses registered with the MCD.

Listing and Trading of the Units

The Units will be listed on the MSM in accordance with the laws and procedures in force on the date the application is made to the MSM for the listing and registration of the Units.

The following table shows the timetable for the Offer, allocation of Units and refund of excess Application Funds:

Procedure	Date
CMA prospectus approval date	20/12/2020
Date of announcement of Public Offer in local newspaper	24/12/2020
Offer opening date	17/1/2021
Offer closing date	31/1/2021
Deadline for the Issue Manager to receive Applications and Applicant lists from the Collecting Banks / Agents	3/2/2021
Notification to CMA of the Offer results and allocation basis proposal	8/2/2021
Approval of the allocation proposal by CMA	11/2/2021
Allocation letters to Applicants	14/2/2021
Registration of the Units and refund of excess Application Funds	14/2/2021
Listing of the Units on MSM	17/2/2021
Refund of Application Funds in the event Public Offer is cancelled	3/2/2021

For further information, contact:

Investment Manager Shumookh Fund Management LLC Tel.: +968 24594695 Email: info@sfm.om P.O. Box 176, Postal Code 130, Azaiba, Sultanate of Oman	Issue Manager United Securities LLC Tel.: +968 24763300 Email: ayman@usoman.com P.O. Box: 2566, P.C.: 112, Sultanate of Oman
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FOR MORE DETAILS AND RISK FACTORS PLEASE REFER TO PROSPECTUS

Investment Manager



Issue Manager



Collecting Banks/Agents



7,600 get COVID-19 vaccines



STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, JAN 3

Dr Ahmed bin Mohammed al Saeedi, Minister of Health, visited COVID-19 vaccination clinics in Muscat on Sunday as part of the National Campaign for Immunisation against COVID-19.

AlSaeedi said 7,600 people have been vaccinated till today. No side effects have been registered other

than the expected symptoms for most of the vaccines such as headache, body ache, low fever and skin rash in some cases.

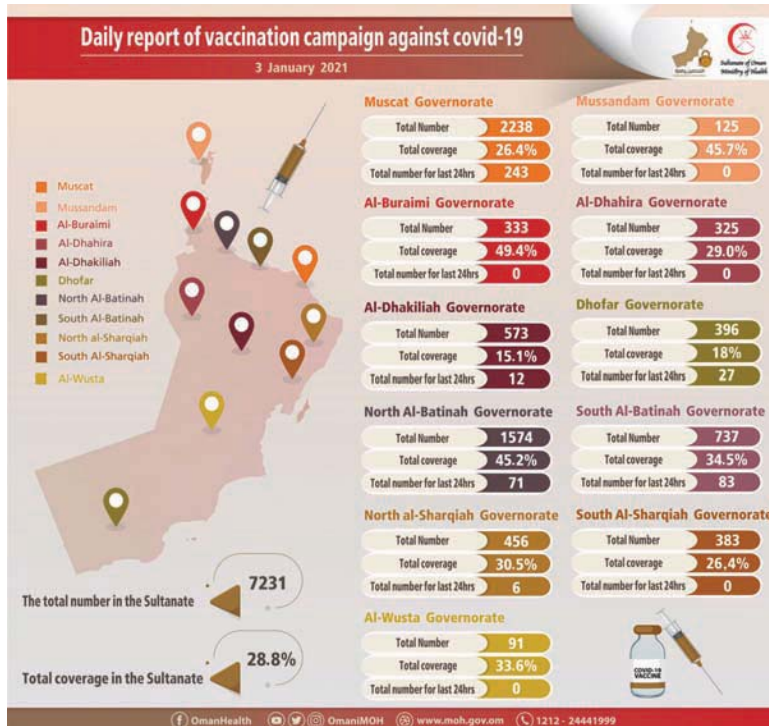
The minister called upon all not to pay attention to rumours and forward to the distributed vaccination centres across the Sultanate.

The minister was briefed on the health workers' efforts in tackling the COVID-19 pandemic and the healthcare services provided for

the infected patients.

During his visit at Al Seeb Polyclinic and Bausher Polyclinic, the minister reviewed the vaccination process for the target groups, daily statistics of vaccinations, as well as the mechanism of receiving the target groups.

Furthermore, the minister met the medical staff working at these clinics and listened to their suggestions.



“We are very glad to see the citizens and residents taking the vaccine,” the minister said to the media. He asserted that the vaccine is safe and effective.

The minister was accompanied by Dr Thamra al Ghafri, Acting Director-General of Health Services of Muscat Governorate.

The Sultanate has started early last week the National Campaign for Immunisation against COVID-19 for the target groups.

Alarming increase in divorce cases

FROM P1

Dr Hamed al Sinawi, Senior Consultant of Behavioural Medicine, Sultan Qaboos University Hospital, said, “Divorces are on the rise because of many things like traditional marriages, miscommunication between the two parties, financial pardons, gap of age, lack of awareness on commitment towards family, besides domestic violence.

“Reducing these rates can be done at two levels. First at the family level by involving both parties in choosing their spouse, not being deceived by appearances, as well as avoiding extravagance in weddings and high dowries that cause financial problems for the newlyweds. Second at the society level which involves raising public awareness about the importance of marriage and family, providing marital counselling services to enable young couples to solve their problems and overcome the crises they may face.

In 2015, Dr Ohoud Saeed al Balushi from SQU conducted a study on the reality of divorce in Omani society. It revealed that divorce is increasing among young people and groups with low educational and economic levels. Also, statistics showed that 47 per cent of divorced women in the Sultanate receive a social security benefits, which reflects their difficult economic situation.

The results found that the possibility of divorce increases during the first four years of marriage. Poor marital compatibility is due to many reasons, including traditional marriage, forced marriage, and lack of independent housing.

“By comparing economic, social, and psychological impact on divorced men and women, a difference is noted in the order of these effects according to gender. Men mainly suffer from

Divorces are on the rise because of many things like traditional marriages, miscommunication between the two parties, financial pardons, gap of age, lack of awareness on commitment towards family, besides domestic violence

DR HAMED AL SINAWI

Senior Consultant of Behavioural Medicine, SQU Hospital

emotional deprivation, social harassment, besides money problems. As for divorced women, they suffer the mostly from lack of a stable source of income, insufficient income, the father not committing to paying child support, in addition to housing problems,” the study said.

The Ministry of Justice and Legal Affairs revealed in October last year the statistics of marriage during the first quarter of the same year. The total number of marriage registrations reached 588, with the Governorate of Al Dakhiliyah on top of the list with 157 followed by Muscat (147) Al Batinah North (135) Al Sharqiyah North (45) Al Sharqiyah South (38), Al Batinah South (33), Al Dhahirah (15), Dhofar (9), Musandam (7), Al Wusta (1) and Al Buraimi (1).

Total number of divorce cases were 152 of which Muscat Governorate accounted for 50 cases.

Central market to reopen on Tuesday

HAMAD AL HASHMI
MUSCAT, JAN 3

Muscat Municipality has decided to reopen the Central Fruits and Vegetables Market starting from Tuesday in accordance to the specified timing.

The municipality said the central market will be open for shoppers between 1 pm and 6 pm and entry will be through gate No 2 where parking spaces are available inside and outside the



market. Additional gates will be opened at the side ground, should the necessity arise.

Opening time for wholesale traders will be between 5 am and 11 am through gate No 1 for

refrigerators and trucks weighing 3 tonnes and above.

Muscat Municipality announced that market-goers are required to take every necessary precaution to avoid the spread of COVID-19 such as physical distancing, wearing of face masks and using sanitisers.

As per the measures set by the municipality, entry to the market will be restricted to shoppers above 12 years of age and only two persons per vehicle will be allowed.

Budget 2021 gives priority for social development, fiscal balance

FROM P1

The appropriations allocated for subsidies are estimated at RO 800 million, including subsidies for electricity, water, sewage and waste sectors, in addition to the subsidies for oil products, housing and development loans.

“The continuous high allocation for social developments including education is a positive move. The government acknowledges that spending must be prioritised

for public services and strategic investment to keep the economy on a strong footing,” said Shaswar al Balushi, CEO of Oman Society for Contractors.

Following the COVID-19 outbreak, the government has embarked on taking measures that will help both public and private sectors to overcome the impact from the pandemic.

“The social development support, especially the higher

allocation for the education sector, will definitely help the Omani youths to help meet the requirements of Oman’s job market,” he said.

According to Dr Anchan C K, International Adviser on Trade and Economy, the budget focuses on ensuring the sustainability of present social services by maintaining a level of spending of no less than 40 per cent in those services.

“This has been done taking into account the social and economic impact, and applying the social protection system to categories that may be effected by the measures and initiatives taken.”

There is continued focus on the need to enhance the contribution of non-oil revenue, and the budget includes allocations for the five sectors — manufacturing, logistics, tourism, fisheries and mining.

The government acknowledges

that revenues from these sectors depend on private sector investment, and is committed to improving the business environment. To facilitate this the Budget aims to reduce debt, control deficit, achieve the first phase of financial sustainability measures, and implement spending rationalisation measures.

“The budget for 2021 aims to increase non-oil revenues and reduce spending to achieve

financial sustainability and to enable the national economy to continue in achieving targeted growth rates,” said Dr Anchan.

To achieve efficiency and financial sustainability for pension funds, and to overcome challenges faced by these funds, the government has decided to establish two pension funds. One fund for civil units and private sector while the other one for defence and security units.

Job Vacancy

A large reputed group of companies, looking for experienced foreman to assist in manage and running concrete product manufacturing plant. Preferably Electrical or Mechanical Diploma/ITI qualified or not qualified with Gulf Experience. Experience in Blocks or Tiles making plant like MASA, Schollosser, Zenith. Diagnosis of any plant malfunction, Preventive maintenance, Mix design, Quality and Manpower Management.

Please send your resume to
abuosama2020@hotmail.com
Whatsapp 99362409

Temperatures may dip further

MUSCAT: Further decrease in temperatures can be expected in coming days as the minimum temperature is likely to range between 14 and 10 degrees Celsius on the coasts of the Sea of Oman and 10 to 6 in the interior and desert areas. Muscat would have maximum temperatures at 24 degrees and minimum at 14 degrees Celsius.

537 COVID cases and two deaths

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Health announced on Sunday 537 new coronavirus cases, bringing the total number of COVID-19 patients in the Sultanate to 129,404. The total death cases in the country has reached 1,501 after 2 people died in three days. A total of 122,266 out of the COVID-19 patients in the Sultanate have recovered, the ministry said.

VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

Job Title
Sr. Sales Manager

Job Specification

- At least Bachelor's degree with a minimum of 10 years of working experience in FMCG manufacturing or distribution company as a Sales Manager.
- Having Knowledge of accounting.
- Computer proficiency with strong analytical & communication skills.

Job Description

- Formulating and executing sales strategy.
- Establishing and expanding the customer base.
- Monitor team performance and set targets.
- Travel to all target areas and have one on one relationship with all the main buyers.

Notice:

Those who meet the conditions mentioned in the announcement must submit their applications to the email investcooperation2040@gmail.com within two week from the date of the announcement. Any request received after that date will not be considered, or if the required documents are not attached to it, or if it does not fulfill the conditions specified for the job.

Salary and other benefits will be determined according to the experience and qualifications of the job applicant by agreement between the two parties.



GET VACCINATED, FOR OTHER’S SAKE IF NOT FOR YOUR OWN



RAY PETERSEN
NIZWA, JAN 3

“The word” is out! It is in the newspapers, on television, heard on the radio, and a part of every conversation being held across the Sultanate. “The vaccine is here. Corona is finished.” Along with the now inevitable knowing looks, nudges, winks, and conspiratorial lowering of voices as mumbled allusions to its being mythical, political, and meaningless.

Apparently, we can all rest easy now because it was all just a gigantic ruse. Such opinions are commonplace among those who ‘know,’ so why have we all suffered the economic, social, and deprivations of the last twelve months? There are many who would like to know the how and why of the greatest global occurrence in a century. Talk is cheap, loose talk is cheaper, and rubbish talk is just noise for no reason.

As to who has suffered most? That is a

difficult question, however, governments on every continent have suffered, as have the tourism and hospitality sectors, currently operating on 5-10 per cent capacity. Business cash reserves are gone as they have lost intellectual property, trade, and impetus. Clearly though, the biggest losers are families, as redundancies, reduced hours, layoffs, and school closures have turned homes upside down.

Homes have either flourished under strong parenting or suffered under the weak. Not everyone has the capacity to manage the time and space needs of such a diverse micro-society for such an extended time. Weekends are one thing, school holidays another, but the pandemic has never had an end date!

No: The biggest losers are the pupils and students of the world! From kindergarten, to school, to secondary, to university, every one of them has had their learning experience deeply affected,

Buy flowers for mums and wives, as the least they deserve. Reward healthcare professionals and teachers appropriately, and be tolerant of your children as they navigate their way back into the classroom, and beyond... sooner rather than later

either simply by the lack of an alternative equal provision of learning, or lesser quality of learning. Paul Levinson is an American Professor of Communications, and he states that “Online learning can be a lifeline,” however a lifeline is just temporary, and as Bill Gates said recently, “In terms of getting the kids working, motivating them, the teacher is the most important.” And there is no doubt... teachers are already the forgotten heroes of the pandemic!

Microsoft ‘Teams’, Google ‘Meet’, and ‘Zoom’ were all thrust upon teachers with diverse prior experiences in technology. Hastily created online syllabi were institutional Pavlovian responses. Endless revisions followed as the realities of societal negligence and aversion to disaster preparation became real-time ‘perfect storms.’ Institutions, and indeed societies, must hold themselves up to be scrutinised for their complacency, as action plans for fire, earthquake,

or storm may have been in place, but not this! Societal laxity, its absence of preparedness, plans, resources, and training, all point to an untested complacency, and the students have been left to pick up the pieces. They will because they are young, sturdy, and have the resilience of that youth.

