



Established 1981. Editor-in-chief: Abdullah bin Salim al Shueili

OMAN OBSERVER

www.omanobserver.om editor@omanobserver.om



P10

DHOFAR
CELEBRATE
HM CUP
TRIUMPH



CHAMPION

P13

OMAN TAPS LEADING
FRENCH FIRM TO
SUPPORT MEGA
FISHERIES HUB AT DUQM



P18

WHAT MAKES
THE OMANIS
STAND OUT?



■ OMAN

**HM THANKED BY
BAHRAIN, TURKEY**

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has received a cable of thanks from King Hamad bin Issa al Khalifa of the Kingdom of Bahrain in reply to His Majesty's condolences cable to him on the death of Prince Khalifa bin Salman al Khalifa. King Hamad expressed his utmost thanks and appreciation for His Majesty the Sultan's sincere condolences and sympathy, praying to the Almighty Allah to perpetuate good health, well-being and long life on His Majesty the Sultan and protect him against all harms. His Majesty also received a cable of thanks from President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of the Republic of Turkey, in reply to His Majesty's cable of greetings to him on the 97th anniversary of the proclamation of the Republic. — ONA



**HM, Mike Pompeo
discuss bilateral relations**

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik received a phone call on Monday evening from Mike Pompeo, US Secretary of State. The call comes within the framework of enhancing the strong bilateral relations in all spheres to serve the joint interests of the two friendly countries, as well as consultations on the developments being witnessed in the region. — ONA

■ HM CONFERS ORDER OF MERIT ON SOME CITIZENS

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on Monday conferred the Order of Merit, First Class and the Order of Commendation for Distinguished Civil Service, Second Class, to a number of Omani citizens in recognition of their praiseworthy efforts and contribution in different fields. The medals were presented by Sayyid Khalid bin Hilal al Busaidy, Minister of Diwan of Royal Court, when he received the dignitaries at his office. **DETAILS ON P2**

**HM GREETINGS TO
ROMANIA PRESIDENT**

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Klaus Iohannis of Romania on the occasion of his country's National Day. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere greetings and best wishes of good health and happiness to President Iohannis and the Romanian friendly people further progress and prosperity. — ONA



INSIDE



Full attendance in offices from Dec 6

NEW SET OF COMMERCIAL ACTIVITIES TO BE OPENED

MUSCAT: Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal al Busaidy, Minister of Interior, on Monday chaired a joint meeting of the Supreme Committee tasked with tackling developments resulting from coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and the sub-committee branching from the Supreme Committee that is mandated to tackle economic impacts of coronavirus.

The Supreme Committee valued the commitment of members of the society and affirmed that this cooperation led to a tangible decline in number of infected persons and mortality cases, besides bringing down the number of people admitted to hospitals and intensive care units.

The committee urged members of the society to continue to abide by all

The epidemiological condition is the criterion that governs future decision-making on re-opening of activities or the re-locking of the same

SUPREME COMMITTEE

procedures and precautionary measures to stem the spread of the virus.

This, the committee said, includes wearing face masks, maintaining physical distance, using sanitizers and avoiding gatherings to help spare society

NEW GUIDELINES



Cooperation from all led to a decline in number of infections and mortality cases



The committee decided to allow the issuance of tourist visas for visitors



All are urged to continue to abide by precautionary measures including wearing face masks, maintaining physical distance



All precautionary measures have to be implemented by individuals and establishments



New set of commercial and industrial activities will be allowed to be opened



Downsizing the number of employees needed to attend the workplace ends

and individuals the risks posed by this serious disease.

The Supreme Committee said that the general trend is to cautiously tackle ways of living with the virus. Towards this end, there has been well-studied re-opening of activities in a manner that maintains the state's performance of its duties and sustain the operation of the private sector, the committee said.

"The epidemiological condition is the criterion that governs future decision-making on re-opening of activities or the re-locking of the same", said the committee. It stressed that all approved precautionary measures have to be implemented by individuals and establishments in public and private sectors. **TURN TO P5**

■ MISFAT AL ABRIYEN TOURISM PROJECT COMPLETED

As part of 50th National Day celebrations, the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism and Bank Muscat announced the successful completion of the Misfat Al Abriyen heritage tourism project in the Wilayat of Al Hamra. The landmark tourism development project was initiated in 2019 by the bank in line with its commitment to partnership in sustainable development and promotion of national goals. **DETAILS ON P13**



Biden names his picks for top economic advisers

WILMINGTON: President-elect Joe Biden named his choices for several top economic positions on Monday, including former Federal Reserve Chair Janet Yellen as nominee for Treasury Secretary and three other women, setting the stage for a more diverse White House.

While Biden's transition to the presidency on January 20 appeared to be hitting its stride, he was hobbling after fracturing his foot while playing with his

dog on Saturday and will wear a protective boot for several weeks, his doctors said.

The incoming administration has been hampered for weeks by Republican President Donald Trump, who has refused to concede to Biden, a Democrat. Trump has said without providing evidence that the November 3 vote was fraudulent, claims that state and federal election officials have dismissed. **SEE ALSO P8**

HM confers medals on Omani personalities



MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on Monday conferred the Order of Merit, First Class, and the Order of Commendation for Distinguished Civil Service, Second Class, to a number of Omani citizens in recognition of their praiseworthy efforts and contribution in different fields.

His Majesty the Sultan conferred the Order of Merit, First Class, to Honourable Dr Aisha bint Hamad al Darmakiyah, researcher Ali bin

Ahmed al Shihri and Dr Ali bin Faraj al Katheeri.

His Majesty the Sultan also conferred the Order of Commendation for Distinguished Civil Service, Second Class, to Bioba bint Ali al Sabriyah, Dr Hilal bin Said al Hajri and Ibrahim bin Ali bin Qambar al Ajmi.

The medals were presented by Sayyid Khalid bin Hilal bin Saud al Busaidy, Minister of the Diwan of Royal Court, at his office on Monday. — ONA



Minister meets representatives of business community

MUSCAT: Qais bin Mohammed bin Moosa al Yousuf, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP), met with senior representatives from Oman's business community on Monday to discuss inward investment progress and developments as well as non-oil export opportunities.

The meeting took place at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Qurum. The MoCIIP delegation accompanying Al Yousuf included Asila bint Salim al Samsamiyah, MOCIIP's Under-Secretary for Investment Promotion, along with Azzan al Busaidy and Ibrahim al Maamari.

Noting the ministry's strong relationship with the local business community and the increasing importance of public-private partnerships will play in the years ahead as Oman grows its economy, Al Yousuf said: "With the ambitious goals of Vision 2040 guiding all discussions during this most productive meeting, a variety of key topics were explored amongst them how local CEOs and C-suite executives can capitalise on the growing portfolio of domestic investment opportunities on offer in manufacturing, tourism, fisheries, logistics and mining."

"The ministry looks forward to leveraging consultations such as the one held on Monday to make sure our all-important business community has the support it needs as our nation looks to the next phase of development, growth and prosperity under the leadership and guidance of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik."

Commenting on the ministry's strong desire for more Omani businesses to enter international markets, Al Yousuf continued: "Growing



our economy requires looking beyond our borders, particularly in a post-pandemic world and this round-table event provided a valuable chance to explore current and future possibilities for Oman's exporters.

"The conversation also encompassed how the ministry can help local investors and businesses make the most of the ever-increasing demand for Oman-made products in the region and beyond."