But do not make the mistake of thinking the pandemic was a ‘one-time-wonder.’ It was not, is not, and will not be. COVID-19 was surely Mother Nature flexing her muscles in the wake of generations and decades of natural, environmental, and complacency (there is that word again), by us all.

The reality is to get vaccinated, for other’s sake if not for your own. Buy flowers for mums and wives, as the least they deserve. Reward healthcare professionals and teachers appropriately, and be tolerant of children as they navigate their way back into the classroom, and beyond... sooner rather than later.



ARA sponsors digital studio in Al Buraimi

STAFF REPORTER

MUSCAT, JAN 3

In line with its strategy to support the development of the local communities it operates in, ARA Petroleum Oman B44 has signed a memorandum of understanding with the Ministry of Education to sponsor a digital studio in Al Buraimi Governorate.

ARA Petroleum Oman Block 44 is primarily a natural gas and condensate development in Oman wholly owned by ARA Petroleum LLC. The company is committed to implement CSR strategies that are in line with In-Country



Value (ICV). Being in the oil and gas business, the entity drives an earnest endeavour to extend tangible support to the society.

The 'ARA Digital Studio' to be constructed in the Al Buraimi Governorate will serve the educational sector by producing

digital material related to the subject.

The MoU signing ceremony was held under the auspices of Dr Abdullah bin Khamis al Busaidy, Education Under-Secretary at the Ministry of Education. Moosa Al Moosawi, DGM at ARA

Petroleum Oman Block 44 and Dr Fathiya al Saddi, Director-General of the Directorate General of the Ministry of Education in the Al Buraimi Governorate signed the agreement.

A spokesperson for Ministry of Education said, "The digital studio will help the education sector in Buraimi enhance the general and digital learning experience. We want to express our sincere gratitude to ARA Petroleum for creating a positive change in the society. By contributing to education sector ARA Petroleum has taken a step in the right direction."

Expats can change sponsor only after contract termination

VINOD NAIR

@vinot_nair

With the government decision to scrap the (No-objection Certification (NOC) rule for expatriates wishing to change sponsors or employers coming into force, concerned authorities said Observer that some conditions must be met.

Speaking to the Observer, a senior ROP said, "Expatriates are free to change their sponsor at the end of their contract with the employer."

The government's decision to scrap the NOC rule has been one of the eagerly awaited labour reforms in the private sector, especially among residents.

However, there have been reports of some expatriates were refused to visit visa with messages saying, "If it was with a different sponsor, NOC must be attached."

Siju Kumar who left his job in Oman a year ago was recently denied a visit visa.

A legal expert based in Muscat said that more clarity on some matters is needed as there are many expatriates who wish to change the job.

Under the tenth five-year plan, Oman is expected to issue new labour and civil service law, which will focus on providing training courses aiming at developing youths' skills, which are required by the job market.

As per the decision, the expatriate on a resident visa

The government stated that one of the main advantages is that it will raise the level of competitiveness of the Omani worker compared to the expatriates by reducing the wage gap between them

may be transferred from one employer to another who has a license to recruit workers provided the evidence of the expiry of contract or termination of the employment contract is presented with proof.

The government stated that one of the main advantages is that it will raise the level of competitiveness of the Omani worker compared to the expatriates by reducing the wage gap between them.

"The decision will also contribute to reducing cases of non-Omani workers running away from employers, especially those under pressure from employers who have the right to issue a no-objection certificate and deprive a person to work in the sultanate within two years of the end of his contract," the statement said.

SMEs URGED TO REAP BENEFITS OF PLASTIC BAN

KABEER YOUSUF

@kabeeryousef

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in the country have been urged to reap the benefits of the plastic ban which came into force in the country.

"SMEs can enjoy the benefits of plastic bans by various measures", says an expert at be'ah. "Manufacturing alternatives to the plastic products can help consumers to use them instead of single use plastic. They include paper bags and textile bags."

Other areas where the local SMEs can look into are recycling the old stock of single use plastic into other useful products and spreading environmental awareness of the expected benefits from the ban.

"Some SMEs have already started liaising with some retailers and electronic companies to source bags from them for all their online deliveries. Similarly,

These local SMEs can be offered with incentives to manufacture eco-friendly bags for certain period. SMEs can manufacture single use, cost effective, biodegradable bags
ABDULLAH AL HASHAMI



plastic bagless services can be promoted." According to Abdullah al Hashami of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, efforts to support the Omani youth business need to be designed and offer them the best solution to avoid any losses especially during the pandemic.

"These local SMEs can be offered with incentives to manufacture eco-friendly bags for certain period. SMEs can manufacture single use, cost effective, biodegradable bags",

says Al Hashami.

Mohammed al Balushi of the Research Council, suggests that the old newspapers that are less in use can be converted into paper bags thus promoting village industries where locals can excel.

"Similarly, foldable trolleys which can be kept inside the car boot is another option and these trolleys can be manufactured locally promoting a one-time investment", Mohammed said.

Ammujam Raveendran,

an environmentalist who manufactures reusable bags named rebagoman in wilayat of Barka, says there are two alternatives to the plastic bags.

"The first option is reusable fabric bags and the second one is bags made out of non woven fabrics which is more harmful to nature as they are made of compressed polyester fibre which is not biodegradable. Today, the market is filled with these bags because they are the cheaper option", says Raveendran who conducts large-scale beach cleaning campaigns.

Fatma al Balushi, owner of Sidus, which is an SME, feels that awareness among the people should be leading the way.

"People should be encouraged to make reusable fabric bags a daily habit and stop using plastic water bottles, disposable plastic plates and glasses. These steps will boost the sale of eco-friendly bags."

Oman Air ready to welcome 103 nationalities

STAFF REPORTER

MUSCAT, JAN 3

Oman Air will welcome guests from 103 countries who can travel to the country without a visa. The Royal Oman Police recently announced the plan, which eases travel requirements for guests who spend up to 10 days in the Sultanate. Guests are required to have a confirmed hotel reservation, health insurance and

a return ticket.

The new programme applies to citizens of countries throughout the world including European nations such as Germany, France, the United Kingdom, Spain, Italy, and more. Citizens of Turkey, Japan, Brazil, Russia, China, Egypt, Jordan and a number of other countries around the world are also eligible.

Visitors to the Sultanate can avail themselves of a number of

options to experience Oman Air's award-winning service.

The national carrier recently earned two 2020 World Travel Awards, for providing the world's best service to the Middle East and the world's best First Class experience.

Oman Air continues to maintain its comprehensive safety programme throughout all elements of the travel journey to ensure that guests fly confidently.

SMEs rise 13.4% in November

MUSCAT: The total number of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) registered with the Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development at the end of November 2020 stood at 47,802, comprising an increase by 13.4 per cent compared to the same period of 2019, according to the data released by the NCSI.

Muscat topped the list with 33 per cent SMEs registered till the end of September 2020, followed by North Al Batinah with 16 per cent, Al Dakhiliyah with 13 per cent, Dhofar with 8 per cent, and the rest of governorates with 30 per cent. 16,024 SMEs registered in the Governorate of Muscat at the end of November 2020, followed by North Al Batinah with 7,536, Al Dakhiliyah with 6,040, Dhofar with 3,979, South Al Batinah with 3,562 and North Al Sharqiyah with 3,214 SMEs registered. — ONA

Bidding Announcement



Sale of Used Sailboats

Oman Sail LLC announces its intention to sell sailboats (Class FARR 30) through the Oman Auction website. The auction process will be done online through the website. Those wishing to register may do so by visiting the below link and checking all bidding conditions and details:


mazad.om/owner/omansail

CENTRAL LIVESTOCK MARKET AND SLAUGHTERHOUSE


Naseer & Suleiman
CONSTRUCTION

BID FOR 18 YEARS USUFRUCT AGREEMENT,
1,500-30,000 SQM PLOT INVESTMENT,
CONSTRUCTION, OPERATION AND TRANSFER
IN WILAYAT AL SUWAIQ

No.	Tender Description	Tender Fee	Last date for Tender Purchase	Bid Submission Deadline
NSC/2021 /001	Fuel Station & Warehouse Plot: 15,000m ²	RO/-1,000	15 January, 2021 at 2:00 pm	31 January, 2021 at 2:00 pm
NSC/2021 /002	Commercial Complex & Tourism Plot: 15,000m ²	RO/-500	15 January, 2021 at 2:00 pm	31 January, 2021 at 2:00 pm
NSC/2021 /003	Suwaiq Souq Plot: 30,000m ²	RO/-500	15 January, 2021 at 2:00 pm	31 January, 2021 at 2:00 pm
NSC/2021 /004	Organic Fertilizer Production Plant: 22,000m ²	RO/-500	15 January, 2021 at 2:00 pm	31 January, 2021 at 2:00 pm
NSC/2021 /005	Staff Accommodation Facility 8,000m ²	RO/-500	15 January, 2021 at 2:00 pm	31 January, 2021 at 2:00 pm
NSC/2021 /006	Animal Skin Processing Facility: 3,600m ²	RO/-500	15 January, 2021 at 2:00 pm	31 January, 2021 at 2:00 pm
NSC/2021 /007	Animal By-Product Rendering Plant: 3,000m ²	RO/-500	15 January, 2021 at 2:00 pm	31 January, 2021 at 2:00 pm
NSC/2021 /008	Solar Energy Farm with Guaranteed Off-Take	RO/-500	15 January, 2021 at 2:00 pm	31 January, 2021 at 2:00 pm

Interested parties may inquire for the Tender Overview,
Expression of Interest Criteria and Guidelines for submission by contacting:

Phone: (+968) 2454 1111

GSM: (+968) 7256 6688 (WhatsApp Available)

Email: info@nsc.om



People walk by in a waiting hall of the airport in Yemen's southern city of Aden on Sunday as activity resumes after explosions rocked the building on December 30, killing or injuring dozens of people. — AFP

Yemeni airport reopens after deadly attack

SANAA: A main airport in Yemen's southern city of Aden reopened on Sunday, less than a week after a powerful explosion left 26 people dead, according to a local security official.

The explosion, which also left over 100 people injured, took place on Wednesday shortly after a new Yemeni unity government arrived at the airport from Saudi Arabia. "The reopening of the airport was launched for flights after they had been suspended since Wednesday," the official said.

Senior government officials, including the interior and transport ministers, attended

the reopening ceremony, added the official. Following the reopening, a flight by the Yemeni national carrier coming from the Sudanese capital, Khartoum, arrived at the airport, the official said without details.

There has been no claim of responsibility for Wednesday's attack, which the government blamed on rebels. Aden has been Yemen's temporary capital since Ansar Allah overran the capital, Sana'a, in late 2014 in a devastating power struggle. Yemen's conflict has pushed the country to the brink of famine and wrecked its health facilities. — dpa

Saudi Arabia reopens borders closed due to new COVID strain

RIYADH/DUBAI: Saudi Arabia on Sunday announced the reopening of borders and the resumption of international flights after a two-week suspension aimed to stem the spread of a new COVID-19 strain.

The government ordered the lifting of "precautionary measures related to the spread of a new variant of coronavirus", the Ministry of the Interior said, according to the official Saudi Press Agency.

Saudi Arabia has recorded more than 363,000 cases, including over 6,200 deaths — the highest among the Gulf Arab states — but has also reported a high recovery rate.

Riyadh suspended international flights and access through land crossings and ports on December 21. Other Gulf countries, which had taken similar measures, have also lifted them in recent days.

But travellers returning from Britain, South Africa or "any country where the new variant of the coronavirus is spreading" are subject to more restrictions, the statement added. Foreigners



A man receives a dose of a vaccine against COVID-19 in Dubai. The UAE on Saturday recorded its fourth straight record number of daily coronavirus cases since the pandemic began. — Reuters

coming from those countries must spend 14 days in another country before entering Saudi Arabia, and show a negative test.

Saudi nationals returning from those countries will be able to enter directly — but must then spend two weeks in quarantine on arrival, and be subject to tests.

Last month Saudi Arabia was

one of the first Gulf countries to launch a massive vaccination campaign using the Pfizer-BioNTech jab. The United Arab Emirates meanwhile on Saturday recorded its fourth straight record number of daily coronavirus cases since the pandemic began, reporting 1,963 cases.

The new cases recorded in

the last 24 hours brings the Gulf country's total recorded cases to 211,641. The UAE also reported three new deaths, bringing the total number of deaths from COVID-19 to 674.

The UAE reported 1,856 new cases on new year's day and more than 1,700 on December 30 and 31. — AFP/Reuters

Hope for Libya's war amputees after long wait

MISRATA: For Radwan Jibril, wounded in a bastion of Libya's 2011 revolution, losing his leg became "inevitable" and he had a prosthetic replacement, but thousands of other amputees are still waiting.

An orthopaedic centre is finally scheduled to open in March to provide prostheses to amputees in the North African country riven by conflict for the past decade.

Jibril, like so many others, was hit by shrapnel in his western hometown of Misrata, which endured a devastating siege during the revolt.

"Despite several medical stays abroad, amputation was inevitable because the injury had been so badly treated. It was all a big shock," he said.

"I was fitted with a prosthesis in Italy but it took a long time to get used to it," said the 38-year-old Libyan, who sports a light beard.

With the support of family, he has opened a fishmonger's where he serves customers as best as he



Members of staff work at the National Center for Artificial Limbs, in Libya's port city of Misrata. — AFP

can with "this foreign body", he said, shuffling from stall to stall with one leg stiff.

Now, he feels "like a new man again". His prosthesis, however, is starting to wear out, and "with hundreds, if not thousands, waiting their turn, it won't be easy" to have it serviced, he said.

FIVE-YEAR TARGET

Mohamad al Nouri, 28, had a hand amputated because of an injury while fighting in 2019 in

the ranks of the Tripoli-based Government of National Unity (GNU) against an abortive assault on the capital by forces of eastern strongman Khalifa Haftar.