He concluded: "Oman is working hard to maintain its position as an attractive global destination for international businesses looking to invest. In fact, we believe what we have to offer – our location, infrastructure, talent, connectivity and natural resources — meet the needs of ambitious companies looking to succeed in today's fast moving global economy."

"Foreign investment is clearly of great importance to the Omani economy, and this is reflected in the level of support provided by my ministry and other government organisations. However, the thousands of SMEs who provide thousands of jobs throughout the economy are equally important and it is crucial we reinforce our ties and boost dialogue with the local business community. Together, we can make Vision 2040 a reality."

ZAINAB AL NASSRI

@zainabalnasseri

Oman Vision 2040 stated that the Sultanate has made unremitting efforts to ensure that natural resources are protected and used in a safe and sound manner, people are protected from harmful environmental impacts and that environment is effectively managed in a way that supports the prosperity of the society.

For this, the Vision's top priorities include concern for the environment as a well-established culture with the citizens as well as institutions. It also includes that environmental perspective is considered when making policies, taking decisions in industrial planning and implementation.

The 60th edition of the "Lynx", the monthly newsletter by the National Field Research Centre for Environmental Conservation, says that the strategic approach of Oman Vision-2040 is based on effective, balanced and resilient ecosystems to protect the environment and sustain its natural resources in support of the national economy.

This future trend is based on the fact that the optimal use and sustainability of natural resources is a necessity to support the economic environment and stimulate it for production. The future strategy in the field of natural resource management will focus on developing non-traditional sources of natural resources, such as the use of various types of renewable energy that contribute to reducing costs on the productive sectors and enhancing their competition. In addition to adopting a transformation approach towards a green economy that enhances the issue of environmental sustainability, contribute to achieving stability, reducing restrictions and pressures on the financial management, and supplying the treasury with

Environmental issues to be addressed in Vision 2040



financing sources through non-traditional natural sources.

"In the field of natural resource management, achieving a balance between development requirements and environmental sustainability is a national priority. There is also an urgent need for structural reform in water sector, expanding sanitation services and using modern technology to take advantage of wastewater to use it in various fields such as



agriculture and others, aiming at increasing and diversification of agricultural production based on modern technology methods. This would lead to favourable levels of food security, as well as gradually starting to manufacture raw materials; to enhance the local added value and build technical capabilities in this field, which also contributes to diversifying sources of income and strengthening the Sultanate economically.

According to "Lynx", the challenges faced are many, include: limiting the follow-up of environmental conservation to a specific institution, without consideration to the fact that the field of the environment is

shared by all other sectors. Also, there is a negative understanding for environmental protection as an obstacle to development. The Sultanate strives to have the "concern for environment" as a firm culture with the citizens and various institutions. In addition to the absence of a national environmental database as a solid infrastructure to support decision-making, policy-making, monitoring, follow-up and

evaluation process. The driving forces and pressures affecting the environment in the Sultanate are represented by population growth, economic growth, and energy demand. The high population and economic growth have exerted severe pressure on the area of cultivable land in the Sultanate. However, in the field of energy, energy production is totally focused on fossil fuels (oil and gas). Most of the final use of the energy sector is concentrated in generating electricity and transportation.

In the field of water resources, the Sultanate is considered one of the countries that suffer from

scarcity of water resources because it is located in the range of dry areas. Deteriorating groundwater quality is one of the pressures and challenges facing the water resources sector as a result of the high salinity of the groundwater in the coastal parts.

The problem of desertification has also grown in the Sultanate during the past two decades. For the marine environment, it is also exposed to illegal discharging of oils from ships and trans-carriers passing through regional waters, and reach of these pollutants to the beaches. Besides, unmonitored fishing activities leads to the destruction of coral reefs and depletion of fish stocks.

All of these activities cause the death of numbers of rare sea turtles, whales and dolphins. On the same context, the growth of commercial marine fishing has environmental impacts. To address these challenges, the Sultanate has set up a number of legislations, programmes and initiatives, including updating the national plan to combat oil pollution, the national programme for monitoring pollutants in the marine environment, monitoring the development of fish stocks, the mangrove cultivation project, monitoring the water situation, the national strategy for improving natural pastures, developing policies encouraging investment in food production projects, strengthening the air quality monitoring network, and reducing gas emissions depleting the ozone layer.

Agricultural project in Musannah reviewed

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources (MAFWR) and the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (SMEDA) held a meeting on Monday to follow up the procedures that have been taken regarding agricultural layouts in Al Mag'sar, the Wilayat of Al Musannah.

The meeting was attended by Dr Ahmed bin Nasser al Bakri, MADWR Under-Secretary for Agriculture, and Halima bint Rashid al Zariya, SMEDA Chairperson.

The meeting reviewed developments for setting up an integrated agricultural project for growing vegetables in the agricultural layout in Al Mag'sar.

The project comes in implementation of the government's directives to strengthen the partnership between the public and private sectors in the field of agricultural investment for sustainable production and food commodities security at the local level. It also aims at promoting and developing agricultural investment projects, by adopting integrated production and modern technologies in agriculture, irrigation and post-harvest transactions, to ensure their sustainability, achieve high quality of products and increase their competitiveness in the markets. — ONA



Sayyid Shihab receives ambassadors of Pakistan, Korea

MUSCAT: His Highness Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik bin Taimour al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, received at his

office in Mu'askar Al Murtafa' on Monday K Ahsan Wagan, Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to the Sultanate,

and Kim Chang Kyu, Ambassador of the Republic of Korea to the Sultanate.

During the two meetings, cordial

conversations were exchanged, and the good bilateral relations between the Sultanate and their countries were reviewed. — ONA

Omran to develop retail, leisure facilities at Muttrah waterfront



VINOD NAIR

@vinot_nair

Omran Group has invited local companies for retail activities at the Al Inshirah Center (AIC) at Muttrah waterfront Muscat as part of the efforts to boost the leisure market in the Sultanate.

The local companies, including

SMEs, can register their interest in leasing a range of commercial and retail outlets at Al Inshirah Center, which include café lounge and co-working space, seven meeting rooms, a souvenir, and handicraft shop featuring artifacts clothing and other relevant Omani products manufactured in Oman sourced from authentic makers, tourist

visitor centre and other tourism-related recreational services and activities such as tourist water taxi berthing, the tender issued on Monday said.

In addition to the retail spaces, the site offers additional opportunities for weekend markets to operate at the site to enhance the visitor experience.

The location offers facilities for a mini marina with a berthing facility, ample car parking area, around 50-60 paved bays. Omran is responsible for creating sustainable and authentic tourism assets, lifestyle communities, and destinations that drive economic growth and contribute to the diversification of the economy.

Oil and condensates production hits 290.3m barrels in 10 months

SHAMSA AL RIYAMIYAH
MUSCAT, NOV 30

The Sultanate's production of crude oil and condensates during the first ten months of the year amounted to 290.3 million barrels at a daily average of 952,100, according to data released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

According to the data, overall crude oil amounted to 234.8 million while oil condensates registered 55.5 million barrels.

Total oil and condensates production for October registered 29.2 million barrels. This includes 22.3 million barrels of crude oil and 6.9 million barrels of oil condensates.

The average price of Oman crude oil at the end of October was \$46 down from the figure of \$64.1 registered during the same period of 2019.