He was fitted with an artificial hand but is waiting to go to Germany for a permanent prosthesis. "I don't think I can go back to the cafe where I worked... I still need a lot of time to regain my confidence," said the young man. — AFP

Iraqis mark anniversary of top Iranian general's death

BAGHDAD: Thousands of Iraqis on Sunday commemorated the first anniversary of the assassinations of a top Iranian general and a leader of a powerful Iraqi militia by a US airstrike.

Last year's US strike near Baghdad airport killed Qassem Soleimani, the commander of Iran's elite Quds Force, and Abu Mahdi al Mohandes, the deputy head of Iraq's Hashd al Shaabi militia, along with several other militiamen.

Streets leading to central Baghdad's Tahrir Square were packed with thousands of protesters who converged on the site since the early morning.

The protesters raised pictures of Soleimani and Al Mohandes, and flags of Iraq, the Hashd al Shaabi and other Iraqi factions.

They also carried banners with slogans demanding the withdrawal of US troops from Iraq and chanted for retaliation



An Iraqi demonstrator shows a mobile phone covered with a portrait of slain commander Al Muhandis (bottom) and Soleimani during a rally in Baghdad on Sunday. — AFP

against those who carried out the assassination.

Addressing the protesters, the head of Hashd al Shaabi, Faleh al Fayyad, vowed retaliation against those who carried out the crime and called for US troops to leave Iraq.

Soleimani, 62, was considered one of Iran's most

influential military leaders, wielding influence in Iraq, Syria and other parts of the Middle East where Iran has a foothold.

The assassination of Soleimani and Al Mohandes had stoked fears of a new war in the Middle East between the US and Iran. — AFP

SHORT TAKES

CAIRO

Egypt approves Sinopharm COVID-19 vaccine

Egypt has approved the use of a COVID-19 vaccine developed by Chinese pharma giant Sinopharm with its rollout to start later in January, the health minister said.

"The Egyptian pharmaceutical authority approved on Saturday the Chinese Sinopharm vaccine," Hala Zayed said late Saturday, on the local MBC Masr channel. The first batch of the vaccine was delivered in December, with further doses expected this month.

"The second shipment of this



vaccine is due to arrive in the second or third week of January, and as soon as it arrives, we will start vaccinations," the minister said. — AFP

BEIRUT

Celebratory gunfire kills one, damages plane

Celebratory gunshots has killed a Syrian woman in eastern Lebanon and damaged a parked aeroplane at Beirut airport, state media and a company source said.

Stray bullets from such gunfire are a source of constant worry across the country, but Lebanese authorities have struggled to stamp out the often deadly tradition.

The Syrian refugee died "after being wounded in the head by a stray bullet" that fell on her camp



in the eastern town of Baalbek, the National News Agency said.

A source from Lebanese carrier Middle East Airlines said gunfire had damaged one of the company's planes parked on the tarmac at Beirut airport. — AFP

TRIPOLI/BENGHAZI

New unified exchange rate introduced

The Central Bank of Libya on Sunday introduced a new unified exchange rate agreed last month after years of division between rival branches based on opposing sides of the front line.

As part of the change, the internationally recognised Government of National Accord (GNA) in Tripoli suspended a fee on foreign currency transactions that it introduced two years ago to bring the official rate closer to the black market rate.

The Central Bank of Libya



board agreed the new rate of 4.8 dinars to the United States dollar last month in its first full meeting for five years after splitting as the country divided between western and eastern factions. — Reuters

In brief

■ NEW DELHI

**19 DEAD AS ROOF COLLAPSES AT CREMATION GROUND**

At least 19 people died when a roof of a shelter at a cremation facility in northern India collapsed on Sunday, police said.

The roof at the site, in Uttar Pradesh's Ghaziabad district, came down when people had taken shelter beneath the structure to get out of the rain. Many victims were relatives of a local resident whose last rites were being conducted at the time, according to reports.

"The roof at the cremation compound, over some 30 metres long, collapsed suddenly and 38 people were trapped. Nineteen people were killed on the scene or while being taken to two hospitals nearby," area police chief Iraj Raja said. — **dpa**

■ QUETTA

**GUNMEN KILL 11 WORKERS AT A COAL MINE**

Gunmen in southwestern Pakistan have killed at least 11 workers at a remote coal mine, officials said on Sunday.

The victims of the attack in Baluchistan province were from the minority Hazara community. "Dead bodies of the 11 miners have been taken to a local hospital," Khalid Durrani, a government official in the area, said.

The attack, before dawn on Sunday, took place in the far-flung and mountainous Machh area — 60 kilometres southeast of Quetta — while the miners slept, Durrani said. — **AFP**

■ KABUL

**PEACE TALKS RESUME AS BLOODSHED CONTINUES**

A string of assassinations has sowed fear and chaos across Afghanistan as a fresh round of peace talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban begin in Qatar on Tuesday.

Months of deliberations between the two sides have yielded little so far, but both parties made something of a breakthrough last year when they finally agreed at least on what to discuss in the next round.

Afghan government negotiators will push for a permanent ceasefire and to protect the existing system of governance, in place since the ouster of the Taliban in 2001 by a US-led invasion in the wake of the September 11 attacks.

— **AFP**

India's approval of local vaccine criticised

- ★ **Emergency-use approval for Bharat Biotech's COVAXIN**
- ★ **Govt also approved use of AstraZeneca/Oxford vaccine**
- ★ **AstraZeneca/Oxford shot to lead immunisation programme**

NEW DELHI: India on Sunday granted emergency approval to Bharat Biotech's COVAXIN but faced questions after taking the step without publishing efficacy data for the homegrown coronavirus vaccine.

The news, announced by the drugs controller general of India (DCGI) who did not take questions, was hailed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his ministers as a success in India's self-reliance push.

The government also approved the use of a vaccine developed by AstraZeneca and Oxford University which will be the lead vaccine in India's immunisation programme until other shots are approved. COVAXIN was jointly developed with a government institute and means India joins a small list of countries to have approved its own coronavirus shot.

Bharat has partnered with drug developer Ocugen Inc to co-develop it for the US market, and Brazil has signed non-binding letters of intent to buy the shot.

The company has said it is in discussions with more than 10 countries about COVAXIN.

"While this vaccine addresses an unmet medical need during this



Health officials take part in dry run or a mock drill for COVID-19 vaccine delivery at a primary health centre in Chennai. — **AFP**

pandemic, our goal is to provide global access to populations that need it the most," Bharat Biotech Chairman Krishna Ella said in a statement.

"COVAXIN has generated excellent safety data with robust immune responses to multiple

viral proteins that persist."

Neither the company nor India's Central Drugs Standards Control Organisation would reveal its efficacy results. A source with knowledge of the matter said its effectiveness could be more than 60 per cent with two doses.

China also did not publish detailed efficacy data for a vaccine it authorised on Thursday but its developer has shared interim data.

"On what basis was this approval given when Bharat Biotech has NOT shown enough data proving safety & efficacy?"

transparency activist Saket Gokhale asked on Twitter.

Gokhale has filed a request under India's right-to-information law asking the government for safety and other data for the two vaccines approved on Sunday.

CRITICISM

COVAXIN has been fast-tracked like no other vaccine in India. The company said in November it was likely to be launched in the second quarter of 2021, while a government scientist had suggested it might be February or March.

Opposition lawmakers and former ministers on Sunday questioned the lack of transparency in approving it.

"Approval was premature and could be dangerous," said opposition lawmaker and former minister Shashi Tharoor, asking Health Minister Harsh Vardhan for an explanation.

"Its use should be avoided till full trials are over. India can start with the AstraZeneca vaccine in the meantime."

Vardhan urged Indians to trust that "stringent protocols" had been followed to ensure the safety and efficacy of the two approved vaccines.

— **Reuters**

■ WHAT'S ON THE BOOKS FOR 2021



People read books at a library during the New Year holiday in Shaoyang city, central China's Hunan province. — **AFP**

China diplomat says US relations at 'new crossroads'

SHANGHAI: China's relationship with the United States has reached a "new crossroads" and could get back on the right track following a period of "unprecedented difficulty", senior diplomat Wang Yi said in official comments.

Relations between the world's two biggest economies have come under increasing strain amid a series of disputes over trade, human rights and the origins of COVID-19. In its latest move, the United States blacklisted dozens of Chinese companies it said had ties to the military.

Wang, China's state councillor and foreign minister, said in a joint interview with Xinhua news agency and other state media outlets that recent US policies towards China had harmed the interests of both countries and brought huge dangers to the world. — **Reuters**

Tokyo governor pushes for state of emergency

TOKYO: Tokyo reported 816 new daily coronavirus cases on Sunday, a day after governors from the capital and neighbouring prefectures called on the Japanese government to announce a state of emergency to combat a recent surge in cases.

Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga has resisted calls for a second national state of emergency; the government first introduced that measure in April during an earlier wave of the pandemic. Suga is scheduled to speak publicly on January 4.

Japan's economy minister told reporters on Saturday the government needed to consult with health experts before deciding on a new declaration.

As an interim measure, restaurants and karaoke parlors in the Tokyo area are being asked to close at 8 pm, while businesses

that serve alcohol should close at 7 pm, he said.

The previous state of emergency relied on voluntary business closings and travel restrictions rather than the sort of rigid lockdown measures seen elsewhere in the world.

Tokyo raised its COVID-19 alert to its highest level on December 17. New infections in the capital hit a record 1,337 on December 31.

Japan's health ministry said on Sunday there were 3,045 new confirmed cases of the new coronavirus across the country.

Since the start of the pandemic, Japan has reported more than 240,000 cases of the novel coronavirus and 3,548 deaths, according to the health ministry.

THAILAND EYES MORE MEASURES

Thailand's government held off



Shoppers wearing protective face masks are reflected on mirrors at a shopping and amusement district in Tokyo. — **Reuters**

from ordering new nationwide business shutdowns on Sunday amid a wave of coronavirus cases but empowered some provincial governors to set their own restrictions and pleaded with the public not to travel.

Thailand, which had largely controlled the virus by mid-2020, saw a second wave of outbreaks beginning in December.

On Sunday, it confirmed 315 new coronavirus cases, the majority of which are local

transmission, bringing its total to 7,694 cases and 64 deaths since its first case last January.

Samut Sakhon, a province south of Bangkok where the current outbreak started, reported 541 additional cases on Sunday. That number will be added to the official tally on Monday, its health official said.

The country also reported its first known case of a more contagious variant of the coronavirus called B.1.1.7 on Sunday, Yong Poovorawan, a senior virologist from Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok, said in a post on his official Facebook page.

The variant was found in a family of four who were in quarantine after arriving in Thailand from Britain, and Yong said there is no risk of that variant being spread in Thailand. — **Reuters**

Dozen Republican senators plan to oppose Biden certification

WASHINGTON: A group of Republican senators led by veteran lawmaker Ted Cruz said on Saturday they will challenge Joe Biden's election win — the latest last-ditch move to support Donald Trump's efforts to undermine the vote.

The initiative, which appears certain to fail, flies in the face of rulings in dozens of courts and the findings by officials in several key states that there were no widespread voting problems.

The Republicans' statement, signed by Cruz and six other current senators along with four senators-elect, asserts that "allegations of fraud and irregularities in the 2020 election exceed any in our lifetimes."

The group said that when Congress convenes in a joint session on Wednesday — for what normally would be a pro-forma certification of Biden's victory — they will demand the creation of a special commission to conduct an "emergency 10-day audit" of the election results.

The statement says individual states could then convene special legislative sessions and potentially revise their vote totals.



Republican Senator Ted Cruz has asserted that 'allegations of fraud and irregularities in the 2020 election exceed any in our lifetimes'. — AFP

"An attempt to steal a landslide win. Can't let it happen!" Trump tweeted on Saturday.

Posting a list of the 11 senators, Trump added: "And after they see the facts, plenty more to come... Our Country will love them for it!"

They join Senator Josh Hawley

of Missouri, who said earlier that he planned to raise objections on Wednesday.

A Republican member of the House of Representatives, Louie Gohmert, has also announced his plan to oppose certification, and more than 100 House Republicans reportedly will back his challenge.

Gohmert sought to further raise the stakes with a lawsuit that would have given Vice President Mike Pence — traditionally in a ceremonial role in Wednesday's session — the power to overturn the election result.

Pence opposed that effort, and a federal judge in Texas on Friday rejected the suit. On Saturday, a federal appeals court upheld that dismissal.

The Hawley and Gohmert challenges will ensure that Congress must meet to hear the complaints.

'THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE HAS SPOKEN'

The Congress sessions, sure to be contentious, will play out against a backdrop of pro-Trump rallies in Washington next week.

As with Trump's other attempts to reverse his election defeat, the latest political manoeuvring appears doomed. Democrats control the House, and many Republicans are expected to vote on Wednesday for certification.

The 11 senators conceded that most Democrats and "more than a few Republicans" would likely oppose their initiative. — AFP

Homes of Republican and Democrat leaders vandalised

WASHINGTON: Vandals have targeted the homes of Republican Senate leader Mitch McConnell and Democrat Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi with graffiti, fake blood and a pig's head, US media said.

"Were's [sic] my money," and "Mitch kills the poor," was daubed on McConnell's front door and window in Louisville, Kentucky, US media reported.

An animal head and fake blood were left outside Pelosi's San Francisco home on January 2, according to local media.

The houses of the top Republican and Democrat were targeted following an intense debate over a COVID-19 stimulus bailout for Americans.

A long-awaited \$900 billion pandemic relief package was finally approved Christmas Eve, with the Democrat-led House of Congress approving an increase in aid from \$600 to \$2,000.

But the Republican-led Senate has not approved the increase — despite furious calls to do so from President Donald Trump.

McConnell had told reporters: "The Senate is not going to be bullied into rushing out more borrowed money into the hands of Democrats' rich friends who don't need the help."

Kentucky Metro police said the incident occurred around 5 am local time, according to local news channel WAS11. It was unclear if anyone was home at the time.

McConnell called the graffiti a "radical tantrum," and added: "Vandalism and the politics of fear have no place in our society."

In San Francisco, Pelosi's garage door was sprayed with a crossed-out "\$2K", followed by "Cancel rent!" and "We want everything!"

The city's police Special Investigations Division was looking into the incident, NBC News reported. — AFP

UK's Johnson warns of tougher measures

LONDON: Tougher coronavirus measures could be implemented in the coming weeks in view of the serious situation in Britain, Prime Minister Boris Johnson hinted in an interview on Sunday.

"It may be that we need to do things in the next few weeks that will be tougher in many parts of the country," Johnson said on the BBC's "Andrew Marr Show," though he didn't specify what they could be.

"I'm not going to speculate now

about what they would be, but ... clearly school closures, which we had to do in March is one of those things," Johnson said. The tiered system is "probably about to get tougher" even despite the roll-out of vaccines, added the premier.

The country is following a tiered system based on infection levels, under which many people already live under harsh restrictions. Schools will remain closed for the time being after the Christmas holidays. — dpa



Paramedics wheel a patient into the Royal London Hospital in east London on Sunday. — AFP

STEAM TRAIN SERVICE



The 'Mince Pie Special' steam train service run along the line of the Keighley and Worth Valley Railway past snow covered fields near the village of Haworth, northern England, on Sunday. The heritage railway runs along a 5 mile stretch of line between the town of Keighley and Oxenhope in the Worth Valley. The line was constructed originally in 1867 but was closed by British Railways in 1962. It reopened as a heritage railway in 1968 and typically operates steam and diesel rail services on more than 200 days per year. — AFP

Norway landslide: More bodies found as search continues

COPENHAGEN: Rescue workers in Norway searching for people who remain missing days after a landslide near Oslo recovered a sixth body on Sunday.

Emergency crews have not given up hope of finding some of the several people, including two girls, still missing more than 100 hours after Wednesday's landslide.

The landslide in the community of Ask, about 40 kilometres north-

east of Oslo, left another 10 people injured and destroyed nine houses. About 1,000 people have been evacuated to safety.

No information has been released about most of the victims of the accident. However local media reported the first victim to be found was a friend of Norwegian tennis star Casper Ruud.

"We have lost a fantastic person

and a fantastic fellow citizen. I have lost a friend, colleague and an important competitor in my team," Ruud wrote on Instagram.

Three of the victims were found on Saturday and one earlier on Sunday, following the discovery of the first body on Friday. Initially, 10 people were said to be missing.

Rescue work had been hampered by the conditions at the site and by the wintry weather.

Norway's royal family also travelled to the town to pay their respects. King Harald V, Queen Sonja and Crown Prince Haakon arrived in the municipality of Gjerdrum to meet with local representatives, rescue workers and those affected by the landslide.

King Harald called the disaster "absolutely terrible," saying it was very difficult to put into words.

— dpa

BRUSSELS

EU urges Bosnia to rebuild migrant camp

The European Union announced additional funding on Sunday to help vulnerable migrants in Bosnia, but urged the government there to rebuild a camp that burned down. Brussels has denounced condition for migrants in Bosnia, a candidate for EU membership, as "completely unacceptable," and warned that lives are at risk. Fire engulfed the Lipa migrant centre in northwestern Bosnia on December 23. There were no casualties from the blaze.



The incident deepened a crisis over where to house thousands of migrants, as Bosnian authorities have failed to find new accommodation for the newly homeless. — AFP

ROME

Pope: Consider others during pandemic

People need to think beyond their next travel plans and consider how much others may be suffering due to the pandemic, Pope Francis said after Sunday's midday prayer. It would be better if people thought about how to help the weakest and most disadvantaged in society, he said, after the Angelus, which he delivered from the Vatican library, due to concerns about the coronavirus. He said he had read reports about people who had travelled abroad on vacation in more than



40 planes. "They didn't think about those who were staying at home, of the economic problems of many people who have been hit hard by the lockdown, of the sick people," Pope Francis said.

— dpa

BERLIN

Lawmakers call on UK to protect Assange

Several members of the German parliament have called on the British government to intervene in case a court decides that WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange should be extradited to the US.

"Extraditing Julian Assange to the US, where he faces no fair trial and up to 175 years in prison, would endanger his life and set a precedent for journalists and whistleblowers around the world," members of the Bundestag working group "Freedom



for Julian Assange" said on Sunday. A British court is set to announce its decision on extradition on Monday. Assange is currently in a British prison. — dpa

Cheers to a new beginning

The last page of 2020's book was flipped and the first page of the new 365-page book has just opened. As the New Year started rolling out, one should decide on what to pen or stamp on the blank pages of the new book. Here comes along another year chance given to us all to make things even better than the past year. Everyone is welcoming the New Year differently, with various ideas, plans and dreams in order to catch potential opportunities and achieve what has not been completed last year.

As the New Year comes with new opportunities, it also brings new challenges! Hence, it is upon us to decide how to make the most of all the upcoming challenges and opportunities. Although nobody can go back and make a new beginning, everyone can start fresh from now and take cognizance of the past year. I believe we all can make a promise and have a dream, which can be chased and fulfilled over the year long journey.

Despite the hardships and pains experienced in 2020, especially with COVID-19 battle, it was a rewarding year of course. Regardless how painful it was, insightful lessons were learned by individuals and nations alike. Pain is unavoidable in life; we all feel and



Abdulaziz Al Jahdhami
aljahdhami22@gmail.com

ALTHOUGH
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deal with it. As a matter of fact, pain is part of human life and there can be no gain without pain. Probably if there was no pain in the world, we would be reckless and nothing would be of value to us.

Painful experiences like break ups, losing a loved one, or losing a job make us more powerful and strong. We learn to survive during hard times; it is when we put our survival instincts into practice then we can truly be strong. Thanks to pain for teaching us to appreciate life and everything around us. Yes, it is true that pain will leave once it has finished teaching the lesson! The American author, Hal Borland, confirmed this fact, saying: "No winter lasts forever; no spring skips its turn".

With all the pain, challenges and disappointments experienced in life, we also have dreams to chase and ambitions to fulfil. Sometimes, the most beautiful dreams are born from the most unpleasant nightmares. It was said that you will never know the power of yourself until someone hurts you badly. Therefore, out of all painful experiences that one comes across everyday arises the courage to make dreams come true.

As the year 2020 bade a farewell, 2021 dawns; it is time to rework on

the dreams and plans left from last year. It is never too late to achieve your dreams, no matter how challenging they are. As Albert Einstein advised in the saying, "Never give up on what you really want to do. The person with big dreams is more powerful than the one with all the facts".

Just remember that your little persistence will result in getting more achievements and whatever looks a failure might suddenly turn into a victory. If you even thought that you failed in achieving your dreams, perhaps you need to change your techniques, but not the principles of doing things. In the same way, trees shed their leaves, but not their roots to grow and bloom. Always a pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity, but an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty.

There is nothing impossible to achieve; all what you shall do is to roll the dice and make it happen. No matter how far life pushes you down, no matter how much you hurt, you can always bounce back.

With the new book you have in hand, all you need is to let the zooming train of pain and disappointments pass by. Anybody can laugh in moments of joy, but only brave ones smile in pain.

NO LONGER A CHILD

Greta Thunberg: A strong voice for climate action

LENNART SIMONSSON

Swedish teen climate activist Greta Thunberg won international attention after she began a lone school strike outside the Swedish parliament in August 2018.

On Sunday, she turns 18, giving her, for instance, the right to marry, to drive a car — and the right to vote in the next Swedish general election scheduled in 2022.

"Every election is a climate election", Thunberg has often said.

Her protest outside parliament — where she used a hand-painted sign with the words "School strike for the climate" — aimed to push for more action on climate change and eventually inspired the youth-led movement Fridays For Future, which has staged a series of global climate strikes.

Due to the coronavirus pandemic, protests and rallies have been scaled back this year, and Thunberg and others have had to resort to on-line protests. Since 2018, Thunberg has had two consecutive nominations for the Nobel Peace Prize, received several other accolades and awards, and addressed world leaders at various conferences and summits.

The idea for a school strike was inspired by students at a high school in Parkland, Florida, where 17 students and staff members were gunned down in February 2018. "I think Rosa Parks was also a great example, an introvert and shy person I'd read about. Nowadays everyone has to be an extrovert and social", she has told dpa.

Her rallying call has been to "listen to the science", urging decision makers to take action, and she has repeatedly criticised politicians for passing the buck to children.

Come Sunday, Thunberg is no longer a child, but her fight for climate will likely continue unabated.

In a recent interview with Stockholm daily *Svenska Dagbladet*, she cited signs of hope in "the opportunities that exist in democracy and popular education, the potential in when people become aware."

She applied that herself when she served as guest editor-in-chief of Swedish daily *Dagens Nyheter*: The December 6 edition was dominated by climate-related articles.

The first section featured a headline photo of a huge crater in Siberia illustrating how the permafrost is melting, and a feature article about a village in Russia' Arctic at the shores of the Barents Sea where the ice has disappeared.

"Handing over responsibility for Sweden's largest daily newspaper to a minor, an uneducated activist, is completely incomprehensible. It's crazy, if it were not for the absurd fact that we are in an existential crisis that is still ignored by our society", Thunberg wrote in a editorial.

For the past decade she has mulled issues related to global warming and climate change. At age 11, she suffered from depression. A contributing factor was the perception that not enough was done to tackle global warming.

— dpa

“
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GRETA THUNBERG
Climate Activist

YEAR FOR ELIMINATION OF CHILD LABOUR

How can the world boost efforts to end child labour in 2021?

KIERAN GUILBERT

The world is set to boost efforts to stop children working as 2021 marks the International Year for the Elimination of Child Labour, amid concerns that COVID-19 has fuelled the practice.

The resolution here by the 193-member United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) aims to increase awareness and spur action to end child labour worldwide by governments and other actors.

The number of child labourers worldwide has dropped significantly to 152 million children from 246 million in 2000, according to the UN International Labour Organization (ILO).

But the coronavirus pandemic could reverse two decades of work to combat the practice, and jeopardise a UN global goal of ending child labour in all forms by 2025, the ILO has warned.

Children who were already working before the pandemic may now be facing longer hours and worse conditions, while others could be forced to work by families struggling to survive the economic downturn, according to several experts and campaigners.

"The choices that governments make now are crucial. They can both lessen the worst impacts of the crisis on children in the short-term and set children up for success in the long term", Jo Becker, Children's Rights Advocacy Director, Human Rights



The number of child labourers has dropped significantly to 152 million children from 246 million in 2000, according to ILO. — AFP

CHILDREN WHO
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Watch (HRW), said.

"A critical step that governments can take is to get children back into school as soon as possible once COVID-19 is under control. Authorities should follow-up individually with children who do not show up for classes and try to re-engage them. Governments and donors also need to help vulnerable families directly to address the financial distress that sends children to work. Regular cash transfers to poor families can help

them meet their basic needs without resorting to child labour", he said.

"COVID-19 has further highlighted how the most vulnerable children are exposed to exploitation during pandemics, including being forced into child labour, Cornelius Williams, Associate Director of Child Protection, Unicef, said. This must be the warning sign for governments, civil society and UN agencies to step up and prioritise strategies to eliminate child labour. — Reuters



Ahli Sidab and Al Nahda players in action during the HM Cup Round 32 match at the ROP Stadium. – Mohammed Mahjoub

BAHLA AND NIZWA CRASH OUT OF HM CUP

Al Nahda, Al Nasr, Sur and Majees advance

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, JAN 3

Five-time winners Al Nasr earned a ticket to the last-16 stage of the His Majesty’s Cup football championship after beating Bausher 2-0 at Al Saada Sports Complex on Sunday night. The Salalah powerhouse’s opening goal was scored by Abdullah Nouh in the 34th

minute, while his teammate Hamed al Habsi increased the margin to 2-0 in the 71st minute. With this triumph, the Salalah-based team began their campaign for a sixth title on a bright note. Mansoor al Nuaimi and Ali al Hinai confirmed Al Nahda’s place in Round 16 as they registered a tough 2-1 victory over the first division league representatives Ahli Sidab in a thrilling encounter

at the ROP Stadium. Though Ahli Sidab took the lead in the first half through Muhannad al Shibli, Al Nahda registered a strong come back in the second half as Mansoor al Nuaimi equalised from a penalty. Al Nahda’s resurgence continued in the additional time as Ali al Hinai netted the winner which saw them advance to the next round.

At Sohar Sports Complex, Northern Batinah-based team, Majees, stole the limelight as they snatched a 3-0 victory against Nizwa in a penalty shoot-out after a 1-1 draw in the regulation time. Nizwa’s Ahmed al Adawi put his team ahead but Majees equalised through Ahmed Salim. In another Round 32 match at the Sur Sports Complex, first

division side Sur knocked out Omatel League team Bahla 4-3 in penalty shoot-out. The match ended 1-1 at the regulation time. Bahla’s Beter Embaboy netted the opening goal in the 36th minute. One minute later, Sur’s equaliser came through an own-goal scored by Ayoob al Shiyadi. Sur prevailed in the ensuing penalty shoot-out 4-3. The qualified teams to the

last 16 round will be set for the draw which will be announced very soon by the Oman Football Association. The last-16 round matches will take place on January 21 and 22. The teams which secured spots in the next round are Oman club, Al Rustaq, Al Suwaiq, Al Musannah, Sohar, Al Ittihad, Samayel, Ibri, Al Orouba, Saham, Sur, Majees, Al Nahda, Al Nasr and Dhofar.

Ingram, Williamson power Pelicans over Raptors

NEW ORLEANS, US: Brandon Ingram scored 31 points and Zion Williamson added 21 as the host New Orleans Pelicans completed a season-series sweep of the Toronto Raptors with a 120-116 victory on Saturday night.

Eric Bledsoe added 19 points and 10 assists, Steven Adams had 13 points and 10 rebounds and Lonzo Ball scored 13 for the Pelicans, who defeated the host Raptors 113-99 in their season opener last month.