21 infiltrators nabbed in North Al Batinah



MUSCAT: Coast Guard Police vessels at North Al Batinah Governorate Police Command rounded up 21 infiltrators who were on board a smuggling boat near the governorate's beach. Legal procedures against the offenders are currently under way, Royal Oman Police (ROP) said on Twitter.

Meanwhile, North Al Sharqiyah Governorate Police Command apprehended two people in connection with 13 thefts from several commercial stores. The police found stolen goods in the defendants' house and vehicle.

Legal action against the defendants is currently underway.

In another development, the Oil and Gas Installations Security Police Command arrested three expats on charges of possessing and trafficking large quantities of tobacco and alcoholic beverages within the concession zones. Legal procedures against the defendants are currently under way, ROP said.

To advertise on our social media platforms and website

Please Contact our Team

95210257

OMAN OBSERVER
www.omanobserver.om

@omanobserver





Al Sunainah



A vista of rolling, golden dunes

Al Sunainah is a wilayat in Al Buraimi Governorate, northeastern Oman. It is about 400 km from the capital, Muscat, and about 90 km from Al Buraimi.

The wilayat has witnessed development projects during the Blessed Renaissance since it had been turned into a wilayat from niyabat.

In ancient times, the wilayat was called Ginainat for the wrapping gardens planted by a woman whose name was Sana from which the name of Sunainah was derived.

The wilayat enjoys a number of fortresses and archaeological towers that stand on the sandy hills. They apparently represent the rootage and the authenticity of the place. The area enfolds old neighbourhoods with urban character, which embraces the presence with diverse shapes. Al Sunainah is known for hospitality, folk art like Al Ayyalah, Al Hamasiyah, Al Taghrood and Al Hambel, in addition to weaving, spinning and other industries inherited from previous generations.

The people are engaged in livestock breeding, especially camels which generate sufficient income to individuals. The inhabitants are also

involved in agriculture as the majority cultivate various crops for fodders and grow palm trees.

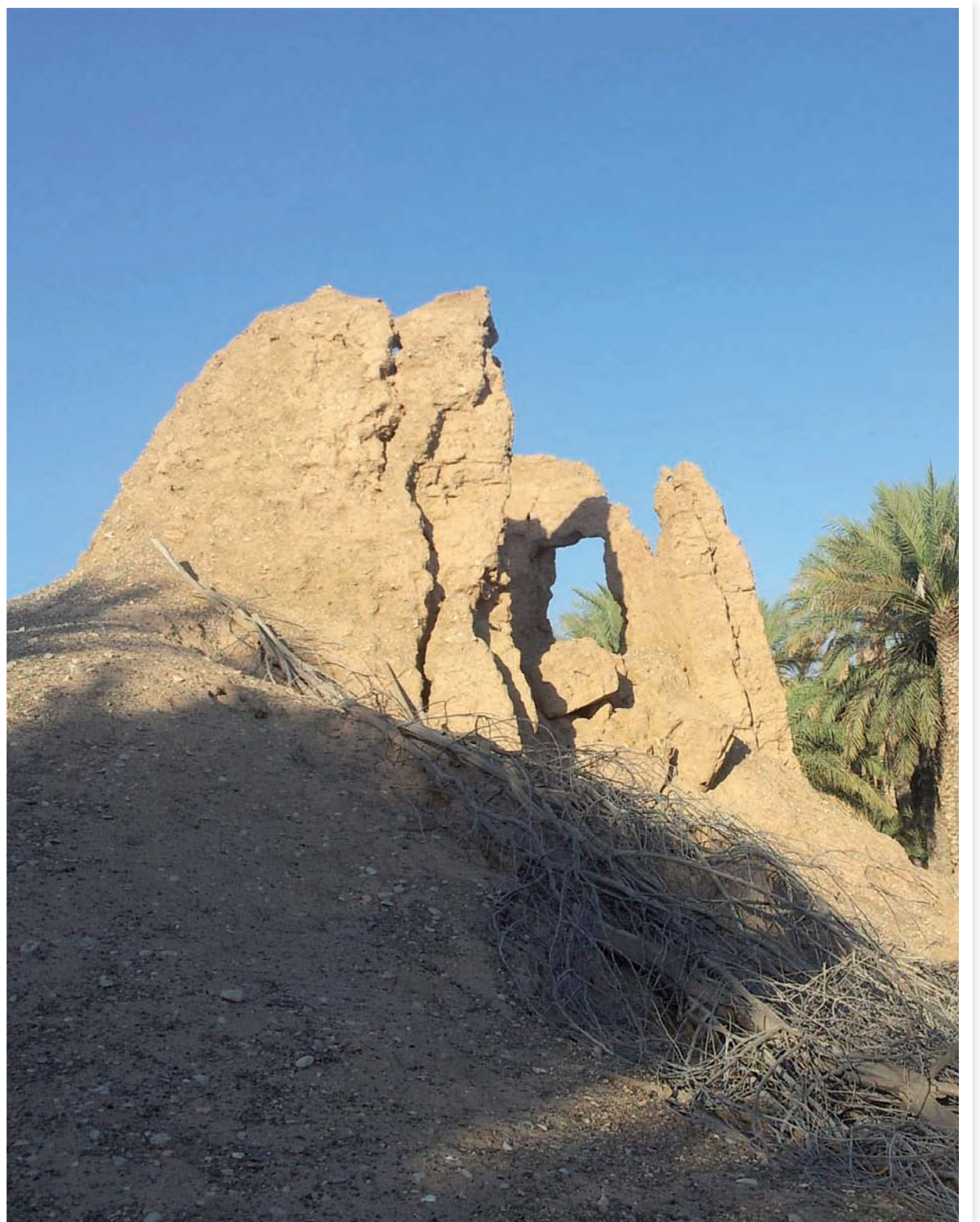
The women have vital roles in the community as they practice craft industries related to palm fronds.

The first female craft industries headquarters was established in the wilayat.

The wilayat sees architectural development and internal road. There are noticeable differences between the past and today as there are hospitals, schools, housing units, electricity, water and government institutions. Various residential complexes were constructed for low income families.

The natural environment is considered as a key tourism landmark that has spectacular scenes and vast plains stretching far away, in addition to other tourism and recreational components. A visitor to the place will have the chance to observe the natural beauty with golden sands along with the tranquillity and quietness.

The wilayat is also famous for the national camel races, which makes it a continuous season throughout the year to visit, especially from the neighboring countries to enjoy the camel races.



Nearly 197,500 employees registered with pension funds

KHALID AL ADAWI
MUSCAT, NOV 30

The number of Omani employees registered with the public sector pension funds at the end of September reached 197,489 employees, a decrease of 0.3 per cent from the end of August.

The number of male employees registered with the Civil Service Employees Pension Funds, the Diwan of Royal Court and the Central Bank of Oman, has reached 114,553 while female employees were 82,936.

The total number of employees registered with the public sector pension funds by the end of August was 198,057.

NCSI affirmed that these figures were registered at the end of September depending on the employees' age group.

NCSI said that there were 121 employees of the age group 65 years and older registered with the public sector pension funds at the end of September.

■ FROM PAGE 1

Full attendance in offices from Dec 6



Accordingly, the committee decided to end the period of downsizing the number of employees needed to attend the workplace in units of the state's administrative apparatus and other public legal entities with effect from Sunday, (December 6).

All departments and employees are required to stick to preventive precautionary measures to curb the spread of coronavirus disease, said the

committee.

Within the context of its keenness to resume economic activities and support the operation of the private sector, the committee decided to allow the issuance of tourist visas for visitors provided that the tourists arrive as part of delegations organised by hotels and tourism companies.

The committee also decided the resumption of a new set

of commercial and industrial activities. All businesses, old and new, have to abide by all preventive measures to curb the virus, said the Supreme Committee, adding that the departments concerned will announce the activities allowed to be re-opened.

The Supreme Committee prayed to the Almighty Allah to protect everyone against all harm. — ONA

Cases drop in Oman as plans to get vaccines gather steam

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

The number of COVID-19 cases in the Sultanate continued to show a steady decline even as the chances of having a vaccine by the year-end seems to be more likely.

On Monday, the Ministry of Health (MoH) reported 215 new cases of COVID-19, bringing the total number of cases registered in the Sultanate to 123,699. MoH also reported five new COVID-19-related deaths, taking the total death toll to 1,423.

The total recovery cases reached 115,216, which is 93.1 per cent of the total cases reported so far.

Most of the cases were reported from Muscat (112), which also reported three of five deaths. Twenty people were hospitalised during the past 24 hours, taking the total number of inpatients in hospitals to 210, including 108 in Intensive Care Units (ICUs).

Meanwhile, the government

said it has agreements to get access to vaccines which will be given to various segments of the population customers from the end of this month.

A working group following up developments in the field of manufacturing an anti-coronavirus vaccine, and to set up mechanisms to obtain the appropriate vaccine in coordination and follow-up with the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunizations (GAVI), the World Health Organization (WHO) and specialised companies.

The Minister of Health Dr Ahmed bin Mohammed al Saeedi recently said that a total of 1,800,030 doses were reserved for the Sultanate as a first batch, hoping that the consignment will be received before the end of this year.

We hope to vaccinate about 60 per cent of citizens and residents so that we could attain total immunity in the community", said the minister.

■ MINISTER RECEIVES GCC OFFICIAL

MUSCAT: Dr Rahma bint Ibrahim bin Said al Mahrouqiyah, Minister of Higher Education, Scientific Research and Innovation, met at her office on Monday with Badr bin Saif al Kindi, Director of GCC Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (GCC-NQAHE). The two parties discussed activating areas of joint cooperation between the Ministry and GCC-NQAHE, in addition to addressing GCC-NQAHE strategic plan, which was recently approved by the GCC Secretariat General.

— ONA



Oman Air best airline in the region

MUSCAT: Oman Air, the national carrier of Sultanate, has won two more 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 CEO Abdulaziz al Raisi said achieving these awards from an internationally acclaimed organisation is a tremendous honour which shows once again that the airline's people make a difference.

"Standing out among all the excellent airlines in this region and across the globe reflects that everyone works with dedication to providing exceptional service to all our guests", he said. "I am particularly proud of the fact that we have won major awards for our service in First, Business and Economy Class, which makes it clear that we provide world-leading service to all our guests."

"Additionally, there is intense competition among carriers which provide service to our region; Oman Air being named the best airline for service to the Middle East is something that says a lot."

Earlier this month, Oman Air was recognised by the World Travel Awards as the Middle East's leading airline for Business Class and Economy Class service. The airline's in-flight magazine, *Wings of Oman*, was also honoured as the Middle East's leading in-flight magazine.

Additionally, Oman Air recently received recognition from thepointsguy.com, a globally popular travel site, for providing the world's best Economy Class service.

These accomplishments are more important than ever, said Graham Cooke, founder of the World Travel Awards.



In spite of ongoing travel-related challenges, "this year's World Travel Awards programme saw record voting numbers from the all-important tourism consumer", said Cooke, who noted that his organisation's website "continues to receive more search

traffic than in any previous year."

These developments reflect that as people around the world plan and look forward to enjoying business and leisure travel, they "will want to know that they will be booking with only the very best", Cooke said.

هيئة تنظيم الخدمات العامة
Authority for Public Services Regulation

نقدم بثقة
Moving Forward with Confidence

رؤية عمان 2040

NOTICE

Article (51) of the law promulgated by Royal Decree 78/2004 requires the Authority to publish its budget for each financial year. The Authority's budget for 2021 is summarized below:

Master Budget Summary for 2021 - Rial Omani		
1- Revenue Budget	2021 Budget	% of Total Budget
Total 2021 Opex and Capex Budget	6,511,845	
Less: Estimated Surplus in 2020	-516,056	
Net Revenue Budget	5,995,789	
Less: Other Revenue	-34,377	
Expenditure recovered through licence fees	5,961,412	
2- Capital Expenditure Budget		
Technology infrastructure and digital transformation	286,036	4.4%
Furniture/Office Building	493,321	7.6%
Motor Vehicle	40,000	0.6%
Total Capital Expenditure Budget	869,357	13.4%
3- Operating Expenditure Budget		
Staff related expenditure	3,947,091	60.6%
Consultancy fees	981,000	15.1%
Other Direct Costs	274,795	4.2%
Administrative expenses	439,602	6.8%
Total Operating Expenditure Budget	5,642,488	86.6%
TOTAL BUDGET FOR 2021	6,511,845	100.0%

The Authority is responsible for the regulation of the electricity and related water sector as well as related legislative instruments applicable to the gas transportation in the Sultanate of Oman. The Authority's costs are funded through licence fees. Consultancy fees are the estimated costs of undertaking the tasks in the Authority's 2021 Forward Work Programme that is available for review on the Authority's web site: www.apsr.om

Authority for Public Services Regulation, Oman
P.O Box 954, P.C 133, Al Khuwair, Sultanate of Oman
Tel: 24609700, Fax: 24609701 E- mail: enquiries@apsr.om



Turkish (R) and Russian soldiers walk together during a joint Russian-Turkish military patrol in the countryside near Darbasiah along the border with Turkey in Syria's northeastern Hasakah province on Monday. — AFP

Syria, Russia under pressure at chemical weapons watchdog

THE HAGUE: Syria and Russia faced renewed pressure over allegations of chemical weapons use as member countries of the global toxic arms watchdog met on Monday.

Moscow was urged by Western nations to “transparently” reveal the circumstances of the Novichok nerve agent poisoning of opposition figure Alexei Navalny.

Damascus meanwhile faced calls for sanctions at the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) after investigators accused the Syrian regime of sarin attacks in 2017.

Russia and Syria have repeatedly denied the accusations, alleging that Western powers

have politicised the Hague-based OPCW.

Syria had failed to meet 90-day deadline set in July to declare the weapons used in the attacks on the village of Lataminah and to reveal its remaining stocks, OPCW chief Fernando Arias said.

“The Syrian Arab Republic has not completed any of the measures,” Arias told the meeting.

He said “gaps, inconsistencies and discrepancies” remained in Syria’s account of its progress on its 2013 agreement to give up all chemical weapons following a suspected sarin attack that killed 1,400 people in the Damascus suburb of Ghouta. — AFP

Iran says Israel, exiled group killed scientist in complex operation

TEHRAN: Iran said Israel and an exiled opposition group used new and “complex” methods to assassinate its leading nuclear scientist, as it buried him on Monday in a funeral befitting a top “martyr”.

As it laid Mohsen Fakhrizadeh — seen by Israel as the “father” of Iran’s nuclear weapons programme — to rest, the Islamic republic also vowed to redouble his work.