Fred VanVleet scored 27, Chris Boucher added 24, OG Anunoby had 17, Kyle Lowry had 16 and Norman Powell 12 to lead Toronto. Pascal Siakam returned to the Raptors lineup after a one-game benching for disciplinary reasons and had 10 points but fouled out with 8:30 remaining.

New Orleans had a 101-89 lead with 8:30 remaining before Toronto started to rally. Anunoby converted a three-point play and he and Norman Powell made back-to-back 3-pointers to pull Toronto within 109-108.

Ingram made one of two free throws before VanVleet made a 3-pointer that gave the Raptors a 111-110 lead. Adams made one of two free throws before Lowry's layup gave Toronto a 113-111 lead with 2:47 left.

Ingram tied the score by making two free throws, then Bledsoe made a 3-pointer to give New Orleans a 116-113 lead with 42 seconds left.

After Anunoby made one of two free throws, Ingram made two free throws with 12 seconds left. The Raptors led by five points at half-time, but the Pelicans tied the score three times early in the third quarter.

Bledsoe broke the third



Oklahoma City Thunder guard Hamidou Diallo (6) goes to the basket as New Orleans Pelicans forward Brandon Ingram (14) defends the shot during the first quarter at Chesapeake Energy Arena. — USA Today Sports

Eric Bledsoe added 19 points and 10 assists, Steven Adams had 13 points and 10 rebounds and Lonzo Ball scored 13 for the Pelicans, who defeated the host Raptors 113-99 in their season opener last month

tie by making two free throws. There were two lead exchanges and another tie by the mid-point of the third quarter.

Williamson made two free throws and Steven Adams hit a jumper to give New Orleans a four-point lead.

Toronto briefly regained a one-point lead, but Josh Hart's 3-pointer put the Pelicans ahead and Bledsoe beat the buzzer to extend the lead to 87-82 at the end of the third quarter.

This game started a four-game home-stand for New Orleans, which played four of its first five games on the road.

CAVALIERS WIN

Collin Sexton scored 27 points, including the go-ahead 3-pointer with 27.9 seconds left, to lead the visiting Cleveland Cavaliers to a 96-91 win over the Atlanta Hawks on Saturday.

Sexton was 10-for-18 from the floor and extended his streak of 20-point games to 11 to help the Cavs erase a 15-point second-half deficit and break a two-game losing streak.

Andre Drummond had 12 points and 11 rebounds to set a franchise record with six double-doubles to open the season.

The Hawks, who were playing the second leg of a back-to-back, grew weary in the second half.

Trae Young scored a season-low 16 points, 14

below his season average, and had 10 assists. Clint Capela had a season-high 16 points and 16 rebounds, his second straight double-double, and DeAndre Hunter scored 17.

The Cavaliers, who had only 10 available players, got 14 points and nine rebounds off the bench from JaVale McGee. The Hawks, who defeated the Brooklyn Nets on Friday, started strong.

They were sparked by Hunter's 12 points in the first quarter and led 35-25.

The Cavs shot poorly in the half, making only 42.2 per cent from the field and 2-for-11 on 3-pointers.

— Reuters

NBA RESULTS

Houston bt Sacramento.....	102-94
New York bt Indiana	106-102
Oklahoma City bt Orlando...	108-99
Philadelphia bt Charlotte ..	127-112
Cleveland bt Atlanta	96-91
New Orleans bt Toronto	120-116



Sri Lanka's Asitha Fernando is bowled by South Africa's Anrich Nortje (not visible) during the first day of the second Test at the Wanderers stadium in Johannesburg on Sunday. — AFP

Nortje, Mulder spark Sri Lankan collapse

JOHANNESBURG: Fast bowler Anrich Nortje claimed career-best figures of six for 56 as Sri Lanka collapsed to 157 all out on the first day of the second and final Test against South Africa at the Wanderers Stadium in Johannesburg on Sunday.

South Africa were 22 for no wicket at tea. Sri Lanka were reasonably placed at 71 for one after winning the toss, with Kusal Perera striking an aggressive 60.

They came within 20 minutes of surviving the always-tricky day one pre-lunch period at the Wanderers with minimal damage before all-rounder Wiaan Mulder sparked a calamitous collapse.

The left-handed Perera struck 11 boundaries, punishing anything loose against the fast bowlers but the medium-paced Mulder slowed his momentum with a maiden over. With

SCOREBOARD

SRI LANKA FIRST INNINGS	
D Karunaratne c De Kock b Nortje	2
K Perera c Markram b Mulder	60
L Thirimanne c Du Plessis b Mulder	17
K Mendis c Van der Dussen b Mulder	0
M Bhanuka c Van der Dussen b Nortje	5
N Dickwella c De Kock b Nortje	7
D Shanaka c De Kock b Nortje	4
W Hasaranga c De Kock b Sipamla	29
D Chameera c De Kock b Nortje	22
V Fernando not out	2
A Fernando b Nortje	4
Extras (lb5)	5
Total (40.3 overs)	157
Fall of wickets: 1-19, 2-71, 3-71, 4-80, 5-84, 6-93, 7-110, 8-149, 9-151	
Bowling: Ngidi 10-3-44-0, Nortje 14.3-1-56-6, Sipamla 9-3-27-1, Mulder 7-3-25-3	

the first ball of his next over, Mulder had Perera caught at gully.

He followed up with the wickets of Kusal Mendis and Lahiru Thirimanne in a spell of three wickets for one run in three overs.

— AFP

Jamieson takes 5 as NZ dismiss Pakistan for 297

WELLINGTON: Paceman Kyle Jamieson took five for 69 as New Zealand overcame some stiff Pakistan resistance to dismiss the tourists for 297 at close of play on the opening day of the second and final Test at Christchurch on Sunday.

Already 1-0 up in the series and needing only a draw to rise to the top of the world rankings for the first time, the Black Caps won the toss and elected to field on what looked like a Hagley Oval track tailor-made for their attack.

Pakistan had shown great fight at the end of their 101-run defeat in the first Test, however, and started out as they had finished at Mount Maunganui with some batting of real intent on a day largely uninterrupted by the Christchurch rain.

Azhar Ali led the way with a superb innings of 93 but there were also cameos from Mohammad Rizwan, who was again forced to stand-in as captain for the injured Babar Azam and scored 61, as well as Faheem Ashraf, who hit 48.

Left-arm spinner Zafar Gohar extended the tail with a 62-ball 34 in his first Test innings until he top edged a short delivery from Tim Southee just after New Zealand took the second new ball. The hosts rattled off the last two wickets in short order to bring up stumps, giving New Zealand's openers the night to rest up before going out again to bat.

Given the swing and seam in the pitch, New Zealand's attack would have hoped to have got the job done more quickly and it looked like they would when Jamieson ripped through the Pakistan top order to reduce the tourists to 88-4 at lunch.

— Reuters



New Zealand's paceman Kyle Jamieson (left) celebrates the wicket of Pakistan's Fawad Alam on day one of the second Test against Pakistan at Hagley Oval in Christchurch. — AFP

SCOREBOARD

PAKISTAN FIRST INNINGS	
S Masood lbw Southee	0
Abid Ali c Southee b Jamieson	25
Azhar Ali c Taylor b Henry	93
H Sohail c Nicholls b Jamieson	1
F Alam c Watling b Jamieson	2
M Rizwan c watling b Jamieson	61
F Ashraf c Watling by Jamieson	48
Z Gohar c Jamieson b Southee	34
S Afridi c Nicholls b Boulton	4
M Abbas not out	0
N Shah c Latham b Boulton	12
Extras (b2, lb9, w6)	17
Total (83.5 overs, all out)	297
Fall of wickets: 1-4, 2-66, 3-70, 4-83, 5-171, 6-227, 7-260, 8-282, 9-285	
Bowling: Southee 23-7-61-2, Boulton 20-5-3-82-2, Jamieson 21-8-69-5, Henry 17-2-68-1, Mitchell 2-1-6-0	

SYDNEY: The schedule for Australia's Test series against India was under threat again on Sunday after reports the tourists were unhappy at the prospect of re-entering strict quarantine for the fourth Test in Brisbane.

The third test in the four-match series is slated to start at Sydney Cricket Ground on Thursday after Cricket Australia decided not to move the match in the wake of an outbreak of COVID-19 cases in the city's northern beaches.

On Monday, both squads will fly to New South Wales, which reported eight new locally transmitted cases of the virus and ramped up social distancing measures on Sunday.

Queensland state has closed its border with New South Wales and although agreement has been reached to allow the players to fly to Brisbane for the fourth test on January 15, they will have



to quarantine having been in Sydney.

"No different from anyone else, if they are coming from a declared hotspot they will have to quarantine," Queensland's chief health officer, Doctor Jeannette Young, said on Sunday.

"That is a discussion Cricket Australia will need to have with the players."

Reports in the Australian media, citing sources within the touring party, said India's players, many of whom have been in some form of quarantine or other for six months, would refuse to travel if they were going to be subjected to a hard lockdown.

A spokesman for the India team did not immediately respond to a request for

comment on the reports. India's players underwent 14 days of strict quarantine after their arrival in Australia but have since enjoyed more freedom while preparing for and playing matches in Adelaide, Canberra, Sydney and Melbourne.

There are still some restrictions, however, and five Indian players were placed in isolation on Saturday after a video surfaced showing them eating inside a Melbourne restaurant on New Year's Day.

The Australian and Indian cricket boards are investigating the alleged breach of biosecurity protocols with precedent suggesting the players might be fined for their actions.

Sydney, which at one stage looked like losing the third Test to Melbourne, would be the most likely beneficiary if it was decided to move the fourth match from Brisbane.

— Reuters

PRICE BEGINS QUEST FOR THIRD TITLE IN MOTORBIKE SECTION

BISHA, Saudi Arabia: Defending champion Carlos Sainz won the first stage of the Dakar rally on Sunday.

The Spaniard, a three-time Dakar winner, covered the 277 km special between Jeddah and Bisha in his Mini Buggy in 3hr 18min 56sec.

Sainz finished 25sec ahead of French teammate Stephane Peterhansel, with Czech Martin Prokop (Ford) rounding out the podium.

Monday's second stage sees competitors covering 685km, including a 457 km special, between Bisha and Wadi Ad-Dawasir.

Sunday's stage featured 277 km of timed action, with 286 vehicles entered — 101 motorbikes, 64 cars, 16 quadbikes, 61 lightweight vehicles and 44 trucks.

A further 23 vehicles are taking part in the Dakar Classic for cars and trucks from the 1980s and 1990s.

In two-wheel section, Toby Price began his quest for a third Dakar Rally title by winning the opening stage of the 2021 edition, while defending champion Ricky Brabec suffered a difficult first day.

Honda rider Brabec opened the road on the 277 km timed section from Jeddah to Bisha following his victory on Saturday's short Prologue stage, but hit navigational trouble almost immediately as he dropped more than 13 minutes in the opening 37 km.

MOTORBIKE STANDINGS
AFTER STAGE 1 (TOP 10)

- | | |
|------------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Toby Price (Australia) | KTM 3h43m58s |
| 2. Kevin Benavides (Argentina) | Honda 23s |
| 3. Matthias Walkner (Austria) | KTM 1m12s |
| 4. Sam Sunderland (United Kingdom) | KTM 4m11s |
| 5. Lorenzo Santolino (Spain) | Sherco 4m59s |
| 6. Franco Caimi (Argentina) | Yamaha 5m16s |
| 7. Xavier de Soultrait (France) | Husqvarna 5m23s |
| 8. Skyler Howes (United States) | KTM 5m45s |
| 9. Luciano Benavides (Argentina) | Husqvarna 7m05s |
| 10. Andrew Short (United States) | Yamaha 8m30s |

Things didn't get any better for the American rider after that, who completed the stage down in 24th having dropped 18 minutes and 32 seconds to KTM rival Price.

Ninth on the Prologue, Price grabbed the lead from Xavier de Soultrait at the 135 km mark and finished the stage with 31 seconds in hand over Honda's Kevin Benavides, giving himself a slender lead of 23 seconds in the overall classification.

De Soultrait — who has switched from Yamaha to KTM sister brand Husqvarna for the 2021 edition — led the opening 92 km through the first three waypoints, but couldn't keep up that pace and ended up sixth at the finish, 4m35s down on Price.

Grabbing the final spot on the podium was KTM's Matthias Walkner, just one second behind Benavides (1m12s behind Price overall), while Sam Sunderland made it three KTM riders in the top four, 2m03s back (4m11s back overall).

Lorenzo Santolino was an impressive fifth for Sherco, while Yamaha's top finisher on the stage was Franco Caimi in seventh place, although he sits sixth ahead of de Soultrait overall.

As well as Brabec, Joan Barreda (Honda) and Pablo Quintanilla (Husqvarna) got their campaigns off to a bad start, likewise getting lost early on in the special. Both lost around 15 minutes, provisionally leaving them 18th and 21st respectively.

In the quads category, Frenchman Alexandre Giroud won the opening stage by 2m52s from Giovanni Enrico to give himself a 3m32s lead overall.

On Saturday, Qatar's Nasser al Attiyah led the cars in the prologue to the Dakar Rally while American defending champion Ricky Brabec got in the groove with the fastest time on two wheels. — **Agencies**



Australian rider Toby Price powers his KTM during the Stage 1 of the 2021 Dakar Rally between Jeddah and Bisha in Saudi Arabia on Sunday. — **AFP**

SAINZ
STORMS
TO DAKAR
STAGE 1
WIN

DAKAR RALLY STANDINGS
AFTER STAGE 1 (TOP 10)

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Carlos Sainz (Spain) | Mini 3hr12m20s |
| 2. Stephane Peterhansel (France) | Mini 8s 3 |
| 3. Martin Prokop (Czech Republic) | Ford 2m59s |
| 4. Mathieu Serradori (France) | Century 6m13s |
| 5. Yasir Seaidan (Saudi Arabia) | Century 7m53s |
| 6. Khalid al Qassimi (UAE) | Peugeot 7m53s |
| 7. Giniel de Villiers (South Africa) | Toyota 8m43s |
| 8. Nani Roma (Spain) | BRX 9m22s |
| 9. Jakub Przygonski (Poland) | Toyota 9m22s |
| 10. Nasser al Attiyah (Qatar) | Toyota 11m58s |



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Major boost for offset projects in 2021 Budget

CONRAD PRABHU
@conradprabhu

The Omani government's Partnership for Development (PFD) programme — also known as 'Offset' — received new impetus in the 2021 State Budget with a string of new projects slated for implementation during the year.