Fakhrizadeh died on Friday after his car and bodyguards were targeted in a bomb and gun attack on a major road outside the capital, heightening tensions once more between Tehran and its foes.

Iran’s top security official, Rear Admiral Ali Shamkhani of the Supreme National Security Council, said the “operation was very complex, using electronic equipment and no one was present at the scene”.

The People’s Mujahedeen of Iran (MEK) were “certainly” involved, along with “the Zionist regime and the Mossad,” he said, referring to the Israeli government and its spy agency.

Shamkhani’s comments came in video interviews broadcast by state television and the Fars news agency.

Without citing sources, Fars itself reported the attack had been



Members of Iranian forces carry the coffin of nuclear scientist Mohsen Fakhrizadeh during a funeral ceremony in Tehran, on Monday. — Reuters

carried out with the help of “a remote-controlled automatic machinegun” mounted on a pickup truck.

Iran’s President Hassan Rouhani had on Saturday accused Israel of acting as a “mercenary” for the United States by carrying out the assassination.

Fakhrizadeh’s funeral was attended by several high-ranking

officials, including Defence Minister Amir Hatami and Revolutionary Guards commander Hossein Salami.

As the funeral got underway, a religious singer praised Fakhrizadeh and alluded to the martyrdom of Imam Hossein, the revered 7th century holy figure.

“If our enemies had not committed this heinous crime and

spilled our dear martyr’s blood, he might have remained unknown,” Hatami said in a speech.

“But today, he who was only an idol for... his students and colleagues, is introduced to the whole world,” he added, saying he would be an inspiration for “all who embark on the path to fight.”

“The enemies should know that this is their first defeat.” — AFP

‘Christmas will not be cancelled’ says Bethlehem, amid little comfort or joy

BETHLEHEM, WEST BANK: Bethlehem is shaping up for a dismal Christmas: most of the inns are closed, the shepherds are likely to be under lockdown and there are few visitors from the east, or anywhere else. Just 12 months ago, the Palestinian town was celebrating its busiest festive season for two decades, amid a sustained drop in violence and a corresponding surge in the number of pilgrims and tourists. But hotels that were adding new wings in 2019 are now shuttered because of the coronavirus pandemic.

Nevertheless, town leaders say the traditional birthplace of Jesus will go ahead with its celebrations, aware that the world’s eyes are upon it at this time of year. “Bethlehem is going to celebrate Christmas. And Christmas will not be cancelled,” said Mayor Anton Salman, as workers behind him erected a huge Christmas tree in



A Palestinian man poses for a picture outside the Church of the Nativity, amid the coronavirus disease outbreak, in Bethlehem in West Bank. — Reuters

Manger Square. “This Christmas from Bethlehem there will be a message of hope to the whole world, that the world will recover from this pandemic.” The newly-appointed Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, Pierbattista Pizzaballa, on Monday sought to rally the Holy Land faithful, saying that

preparations had already started. His fellow Franciscan friar Father Francesco Patton, the Custodian of the Holy Land, launched the seasonal celebrations on Saturday, presiding over a service in a near-deserted Church of the Nativity.

“This Christmas will be less festive than usual as there will be

restrictions, I suppose like any other part of the world,” Pizzaballa said in an interview with a Catholic news service. “Maybe the civil law will forbid us to celebrate as we want; the pandemic will impose restrictions, but none will stop us from expressing the true meaning of Christmas which is to make an act of love.”

ROOM AT THE INN

Rula Maayah, the Palestinian Authority’s tourism minister, said this year was particularly challenging because it followed record tourism in 2018 and 2019, which then slumped to near-zero foreign tourism, and fewer Christian Palestinians coming as pilgrims. A third factor, say tourist guides and souvenir shop owners, is that the pandemic’s toll on the global economy has devastated sales over the Internet — which typically spike during the holiday season. — Reuters

Israel-Lebanon maritime border talks postponed

BEIRUT/TEL AVIV: Maritime border talks between Lebanon and Israel scheduled for Wednesday have been postponed, and US mediators will now contact the two countries separately, Israeli and Lebanese officials said on Monday.

The negotiations were launched in October with delegations convening at a UN base to try to resolve a dispute about their maritime border that has held up hydrocarbon exploration in the potentially gas-rich area.

Israeli Energy Minister Yuval Steinitz said it had been agreed with the Americans that talks would be postponed for a few weeks. “In the interim, they will do some shuttling in order to better prepare the next round of talks,” he told Israel’s Army Radio.

A Lebanese security

source said the reason for the delay was Israel’s rejection of Lebanese proposals. Steinitz said last week there had been no breakthrough after four rounds of talks and that Lebanon had “so far presented positions which add up to a provocation”.

He said he expected “many more hurdles and bust-ups” but hoped a breakthrough could be reached in a few months. The Lebanese group Hezbollah, which fought a month-long war with Israel in 2006, has said the talks are not a sign of peace-making with Israel.

Disagreement over the sea border had discouraged oil and gas exploration near the disputed line. Israel already pumps gas from huge offshore fields but Lebanon has yet to find commercial gas reserves in its own waters. — Reuters

SANAA

Yemen pushes polio immunisation

Yemeni health worker Fairouz Sanad lugs a coolbox of polio vaccines from house to house, dripping the liquid into children’s mouths hoping to stop an outbreak of the paralysing virus largely eradicated globally. As the world focussed on COVID-19 this year, the United Nations in August declared an outbreak in Yemen of the virus that can cause permanent paralysis, with children most at risk. Wild polio today is found only in Afghanistan and Pakistan. But in populations with low vaccination



rates — common in remote parts of war-torn countries like Yemen — the weakened polio virus used in vaccines can circulate and mutate, also causing paralysis. This is called a vaccine-derived polio outbreak. — Reuters

ANKARA

Turkey expected to tighten weekend curbs

Turkey is expected to tighten weekend curfews after a record rise in new coronavirus cases and fatalities, two sources familiar with the matter said on Monday. The move is expected to be announced after a cabinet meeting on Monday, said the sources who requested anonymity. They said that new measures adopted on November 17, including nightly curfews at weekends, had been insufficient.

“It is highly probable that the scope of the weekend curfew re-



striction will be expanded,” said one of the sources, adding that a final decision would be made at the cabinet meeting chaired by President Tayyip Erdogan. — Reuters

AMMAN

Jordan’s King Abdullah and Abbas meet

Jordan’s King Abdullah on Sunday met with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and both leaders set high hopes that US President-elect Joe Biden will revive peace talks over a two-state solution to the decades-old Arab-Israeli conflict, officials said.

In a palace statement after meeting with Abbas in the Red Sea port of Aqaba, the king, who in recent months said Israeli policies and Trump’s Middle East peace plan would lead to conflict, said he fully backed Palestinian



statehood. “His Majesty stressed Jordan stood with all its resources alongside Palestinians in achieving their legitimate rights to set up an independent state,” the king was quoted as saying in the statement. — Reuters



In brief

■ SEOUL

EX-PRESIDENT
GETS SUSPENDED
JAIL SENTENCE

A South Korean court on Monday found former president Chun Doo-hwan guilty of defaming a former democracy activist who was involved in protests against his government in the 1980s and handed him an eight-month suspended jail sentence. The sentence was suspended for two years, meaning the 89-year-old former president is unlikely to spend any time in prison, the court ruling seen by Reuters showed. Jung Ju-gyo, an attorney for Chun, did not respond to phone calls seeking comment and it is unclear whether he plans to appeal. The trial was held in the southwestern city of Gwangju, where hundreds, possibly thousands, were believed to have been killed when local citizens rose up against Chun's authoritarian government on May 18, 1980 and were crushed by police, paratroopers and tanks. — Reuters

■ NEW DELHI

MODI REFUSES
TO BACK DOWN ON
FARM REFORMS

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday resisted calls for the repeal of farm reforms that have ignited the biggest protests by farmers in years around the national capital, saying they were being misled and that deregulation would benefit them. Thousands of people from the big farming state of Punjab were camped out on the outskirts of Delhi for a fifth day demanding that they be allowed to stage protests in the city centre against the new laws that open up India's tightly regulated farm produce market.

Farmers who could earlier sell grains and other products only at neighbouring government-regulated wholesale markets can now sell them across the country, including to big food processing companies and retailers such as Walmart. — Reuters

■ KABUL

TROOPS KILL TALIBAN
MASTERMIND OF ARMY
BASE ATTACK

Afghan forces have killed the Taliban mastermind of a car bomb attack that left at least 30 security personnel dead, officials said on Monday. Hamza Waziristani was killed in an airstrike overnight in the eastern province of Ghazni where the bomber struck an Afghan military base on Sunday. "The mastermind behind yesterday's terrorist attack on the (Ghazni) base was killed along with seven other terrorists," the defence ministry said in a statement.

Ministry spokesman Fawad Aman said that Waziristani was a Taliban militant from the Pakistani border region of Waziristan.

The attack was one of the deadliest in months targeting government forces in Afghanistan, where violence has surged since the start of peace talks between President Ashraf Ghani's administration and the Taliban in Qatar. — AFP

Eight shot dead in Sri Lanka prison riot

COLOMBO: Sri Lankan prison guards shot dead eight inmates and wounded at least 71 others in a riot sparked by anger over rising coronavirus infections, officials said on Monday.

Sri Lanka's prisons have seen weeks of unrest as the number of COVID-19 cases soared and authorities banned visits.

Two inmates have died of the disease, and more than 1,200 guards and prisoners have been infected, officials said.

Inmates at the high-security Mahara jail outside Colombo fought with guards through Sunday night after setting fire to the kitchens and an administrative block, and taking two wardens hostage, residents and police said.

On Monday, intermittent gunfire rang out as around 800 security force members — including some 200 police commandos — retook control.

Prison Reforms Minister Sudarshini Fernandopulle said they had no choice but to open fire to prevent a break-out.

"Unfortunately, eight inmates have been killed," Fernandopulle told parliament.

"Prison authorities have moved in and taken full control, but the inmates have caused ex-



Family members of the prisoners argue with a police officer following unrest at Mahara Prison, on the outskirts of Colombo, on Monday. — Reuters

tensive damage to property."

Medical sources said 71 inmates were admitted to the nearby Ragama hospital, mostly with gunshot wounds.

"The two officers have been rescued and hospitalised," police spokesman Ajith Rohana said.

The riot at the overcrowded jail, holding nearly 10,000 prisoners, began when inmates

broke out of their cells to protest after the number of coronavirus infections passed 180, officials said.

Last week authorities banned prison visits and staff from travelling across the country as the number of cases increased.

At the same time, a prisoner was killed when he fell while trying to scale the wall of a jail in

central Bogambara region.

The number of COVID-19 deaths across Sri Lanka has increased six-fold this month to 116, while infections have more than doubled to 23,484.

The South Asian island nation of 21 million people eased a three-month curfew on June 28, but a second wave hit in October prompting tighter restrictions.

A riot at Sri Lanka's main Welikada prison in 2012 saw 27 inmates killed by police commandos, who have since been accused of execution-style murders.

UK POLICE PROBE
MERCENARIES

Meanwhile, London police said on Monday they have launched an investigation into alleged war crimes by British mercenaries who trained a security force accused of brutalising Tamil people during Sri Lanka's civil war.

The war crimes unit of the Metropolitan Police said it was acting on a referral received in March "concerning war crimes alleged to have been committed by British mercenaries in Sri Lanka during the 1980s".

"Following receipt of the referral, the War Crimes Team began a scoping exercise into the matter and have subsequently launched an investigation," it said, declining to comment further while the probe is ongoing.

The investigation concerns Keenie Meenie Services (KMS), a now-defunct private security company that trained an elite unit of the Sri Lankan police called the Special Task Force in the 1980s to fight Tamil separatists, according to the BBC. — AFP



Buddhist monks perform a ceremony to bless the crate containing Kaavan the Asian elephant upon his arrival in Cambodia on Monday. — AFP

'World's loneliest elephant' lands in Cambodia, greeted by Cher

SIEM REAP, CAMBODIA: An elephant dubbed the "world's loneliest" landed in Cambodia on Monday from Pakistan, receiving a warm welcome from American superstar Cher who will accompany him to a sanctuary housing potential mates.

The case of Kaavan — an overweight, 36-year-old bull elephant — sparked global uproar from animal rights groups, who petitioned for his move from an Islamabad zoo accused of substandard care and conditions.

His cause was boosted by a spirited social media campaign by Cher, who travelled to Pakistan to see him off.

Wearing a black face mask, the singer was on hand at Siem Reap airport and waved excitedly at the plane after it landed around 2:30 pm (0730 GMT).

"I am so proud he is here," she said, after greeting Kaavan through an opening at the base



US pop singer Cher has her facemask fixed by an assistant as she waits for Kaavan to arrive in Cambodia. — AFP

of the crate.

"He's going to be really happy here," said Cher, adding that she is hopeful his ordeal is now over.

Kaavan's much-anticipated journey was "uneventful," said Amir Khalil, a veterinarian from animal welfare group Four Paws, adding he behaved "like a frequent flyer".

"Kaavan was eating, was not

stressed — he was even a little bit sleeping, standing, leaning at the crate wall," he said.

Once the sole Asian elephant in Pakistan, Kaavan will be transported from Siem Reap to neighbouring province Oddar Meanchey where a wildlife sanctuary with about 600 other elephants will be his new home.

— AFP

New Zealand lays charges over volcano deaths



An aerial view of the Whakaari, also known as White Island volcano, in New Zealand, on December 12, 2019. — Reuters

WELLINGTON: New Zealand's workplace safety watchdog handed down criminal charges on Monday over last year's White Island volcanic eruption that claimed 22 lives and left dozens more with horrific burns.

WorkSafe had investigated why 47 people, mainly Australian tourists, were on the island in December 2019 when a column of burning ash and steam blasted from a volcanic vent.

Chief executive Phil Parkes announced charges against 10 organisations and three individuals who took tourists to the country's most active volcano just weeks after the eruption threat alert level had been raised.

"This deeply tragic event was unexpected but that does not mean it was unforeseeable," Parkes said.

"The victims, both workers and visitors alike, all had a reasonable expectation that they could go to the island knowing that the organisations involved had done all they were required to do to look after their

health and safety," he added.

Parkes refused to detail who was facing charges in case the court granted them name suppression, although the identities of some were revealed through other sources.

Two tour company operators told local media that they had been charged, while Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern announced that two government agencies were also being prosecuted.

She said the agencies are GNS Science, responsible for monitoring volcanic activity, and the National Emergency Management Authority, which handles disaster planning.