Separately, several projects and initiatives planned for delivery via the Public Private Privatisation (PPP) route are expected to made headway during 2021 as well.

The Ministry of Finance, which is currently overseeing both the Offset and PPP-based schemes following the overhaul of government ministries and units last August, has spelt out clear-cut goals for the advancement of either programme in 2021.

As of end-December 2020, as many as 17 projects and initiatives under the Offset Programme were in various stages of implementation across the Sultanate, the Ministry of Finance noted in its 2021 General Budget Statement.

Notable in the list is Oman Aviation Academy — a first-of-



its-kind facility set up at Suhar Airport in collaboration with Airbus Helicopters as the offset partner, along with CAE, a global aviation training organisation, as the strategic partner in the establishment of the campus and its curriculum.

The initiative is supported by a number of government and private funds, including the Ministry of Defence

Pension Fund, Oman National Investments Development Company (TANMIA) and Al Hosn Investment Company.

Another academy set up in the Sultanate under the Offset Programme is focused on high-level skills development in cyber-security. The Advanced Cybersecurity Academy (ACA) was unveiled last year with the support of Thales, a French-based

multinational specialist in space and defence security solutions. The high-tech facility has already begun delivering advanced cyber range solutions and training.

More recently, the ministry also announced the signing of a strategic agreement with global telecom and Internet giant Ericsson for the establishment of a first-ever Centre of Excellence for Advanced Telecommunications

NEW IMPETUS:
Five new initiatives are slated for implementation this year under the Partnership for Development (PFD) programme

Technology and IoT in the Sultanate. The facility will drive the growth of technologies and applications based on 5G and the Internet of Things (IoT).

Significantly, 14 new projects and initiatives are currently on the anvil for implementation under the Offset Programme, according to the Ministry.

While they are all the subject of feasibility studies, seven other projects are being prepped for implementation, of which five are due to be launched during the course of 2021.

It includes plans for the launch of a Leaders Development Centre in the Sultanate in collaboration with Arizona State University, one of the largest public universities in

the United States.

"The Ministry of Finance is also setting out a strategic plans to implement the projects, which fall within the Partnership for Development Programme, in industry sector and knowledge transfer area in alignment with Oman Vision 2040 and Tenth Five-Year Plan," it stated.

Meanwhile, projects and initiatives in seven key sectors have been targeted for procurement under the PPP model during 2021 and beyond. The list covers seaports, education, environment, transport, healthcare, municipal services, and government services.

Affirming its commitment to the PPP framework for procuring public services, the Ministry added: "The Public-Private Partnership (PPP) is considered as one of the economic policies that aims at developing national economy and diversifying sources of income. The ministry is responsible for the enforcement of PPP Law in order to encourage private sector to invest in the infrastructure and public services, in order to reduce the burden on public spending."

Arab Open University secures funding for new Oman campus



BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JAN 3

Bank Nizwa has signed an agreement with Arab Open University to finance the construction of its new campus at South Al Maabala in Muscat Governorate. The agreement was signed by Khalid al Kayed, CEO of Bank Nizwa and Dr Moosa al Kindi, Director of Arab Open University, Oman branch. To build the campus, the University has received a land allocation from the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning in South Al Maabala with a total area covering 37,850 sqm. The new Arab Open University falls under the Arab Gulf Programme for Development (AGFUND) which is a regional organisation established in 1980. AGFUND works mainly in the field of development and growth at the international level through an effective partnership with the UN organisation and regional and international development organisations. The Arab Open University launched in Oman in February 2008. On completion of the project, the university will help students enhance their skill set, increase knowledge and attain internationally acclaimed degrees, therefore, giving the country local talents in various sectors who possess the necessary expertise to take on leadership roles.

RO 215m subsidy saving from power, water tariffs

SUBSIDY REFORMS:
The allocation towards electricity subsidy alone falls to RO 500 million for this year, as opposed to RO 610 m in 2020

CONRAD PRABHU
@conradprabhu

A strident effort by the Omani government to roll back subsidies as part of a wider bid to help reduce the country's annual budget deficit is beginning to pay off.

On Saturday, the Ministry of Finance revealed that allocations towards subsidies against electricity, water, transport fuels and other utilities and services were estimated at RO 800 million in the 2021 General Budget.



This compares with disbursements totalling RO 1.031 billion in 2019 in the form of subsidy payouts and funding support towards a number of public services and economic sectors.

The biggest contribution to this reduction comes from the power and water sector following a dramatic

overhaul of tariffs announced by the government recently.

With effect from January 1, 2021, subsidy on electricity will be gradually phased out over the course of 2021–2024 for citizens, while expatriates will begin paying cost-reflective rates for their consumption.

A saving of RO 215 million accrues to the government following the revamp of electricity and water tariffs during 2021, according to the Ministry. Consequently, the allocation towards electricity subsidy falls to RO 500 million for this year, as opposed to RO 610 million in 2020.

Other utilities attracting subsidy during the year are: Potable Water - RO 90 million, Wastewater — RO 86 million, and Solid Waste — RO 64 million. Subsidy on transport fuels, chiefly gasoline and diesel, remains at RO 35 million this year, similar to last year's allocation.

Additionally, the 2021 Budget earmarks RO 25 million as subsidy on interest accruing on soft development and housing loans disbursed by state-backed lenders.

This does not include RO 100 million in housing loans that Oman Housing Bank (OHB) is committed to making available during the year.

A divided UK casts off into the Brexit unknown

LONDON: The United Kingdom began the New Year outside the European Union's orbit on Friday after ending a tempestuous 48-year liaison with the European project, its most significant geopolitical shift since the loss of empire.

Brexit took effect in substance on Thursday at the strike of midnight in Brussels, or 23:00 London time (GMT), at the end of a transition period that largely maintained the status quo for 11 months after Britain formally left the EU on January 31, 2020.

"This is an amazing moment for this country," Prime Minister Boris Johnson, 56, said in his New Year's Eve message. "We have our freedom in our hands and it is up to us to make the most of it."

We have our freedom in our hands and it is up to us to make the most of it

BORIS JOHNSON
Prime Minister

For five years, the frenzied gyrations of the Brexit crisis dominated European affairs, buffeted the sterling markets and tarnished the United Kingdom's reputation as a reliable pillar of Western stability. Supporters cast Brexit as the dawn of a newly independent "global Britain", but the drama has weakened



Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson gives a thumbs up after signing the Brexit trade deal with the EU at number 10 Downing Street in London. — Reuters

the bonds that bind England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. After all the vitriol, one of the most significant events in European history since the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 passed with little fanfare: the United Kingdom slipped away, shrouded in the silence of the COVID-19 crisis.

With gatherings banned in London and most of the country due to soaring rates of infection, there were few outward displays of emotion when the Great Bell known as Big Ben tolled 11 through a scaffold on Thursday night.

As EU leaders and citizens bade farewell, Johnson said there would be no bonfire of regulations to build a "bargain basement Dickensian Britain" and that the country would remain the "quintessential European civilisation".

But Johnson, the face of the Brexit campaign, has been short on detail about what he wants to build with Britain's "independence" — or how to do it while borrowing record amounts to pay for the COVID-19 crisis.

— Reuters

Fiscal measures help pare 2020 budget spend by RO 540m

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JAN 3

A series of far-reaching measures by the Omani government to reduce public expenditure in the face of diminishing revenues from oil exports and a wider economic slowdown have helped cut budgeted expenditures in the 2020 General Budget by a significant RO 540 million.

Citing preliminary results, the Ministry of Finance noted that public spending declined to about RO 12.7 billion as compared with the budgeted figure of RO 13.2 billion, entailing a decrease of RO 540 million.

It attributed the outcome to a number of fiscal measures taken during 2020, including a 10 per cent cut in the approved budgets of government units, 10 per cent reduction in the operating and administrative expenses of state-owned enterprises (SOEs), 10 per cent reduction in the approved allocations of development projects, and a suspension of most projects carried out by SOEs.

Commenting on the performance of the 2020 Budget, the ministry said: "In light of the consequences triggered by the pandemic and continued low oil prices which have severely affected economic growth and public

Preliminary results of 2020 Budget (RO Million)			
	2020 Budget		
	Approved Budget	Preliminary Results	The change as per 2020 Budget and the preliminary results of 2020
Average Oil Price (\$)	58	48	(17%)
Average of Daily Oil production (000 bbl)	970	974	0.4%
Public Revenue:			
Oil Revenue	5500	4364	(21%)
Gas Revenue	2200	1700	(23%)
Non-oil Revenue	3000	2400	(20%)
Tax & Fees Revenue	2450	1800	(27%)
Capital Revenue & Repayments	550	600	9%
Total Public Revenue	10700	8464	(21%)
Expenditure:			
Civil Ministries Expenditure	4590	4350	(5%)
Defense & Security Expenditure	3450	3125	(9%)
Oil & Gas production Expenditure	2230	2400	8%
Development Expenditure	1300	1130	(13%)
Electricity Subsidy	500	610	(22%)
Debt Service (Interests)	860	860	-
Other Expenditure	270	185	(31%)
Total Expenditure	13200	12660	(4%)
Total Budget Deficit	(2500)	(4196)	68%

finance in 2020, the preliminary results of 2020 Budget show a decline in total revenue that led to higher deficit than that estimated in 2020 budget.

The total revenue is projected to reach RO 8.5 billion as compared with the budgeted figure of RO 10.7 billion. Public spending has declined to nearly RO 12.7 billion, down by 4 per cent as compared with 2020 Budget. However, the primary deficit rose by RO 1.7 billion i.e. 68 per cent, reaching

to RO 4.2 billion, as against the budget deficit," it stated.

The 2020 Budget faced dual challenges of lower oil prices than the assumed oil price, and economic and financial implications triggered by COVID-19 pandemic, according to the ministry.

Preliminary results show a decline in aggregate revenue to lower levels as compared with the budgeted figures.

Oil revenue declined by RO 1.1 billion due to average oil price

The 2020 Budget faced dual challenges of lower oil prices than the assumed oil price, and economic and financial implications triggered by COVID-19 pandemic, according to the ministry

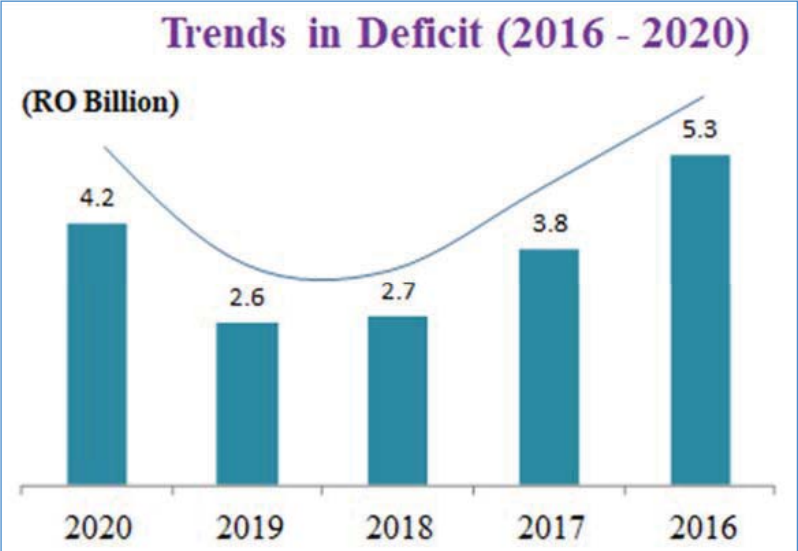
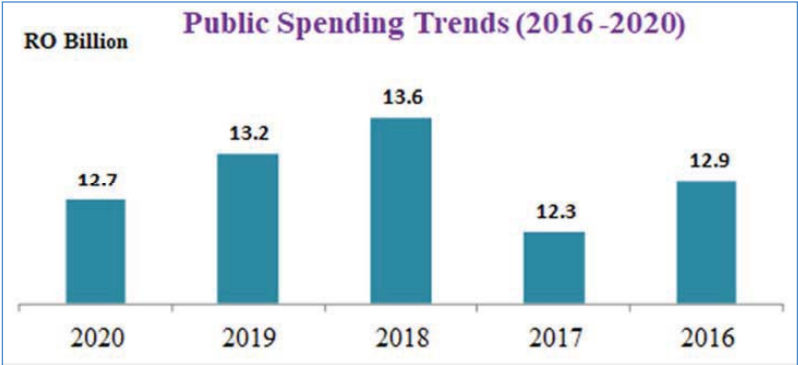
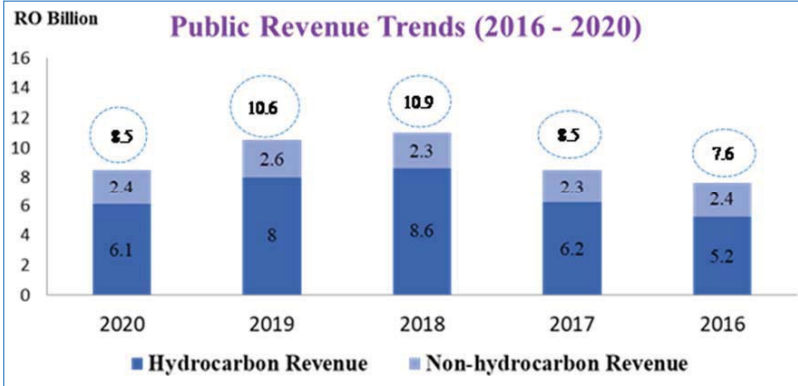
being lower than the assumed price in the budget by \$10 per barrel. Gas revenue dropped by RO 500 million as a result of a decline in natural gas price as well as lower sales.

Non-oil revenue declined by RO 600 million due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

To mitigate the effects on economic activity, the government waived several fees and taxes (such as tourism tax, municipality fees and tax, industrial areas rents, commercial register renewal fee, shipping and handling fees and others), which helped fuel the decline in non-oil revenue, it said.

"Therefore, total revenue reached nearly RO 8.5 billion by the end of 2020, down by 21 per cent as compared with the budgeted figure of RO 10.7 billion," it pointed out.

Significantly, the 2020 Budget deficit is projected to reach nearly



RO 4.2 billion, up by RO 1.7 billion than the estimated deficit of RO 2.5 billion in 2020 Budget. This is

attributed to the implications of COVID-19 and sharp drop in oil prices, the ministry added.

GII announces progress in London project

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JAN 3

Gulf Islamic Investments LLC (GII), a leading UAE-based investment conglomerate, announced that development work is progressing well at 2 Lucan Place, the site for a premium mixed-use property: a 7-storey luxury building that will uniquely meld residential, social and community uses in one of London's most prestigious addresses, the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea.

Commenting on the progress, Mohammed al Hassan, Co-CEO of GII said: "We are delighted that development works are in full swing on-site at 2 Lucan Place. This progress is a testament to the dedication and meticulous efforts of the entire team including project managers, designers, planners and our specialist contractors; that despite the unprecedented developments presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, we were able to swiftly proceed with the demolition while maintaining the highest health and safety standards for site workers."

Pankaj Gupta, Co-CEO of GII added: "We are committed to delivering a boutique development that not only offers an exceptional quality of life for residents but is also in cohesion



with the community, benefitting the area for generations to come. We will continue to work closely with the local Council and the contractor to ensure 2 Lucan Place continues to meet our target milestones."

A new-build development, 2 Lucan Place is slated for completion in the fourth quarter of 2022 and has received significant investor interest.

The development is managed by GRID Properties Limited,

the UK subsidiary of GII Group company GII Real Estate Development LLC.

2 Lucan Place will be designed by the international award-winning architectural firm Kohn Pedersen Fox Associates (KPF) whose portfolio includes many of the world's tallest towers and iconic developments including The World Bank headquarters in Washington DC and Hudson Yards in New York, the largest private real estate development in US history.

PRESS RELEASE ALIZZ AL-ISLAMIC BANK INCREASES BUSHRA PRIZES TO RO 2 M

Alizz Islamic Bank's Bushra Prize Savings Account Programme has been designed to match changes in expectation and consumer behaviour. Bushra in 2021 is bigger and better, with an increase in the prizes from 'RO 1.85 million' to 'RO 2 million' and a significant jump in winners to '3,692 winners'. The Bushra 2021 Schemes



includes special draws for our front line soldiers; Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education and the defence force as well as the ROP, a small token of appreciation for their relentless sacrifices.

The special draws for this segment will take place every quarter with a prize of RO 500 each for 3 winners per organisation.

MEETHAQ LAUNCHES SHARIA-COMPLIANT CORPORATE CARDS

In line with the bank's vision 'To serve you better, everyday', Meethaq Islamic Banking from Bank Muscat, has launched the first-ever Sharia-compliant Corporate Purchase Cards in Oman.

Meethaq Corporate Clients can now enjoy a simple and secure



way to make all their Business to Government payments

with these exclusive corporate purchase cards. Meethaq is the leading Islamic financial services provider in Oman, operating on the principles of Transparency, Trust and Partnership, thereby ensuring the comfort of remaining true to one's religious values.

OAB PROVIDES NEW SERVICE FOR TOURISM FACILITIES

In cooperation with the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, Oman Arab Bank launched a new service through its digital channels. The new development will allow entities in the tourism industry to directly pay their fees to the ministry's account, easily and efficiently.

Khalid Khalaf al Awfi, Assistant General Manager for Financial & Administrative Affairs, at the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, says, "The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism continuously seeks to facilitate and develop procedures for investors within the tourism and



hotel establishments by digitising relevant processes, together with private sector institutions. Through our partnership with Oman Arab Bank, we will see the provision of a suitable technical solution that links the payment

of tourism fees via the bank's digital platforms, which is also in line with national e-government strategy."

Abdullah Salim al Hajri, General Director of Financial & Administrative Affairs, said, "We are confident entities in the tourism industry will appreciate this new service, which enables timely fee payments, no delay and promotes ease and convenience. This will reflect positively on the sustainability of their businesses, especially in light of the current circumstances and the tremendous challenges facing the sector.



In brief

■ WASHINGTON

AVIATION DEATHS
RISE WORLDWIDE
IN 2020

The number of people killed in large commercial airplane crashes rose in 2020 to 299 worldwide, even as the number of crashes fell by more than 50 per cent, a Dutch consulting firm said. Aviation consulting firm To70 said in 2020 there were 40 accidents involving large commercial passenger planes, five of which were fatal, resulting in 299 fatalities.

In 2019 there were 86 accidents, eight of which were fatal, resulting in 257 fatalities. Large commercial airplanes had 0.27 fatal accidents per million flights in 2020, To70 said, or one fatal crash every 3.7 million flights — up from 0.18 fatal accidents per million flights in 2019. —

■ NEW DELHI

MAHINDRA TO FOCUS
ON SUVs, ELECTRIC
AFTER ENDING FORD JV

Mahindra & Mahindra Ltd will focus on developing its core portfolio of sport-utility vehicles (SUVs) and their electric version, a senior executive said after the company ended joint venture talks with Ford Motor Co.

Anish Shah, the Deputy Managing Director, said Mahindra will focus mainly on large SUVs for its core India market in the short term and move to electric in the medium-term, as it charts a new strategy for its automotive business.

“We are going back to our core”, Shah, who will take over as managing director from April, said. — **Reuters**

■ FRANKFURT

TESLA TOPS RECORD FOR
CAR DELIVERIES IN LAST
QUARTER OF 2020

The US electric car manufacturer Tesla produced and delivered more cars than ever in the last quarter of 2020, according to a company statement released on Saturday.

Tesla topped its previous high, recorded in the third quarter, by a significant margin: In the last quarter, it delivered 180,570 vehicles, versus just under 140,000 in the one before.

As a whole, the California-based company was able to increase deliveries by 36 per cent, to 499,550 cars — nearly meeting its self-determined goal of delivering half-a-million vehicles. 2020 was an extraordinary year for Tesla and Chief Executive Officer Elon Musk, who became one of the richest men in the world at age 49 thanks to soaring share prices.

Investors bullish on stocks,
hoping for a brighter 2021

NEW YORK: US stocks closed 2020 on a strong note, and many investors are betting the party will continue after a tumultuous year that marked both the end of the longest bull market and the shortest-lived bear market ever.

Risks abound, including a resurgent coronavirus pandemic, concerns about the speed of rollout of vaccines and high-stakes January 5 US Senate runoffs in Georgia for the balance of power in Congress.

Still, many investors are looking past these threats. “We are going to continue to see a push higher”, said Commonwealth Financial Network’s head of portfolio management, Peter Essele, who sees stocks in the early stages of a multi-year bull run. The options market is pricing in more volatility in January than December, likely due to the Georgia elections.

If Republicans win at least one Senate seat, they will maintain a slim majority. If Democrats sweep the dual runoffs, the chamber would be split 50-50 and the tie-breaking vote would go to Vice President-elect Kamala Harris, giving President-elect Joe Biden’s party full sway over Congress. That raises the possibility of tax-reform proposals that many investors fear would hurt stock prices. Still, most investors are not looking for a sharp pullback next year.

BofA Global Research’s December fund manager survey was the most bullish. The roll out of coronavirus vaccines has emboldened investors, along with the US Federal Reserve’s expressed readiness to keep policy accommodative, strategists said. Indeed, the US stock market’s rally over the last two months may have taken even bulls by surprise.

A late November poll found strategists expected the S&P 500 to end 2021 at 3,900, which would be another annual rise after the index rose about 16.3 per cent this year to 3,756.07.

The year 2020 was a wild one for Wall Street, book ended by the end of the longest bull market in history with the battering



The Wall Street bull statue is pictured in the Manhattan Borough of New York. — AFP File Photo

of equities by the COVID-19 shutdowns, and a bungee-cord rebound on hopes for economic recovery that resulted in the shortest bear market on record. In prior bull markets, when the S&P 500 takes out its previous bull market high, the index has experienced a median gain of 38 per cent over the span of 26 months before topping out, according to Bespoke Investment Group data.

Some investors fret the COVID-19 recovery may already be priced in and valuations may be stretched. The 12-month forward price-to-earnings ratio of the S&P 500 is currently about 22, well above its long-term average of 15. Still, investors see several parts of the market, including financials, leisure and hospitality stocks and energy with potential to rally.

“The market, overall, does not seem overbought”, said Tim Ghriskey, Chief Investment Strategist at Inverness Counsel.

Investors looking for a continued rally are optimistic of a rebound in corporate earnings. “Earnings are going to be used as a confirmation of current



**Do not count out those
growth companies
with dominant
and emerging
business models
that can continue
to meet or exceed
lofty shareholder
expectations**

TONY DESPIRITO

Chief Investment Officer

pricing”, Essele said. S&P 500 company earnings are forecast to increase about 23 per cent in 2021 compared with 2020. For much of this year increased market concentration has been a nagging worry for investors, with top five S&P 500 constituents generating 127 per cent of the index’s return during the first nine months of the year, according to BlackRock’s calculations.

Technology’s weight in the S&P 500 currently stands at 28 per

cent, up more than 10 percentage points from its historical average since 1990, according to Bespoke. “What we saw in November and December is that the market already started broadening out... beyond the tech stocks, the mega stocks”, said John Praveen, portfolio Manager at QMA, a PGIM company, pointing to a strong showing by value stocks, shares of small caps and non-US stocks.

The golden run by some high-flying growth names could continue, investors said.

“Do not count out those growth companies with dominant and emerging business models that can continue to meet or exceed lofty shareholder expectations”, said Tony DeSpirito, Chief Investment Officer of US fundamental active equity for BlackRock, in a note. With vaccines being deployed investors are looking at “the light at the end of the tunnel”, said Praveen, who expects this year’s laggard stocks and sectors to join the rally in 2021. “Think of it as your car firing on all cylinders... it’s a much broader, healthier rally”, Praveen said. — **Reuters**

US stocks
in 2020:
A year for
the history
books

NEW YORK: The year 2020 was a wild one for Wall Street, book ended by the end of the longest bull market in history with the battering of equities by the COVID-19 shutdowns, and a bungee-cord rebound on hopes for economic recovery that resulted in the shortest bear market on record.

After closing at a record high on February 19, stocks suffered a month-long plummet as the coronavirus pandemic and related government lockdowns sowed panic about the damage to the economy in the United States and globally.



A 9.5 per cent plummet in the S&P 500 on March 12, the benchmark index’s biggest-one day percentage drop since the ‘Black Monday’ crash of 1987, put it down 26.7 per cent from the February high and confirmed a bear market, widely viewed as a decline of more than 20 per cent from a high.

But the slide only lasted until March 23, when the S&P bottomed. It went on to surpass its February high on August 18, marking the start of a new bull market. The 23 trading days of a bear market were the fewest ever.

The S&P closed 2020 on Thursday at a record high, as did the Dow Jones Industrial Average, with annual gains of 16.3 per cent and 7.2 per cent, respectively. — **Reuters**

US closes money-laundering, tax evasion channel

WASHINGTON: A major avenue for global money laundering and tax evasion has been closed off by a new law requiring disclosure of owners of US shell companies used to hide billions of dollars.

The Corporate Transparency Act was included in the US defence appropriations bill passed into law by Congress late on Friday, overriding President Donald Trump’s veto.

The law forces “beneficial owners” behind shell companies to report their identities to the US Treasury’s Financial Crimes Enforcement Network, or FinCEN.

While the law still grants them protection from public knowledge — only the Treasury and law enforcement will be able to access the FinCEN database — transparency advocates say it is a huge step against kleptocrats, organised crime and rich tax evaders who have been able to anonymously wash their suspect



wealth through the world’s largest economy.

“For years, experts routinely ranked anonymous shell companies... as the biggest weakness in our anti-money laundering safeguards”, said Ian Gary, Executive Director of the FACT Coalition, which lobbied for the legislation.

“It’s the single most important step we could take to better protect

our financial system from abuse.”

The United Nations estimates that \$800 billion to \$2 trillion is laundered through the global financial system every year.

While much of the attention on has focused on tax havens like Panama and the Cayman Islands, experts say that the size of the US economy, and its ability to absorb billions of dollars without notice, has made it crucial for converting

illicit funds into legitimate assets.

In early 2020 the Tax Justice Network ranked the Cayman Islands and the United States as the global leaders in helping people conceal their finances from law and tax enforcement.

Gary Kalman, the US Director of Transparency International, said the Corporate Transparency Act was “foundational” for fighting money laundering.

Despite geopolitical tensions, he pointed out that money has flowed into the United States from China and Russia because it was the easiest place to launder it, through properties, corporate assets, securities and art.

“We are the easiest place in the world to set up an anonymous company”, he said before the law had passed. “We are the dream of any kleptocrat or criminal to hide money.”

By forcing company owners to divulge their identities, he said, the US is establishing a “global

norm” for the world’s financial system.

“By choking off access to the advanced economies, you are making it much harder. You are upping the cost and the likelihood of getting caught”, he said.

The legislation sets penalties for not reporting a company’s beneficial owners of up to two years in jail and a \$10,000 fine.

FACT said the law could result in a sharp drop in all-cash business transactions, especially in real estate, a favoured way for outsiders to move large sums into the US economy.