"There is no easy process here but it is the job of WorkSafe to ensure that if there are questions to be answered for them... we really need to leave it at that."

The prosecution by WorkSafe does not carry the threat of jail time for those who took tourists sightseeing on the island, with hefty fines being the maximum penalty. — AFP

Moderna requests US, Europe vaccine approvals after full results

WASHINGTON: US firm Moderna said it would file requests for emergency authorisation of its COVID-19 vaccine in the United States and Europe on Monday, after full results confirmed a high efficacy estimated at 94.1 per cent.

The highly-anticipated news comes as the US braces for a supercharged post-Thanksgiving coronavirus surge.

More than 265,000 Americans have died from the disease and 93,000 are currently hospitalised.

“We believe that our vaccine will provide a new and powerful tool that may change the course of this pandemic and help prevent severe disease, hospitalisations and death,” said the company’s CEO Stephane Bancel.

If the US Food and Drug Administration agrees it is safe and effective, the first of the drug’s two doses could be injected into the arms of millions of Americans by the middle of December.

American pharmaceutical Pfizer and Germany’s BioNTech applied for similar approvals last week, and their vaccine could be greenlit in the US shortly after December 10.

The Moderna vaccine, which was co-developed with the US National Institutes of Health, is being studied in a clinical trial with more than 30,000 partici-



A small shopping basket filled with vials labelled “COVID-19 - Coronavirus Vaccine” and a medical syringe are placed on a Moderna logo in this illustration. — Reuters

pants across the United States.

An interim analysis announced earlier this month was based on 95 patients who fell sick with COVID-19. The final analysis was based on 196 cases, 185 of which were observed in a group assigned a placebo versus 11 who received the shots.

Thirty people had severe cases — all of whom were in the placebo group — which also included one person who died.

Significantly, efficacy was uniform across age, race, ethnicity and gender, the company said.

The 196 COVID-19 cases included 33 adults over the age of 65, and 42 participants identify-

ing as being from diverse communities (including 29 Hispanic, six Black, four Asian Americans and three multiracial participants).

The vaccine was generally well tolerated, with the most common side effects including injection site pain, fatigue, muscle pain, joint pain, headache, and redness at the site. These increased in frequency and severity after the second dose in the vaccinated group.

The press statement included the line: “no new serious safety concerns have been identified by the Company” — but it did not explicitly say whether serious concerns have been flagged previously.

Outside experts welcomed the

“We believe that our vaccine will provide a new and powerful tool that may change the course of this pandemic and help prevent severe disease, hospitalisations and death

STEPHANE BANCEL
Moderna CEO

new results, particularly the absence of any severe COVID-19 cases in the vaccine group.

“Prevention of severe disease and hospitalisation can be expected to significantly reduce pressure on overstretched health services, provided that a sufficient proportion of the high risk population can be vaccinated,” said Penny Ward, a visiting professor in pharmaceutical medicine at King’s College London.

Both the Moderna and Pfizer vaccines are based on a new technology that uses mRNA (messenger ribonucleic acid) to deliver genetic material to the body that makes human cells create a protein from the virus. — AFP

Biden names top economic advisers

WILMINGTON: President-elect Joe Biden unveiled his picks for several top economic positions on Monday, including former Federal Reserve Chair Janet Yellen as his nominee for Treasury Secretary, setting the stage for a more diverse White House.

While Biden’s transition to the White House appeared to be hitting its stride, the president-elect was hobbling after fracturing his foot while playing with his dog on Saturday. The incoming administration has been hampered for weeks by President Donald Trump who has refused to concede claiming, without evidence, that Biden’s November 3 electoral victory was due to fraud. Biden named leading members of an economic team that will have to combat the crushing blows to US workers and businesses from the coronavirus pandemic.

In contrast to Trump, who largely picked white men for key positions, Biden’s early appointments were shaping up to be highly diverse, including an all-women communications team unveiled on Sunday night. Biden nominated Janet Yellen, who was the first woman to chair the Federal Reserve, as his Treasury secretary, and Adele Adeyemo, who would be the first Black deputy Treasury secretary.

Other members of his eco-



Janet Yellen, nominee for Treasury Secretary. — AFP

nomics team include Neera Tanden, chief executive of the progressive Center for American Progress think-tank, as director of the White House Budget Office, who would be the first woman of colour to lead that agency.

Biden and Vice-President-elect Kamala Harris were also set to receive their first classified presidential daily briefing on Monday, which the Trump administration had previously refused to provide.

The briefing is the first step towards transfer of responsibility for the most sensitive intelligence to a new administration. Trump, for his part, kept up his unfounded fraud claims in an interview with Fox News on Sunday and with Sunday evening Tweets that the social media service flagged as disputed. — Reuters

Inquest to probe role of air pollution in death of British girl

LONDON: The mother of a nine-year-old girl who died from acute respiratory failure after repeated asthma attacks on Monday said she hoped a coroner’s inquest would conclude that air pollution played a role in her death.

Ella Adoo-Kissi-Debrah died in February 2013 after nearly three years of repeated attacks, which saw her taken to hospital 30 times.

But a specialist in 2018 noticed a “striking link” between levels of nitrogen dioxide (NO2) and harmful particulate matter at the times she was admitted for treatment.

A ruling that air pollution was a factor in her death would be a legal first in Britain.

“I hope, and I’m keeping my fingers crossed that the coroner, after hearing all the evidence,



Ella Adoo-Kissi-Debrah who died in February 2013 from a severe asthma attack. — AFP

will come to the conclusion that air pollution either caused or contributed to her death, and that’s all I’m asking for,” Ella’s mother Rosamund said.

“I will finally have the reason why she passed away on her birth certificate,” she said.

“All children have a right to breathe cleaner air and I’ll keep on saying that because children shouldn’t die from asthma.”

The first coroner’s inquest in 2014 determined that Ella died of acute respiratory failure brought on by severe asthma. But the ruling was set aside after the specialist’s report.

The second hearing, which is due to last 10 days from Monday, will examine the levels of pollution the young girl was exposed to. The family lived less than 30 metres (100 feet) from the South Circular, a busy and regularly congested arterial road, in Lewisham, southeast London. — AFP



Protesters hold placards reading “I am a restaurant owner” as hundreds of restaurant managers or employees, pub or club tenders, or event workers protest against the sanitary measures implemented to curb the COVID-19 pandemic, on Monday in Nantes, western France. — AFP

SHORT TAKES

PARIS

Sarkozy denies all charges during corruption trial

Former French president Nicolas Sarkozy denied an array of corruption charges against him as he appeared in court on Monday, according to a report by French news agency AFP. “I don’t confess to any of these shameful charges, with which people have been pursuing me for six years,” he said, in his first public statement on the matter. Sarkozy and his long-time attorney Thierry Herzog stand accused of corruption and influence-peddling, based on an alleged attempt to bribe Gilbert Azibert, a



prosecutor, in 2014 to get secret information about a separate investigation concerning campaign financing. The trial began last week, but stalled initially while the courts sought a medical opinion on whether Azibert was fit to attend.