FACT also says that anonymous companies underpin trade in counterfeit luxury goods, pharmaceuticals and industrial equipment.

The legislation isn’t perfect, say analysts. The FinCEN database will not be open to the public or media, whose efforts have produced the biggest stories about money laundering. — **AFP**

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Mohammed al Rashdi: 99841230
m.alrahd86@yahoo.com

Ali al Maashari: 99639264
ali.almashari@omandaily.om

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features

IRANIAN ARTIST sharing love for Oman

Nakisa, engaged in art for a decade now, believes that her experience is skilled by the deep love she has for painting, not alone her specialisation in Graphics... **P18**

INSIDE STORIES

HERITAGE



MUSANDAM'S NEW ARCHAEOLOGICAL TREASURE

The Embassy of Italy and the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism have completed a project for the conservation and promotion of the Daba Al Bayah archaeological site in Musandam Governorate... **Story on Page P20**

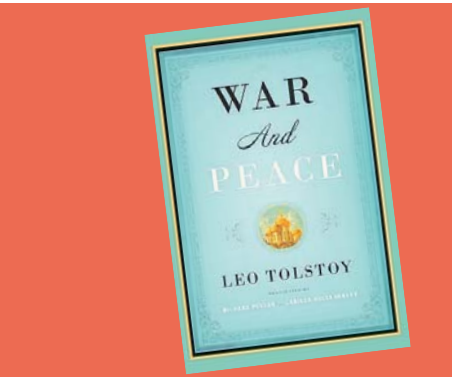
ENVIRONMENT



A BUSY YEAR FOR ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION

The Environment Society of Oman (ESO) is rounding off a busy year, which saw it continue to fulfil its mission to protect Oman's natural heritage and influence environmentally sustainable behaviour... **Story on Page 19**

READ



WAR AND PEACE BY LEO TOLSTOY

War and Peace broadly focuses on Napoleon's invasion of Russia in 1812 and follows some well-known characters in literature like Pierre Bezukhov, Prince Andrei Bolkonsky

CINEMA



"DEMON SLAYER" BECOMES JAPAN'S TOP-GROSSING MOVIE

"Demon Slayer", the animated tale of a boy fighting human-eating demons that murdered his family, has shattered a nearly two-decade record to become Japan's top-grossing movie, its distributor said on Monday. The film... **Story on Page 19**

CELEBRITIES



ACTRESS DAWN WELLS DIES FROM COVID-19

Dawn Wells, who parlayed her girl-next-door charm and wholesome beauty into enduring TV fame as the sweet-natured desert island castaway Mary Ann on the classic 1960s sitcom "Gilligan's Island," died on Wednesday at age 82.



IRANIAN ARTIST sharing love for Oman

Iranian artist Nakisa Samadi concluded her exhibition "Painting of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik". The two-day exhibition aimed at shedding the light to the personality of the new Sultan and to continue supporting the tight diplomatic relations with the two countries.

"The bonds between Omanis and Iranians can be reinforced by art as well. Artists can bring close the two peoples through sharing their life aspects, values, aspirations, love to one another, etc," Nakisa commented.

"Undoubtedly, Oman and Iran share close diplomatic, economic and military ties. These ties can also be tightened through art," she added.

Nakisa is delighted to be in Oman and live with the people of Oman and the joy of the National Day. I am sure that HM Sultan Haitham will continue the march of the development that the late Sultan Qaboos started fifty years back".

Nakisa, engaged in art for a decade now, believes that her experience is skilled by the deep love she has for painting, not alone her specialisation in Graphics.

Tram, Hyper realism, Line & point are some new methods that she is engaged with to create her artistic works.

Having used, the techniques, namely acrylics, patina and golden leaf, she has created a surprising artistic art works of HM for the first time in the Sultanate to celebrate the 50th National Day.

Speaking of her experience with the new methods she uses, Nakisa says, "If you squint looking at a picture you'll be able to see beyond colour variations and



notice how details blend together and create simpler masses of similar value".

"Lines are much more than the contour of objects. When looking at any artwork, each edge between different colours or different shapes can be seen as a line.

Either used as a contour or as an edge between different paint colours, lines define shapes and can be used by the artist to guide the eye of the viewer through the painting".





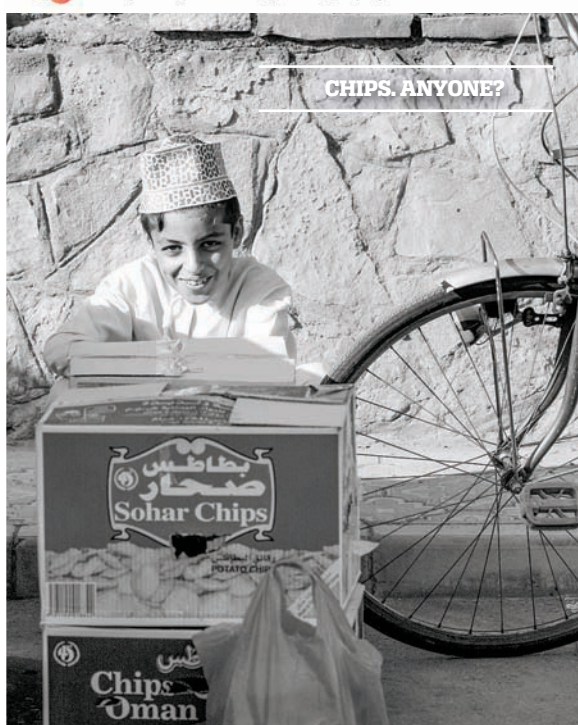
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ENVIRONMENT

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A BUSY YEAR FOR ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION

The Environment Society of Oman (ESO) is rounding off a busy year, which saw it continue to fulfil its mission to protect Oman's natural heritage and influence environmentally sustainable behaviour. With the steadfast and generous help of its members, sponsors and supporters, ESO, which is the Sultanate's only non-profit organisation focusing on environmental conservation, carried out a number of educational programmes, awareness campaigns and conservation projects. During the year, it produced seven educational materials, including booklets, infographics and videos, distributed more than 700 frankincense tree seedlings together with the Dhofar communities, and distributed 4,600 reusable bags to communities in Muscat, Sur, Masirah, Al Wusta, Sadah and Thamrait. Bolstered by the Summer Sea Turtle Sustainability



Grant from the Turtle Island Restoration Network and SEE Turtles, a grant awarded to ESO thanks to an international public vote, ESO also removed almost 200 tonnes of abandoned fishing nets in Masirah. Continuing to drive community engagement, ESO has ended the year with 356 individual members, 30 corporate members, as well as strengthening relationships with educators and fishermen across the country. It also held several of its long-running programmes, including the Turtle Research and Conservation programme, the Renaissance Whale and Dolphin Conservation Programme and the Green School Initiative. Building on its 16-year precedence, ESO continues to bring together governments, organisations, communities and individuals on a shared cause, each year stepping closer to environmental sustainability, while securing Oman's natural health for the coming generations.

CINEMA

"Demon Slayer" becomes Japan's top-grossing movie



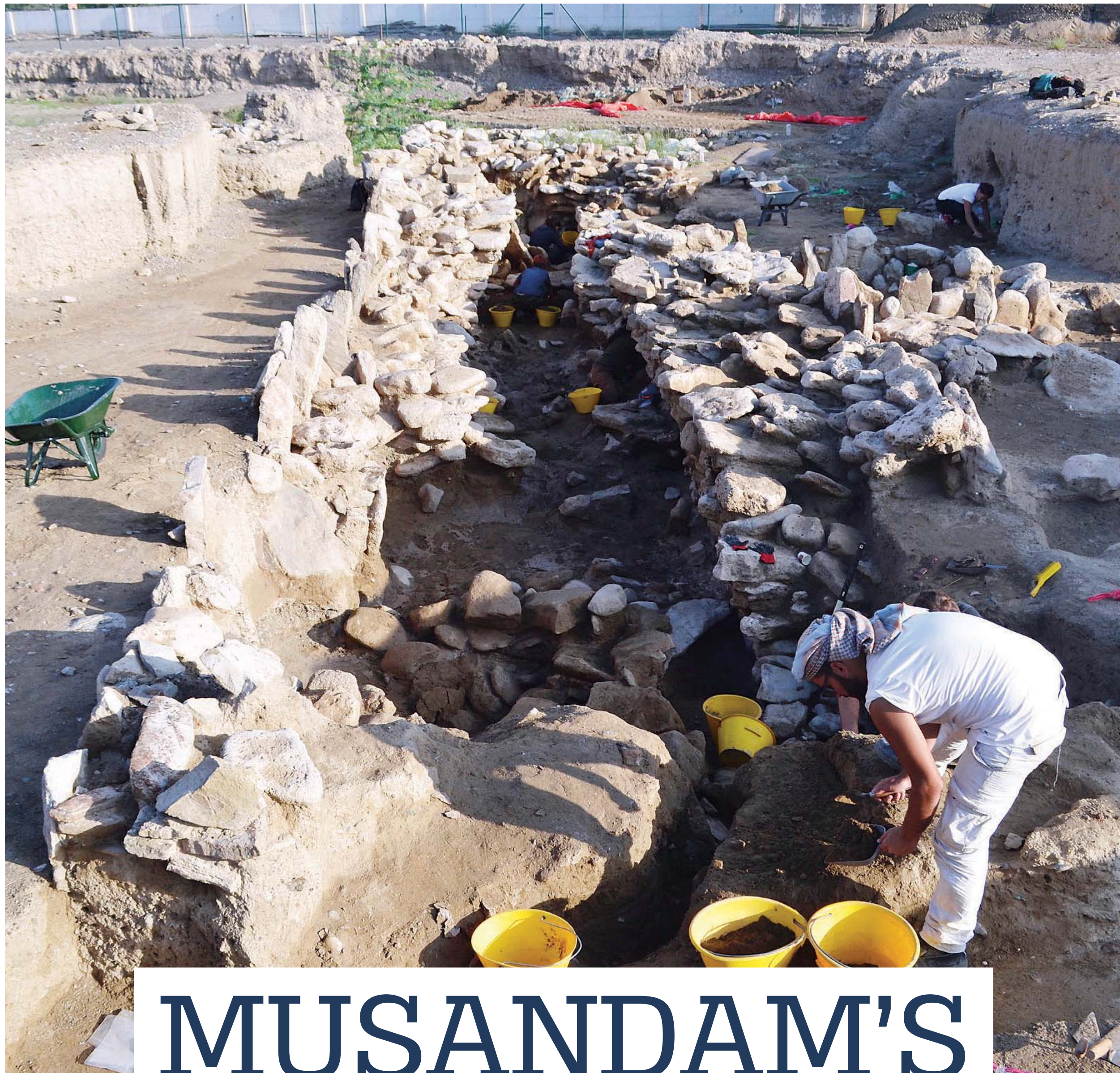
"DEMON SLAYER", THE animated tale of a boy fighting human-eating demons that murdered his family, has shattered a nearly two-decade record to become Japan's top-grossing movie, its distributor said on Monday. The film, based on a popular manga and television anime series, powered

pected boost from the novel coronavirus, film industry watchers said. People stuck at home because of social distancing got hooked on the manga comic and television series then rushed to watch the film when cinemas reopened. The film, with its message of resilience, has also spawned a bonanza



past "Spirited Away", the mega-hit Academy Award-winning movie by Studio Ghibli's Hayao Miyazaki that opened in 2001, in just a little over two months. "Demon Slayer", with a full official title of "Kimetsu no Yaiba the Movie – Mugen Train", had taken in 32.47 billion yen compared with 31.68 billion yen for "Spirited Away", according to data released on Monday. The film got an unex-

pected boost from the novel coronavirus, film industry watchers said. People stuck at home because of social distancing got hooked on the manga comic and television series then rushed to watch the film when cinemas reopened. The film, with its message of resilience, has also spawned a bonanza of merchandise — from toys to canned coffee — generating at least 270 billion yen (\$2.61 billion) in business as of December 3, said Toshihiro Nagahama, senior economist at the Dai-ichi Life Research Institute. Sony Corp, whose music unit is co-distributor, also got a boost from the film, which has opened in several Asian countries and will head to the United States and Canada early in the New Year. — Reuters



MUSANDAM'S

new archaeological treasure

The Embassy of Italy and the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism have completed a project for the conservation and promotion of the Daba Al Bayah archaeological site in Musandam Governorate, where an Italian archaeological team conducted by Dr Francesco Genchi of La Sapienza University of Rome has been excavating since 2013 with the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Italy.

The activity provided a training course for ten Ministry of Heritage and Tourism officials aimed at enhancing the preservation of the site and supporting the development of its museum as a tourism destination.

A multilingual guide of the site will allow visitors to learn about the historical importance of the settlement of Daba. A museum of the site will feature panels describing the various aspects of the archaeological complex. The project also included training for local tourist guides from Musandam who will accompany the visitors in the tours of the site.

The initiative comes in the framework of the long collaboration between Italy and Oman in the archaeological sector, with more than 40 years of scientific and academic exchanges. Although the restrictions to the excavations due to the precautionary measures related to COVID-19 did not allow in-the-field activities, the cooperation between the two countries continued also this year



through virtual programmes. The project contributed to develop capacities to highlight the rich

and diverse cultural heritage of Oman and to promote sustainable tourism within the economic diver-

sification programme.

Daba is a burial complex of great importance formed by numerous large

collective graves containing hundreds of individuals each, accompanied by thousands of valuable goods. Daba is located on the east coast of Musandam Peninsula and is surrounded by several Iron Age sites including both settlements and burial complex, giving the idea of a wealthy society that was living in the area.

Daba is at present among the richest sites of Eastern Arabia. The metal objects recovered represent a unique assemblage for wealth and quality: a milestone for the understanding of Early Arabian Civilisation that for a decade will engage scholars from all over the world. As a result of the importance and the good conservation of the site, the potential for tourism development in the area is extremely high.