WASHINGTON

Biden fractures foot playing with dog

US president-elect Joe Biden has a foot fracture and will likely have to wear a medical boot, his team said on Sunday after the 78-year-old was taken to the doctor because he had slipped while playing with his dog. Biden, who will become the oldest US president upon his January swearing-in, suffered the injury on Saturday with Major, one of his two German shepherds. The president-elect’s personal physician Kevin O’Connor initially said x-rays had not uncovered any “obvi-



ous fracture”, but added that an additional CT scan would still be done. That scan “confirmed hairline (small) fractures... in the mid-foot,” O’Connor said in a subsequent statement released by Biden’s office. — AFP

LONDON

Scotland’s Sturgeon hints at legal move

Scotland’s First Minister Nicola Sturgeon on Monday declined to rule out a new vote for Scottish independence next year and hinted she might go to court for permission to hold one if London tried to block it. Scots rejected independence in 2014 but Brexit and the British government’s handling of the COVID-19 crisis have bolstered support for secession, with most polls showing a majority now favour breaking up the United Kingdom.

Elections to Scotland’s de-



volved parliament will take place in May, and Sturgeon’s Scottish National Party (SNP) is expected to perform strongly, which it argues would be a mandate for another independence referendum. — Reuters

Keeping fear at bay...

A long weekend with a vacation and guess what, the flu hits.

The season is changing and flu could be expected, but it is 2020 and that means even a sneeze makes everyone to freeze in their path. So let alone plan for a weekend. The main reason being it is the year of the pandemic and the year has come in with elements of fear.

Stay isolated was the first advice. So that meant settled in with typical medication, along with steaming, hot water, turmeric, lemon, ginger and other herbs while watching each day of the long weekend pass by. Staying in isolation is ideal to have self talk and plenty of it leads you to that area that has been pretty alert lately — fear of the unknown.

We have been masked for a while and the sanitizing gel is at hand's reach yet the lingering concern. Three days pass by with the thought of the scary name of something larger than a flu with family and friends asking, "Can you taste and smell?" With so many rounds of questioning, the self doubts began. Boredom led to painting nails, and the question popped, "could I smell the polish?" While sniffing it and wondering, a thought in the head urged me to remember, "Your nose is blocked."

Never noted before whether a nose block could prevent one from smelling



Lakshmi Kothaneth
lakshmiobserver@gmail.com

THE BEST WAY IS
TO STAY MASKED
AND KEEP HANDS
SANITIZED,
UNTIL THE DAYS
OF NORMALCY
COME BACK

the nail polish. Never was bothered to find out earlier. But now it is the focal point. What about taste? The mind responded again, "You have been drinking too many hot fluids and the taste buds are literally on a break"

And that is when the doctor suggested, "Why take a chance? Why don't you take a test at the airport?"

The suggestion moved into thought and soon the thought was materialising into action. Petrified of directions, a friend sent in the details on how to get there. Was happy to see the streetlights and decorations again, but the closer we got to the COVID-19 testing centre the butterflies in the stomach started to flutter their wings. Suddenly was unable to neither notice nor read sign boards. The friendly people at the parking said go to the drive through number one, sure enough lands up in drive through number 2, reverses back when the same man who was talking had reached number one and waved.

"I told you number one, there is another car there", he said. Yes the maroon car was there all the time and I replied, "Could not see the number" The only thing that was on the mind was the swab test. How painful would it be?

Was lucky to have the gentlest of nurses and probably she could read eyes and mind from behind her

mask and facial screen because she completed the procedure with great care compared to the last time (a few years ago when I had pneumonia) I was almost pricked in my nose. The nurse was just beginning her career and I was not a great patient.

The drive back was delightful again with the lights and decorations. The next day family and friends were anxious again, but I reminded them that it takes 24 hours. They corrected me, "within 24 hours not after 24 hours."

So the website accessed and there was a flashback of waiting for high school results and university grades. The tests we have to go through in life!

Read the result again and again to understand what it meant, 'not-detected'.

The relief is tremendous and made me realise the amount of anxiety each person goes through every time they sneeze and catch cold during the pandemic.

It just makes one wonder how important it might be to have help lines where health experts can guide the public.

The anxiety and stress alone could cause much damage. Our fear of the unknown and the fear based on our previous experiences make us vulnerable.

PANDEMIC MOTORS

Europeans snap up old cars to avoid public transport

NICK CAREY AND INTI LANDAURO

Want a cheap used car to nip around town without running the gauntlet of coronavirus on public transport? Welcome to Pandemic Motors, we have just what you need. Across Europe, people are snapping up old bangers, clunkers, Klapperkasten, tacots and catorci, desperate to avoid buses and trains but wary of splashing out on a shiny new motor in uncertain economic times.

"Public transportation is terrific here, but with the Covid and all that, it's better to avoid it," said Robert Perez, who recently moved to Spain's capital Madrid from Argentina. On the hunt for work, Perez, a 33-year-old automotive engineer, bought a red 2001 Seat Toledo for 2,000 euros (\$2,370) from OcasiónPlus, a Spanish used car firm that has opened four new dealerships since the lockdown due to soaring demand.

Data provided by research firm IHS Markit and online car market AutoScout24 showed there has been a marked upward shift in registrations of older cars across Europe, as well as a spike in internet searches for ageing vehicles.

The surge in interest in used cars is neither good news for struggling mass transit networks nor the environment as dirty old cars appear to be more in demand than new electric vehicles. In the longer term, however, the shift away from public transport towards "individual mobility" in the pandemic era is expected to help carmakers, hit by a 27 per cent slump in new vehicle sales across Europe in the first 10 months of 2020.

At Nawaie Motoring's crammed lot in the west London suburb of Hayes, General Manager Ameen Sultani points out the older cars selling for under £3,000 (\$3,985) that are in demand. He said prices for the cars, mostly over a decade old, have jumped by 25 per cent as buyers who used to take trains and buses look for affordable alternatives.

"Anything under £3,000 has sold very quickly and is very hard to replace in our inventory because everyone is chasing the same vehicles", Sultani said.

"Most of them have bought because they wanted to avoid public transport."

Stronger than expected demand for new cars in the United States, Europe and especially China in recent months has helped major automakers recover to some extent from the financial blows pandemic lockdowns delivered in the spring. But an analysis of car registration data in France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Switzerland and the United Kingdom conducted for Reuters by IHS Markit also shows there's a significant shift towards older, used vehicles.

In France, for example, the IHS analysis showed used car registrations rose nearly 16 per cent in the third quarter while new vehicle sales fell more than 5 per cent. It also showed that in 2020 so far, vehicles over 15 years old made up a higher proportion of used car registrations than in 2019.

"It's fair to say in the time of corona that the amount of vehicles older than 15 years has increased versus prior years", said Bjoern Huetter, an associate product director at IHS. There was an even bigger jump in Spain, with used car registrations up nearly 25 per cent, according to the IHS analysis Cristian Lopez, 34, is another buyer in Spain who went for the cheaper second-hand option, partly thanks to having saved some money during the country's strict lockdown.

— Reuters

DISTINCT NATIONS

One year later, EU duo yet to convince on many issues

FRANÇOISE MICHEL

Running the European Union is no simple matter and the duo at the head of the bloc of 27 very distinct nations has struggled mightily to have their voices heard.

It is one of the EU's peculiarities that its leadership is composed of two people, sometimes to the bemusement of other heads of state and governments meeting at international summits or events.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and EU Council President Charles Michel took office a year ago — but there was no honeymoon period to find their footing, as they were engulfed within months by the coronavirus pandemic.

"The beginning of the pandemic was very poor, devastating for both of them", said Rosa Balfour, a director at Carnegie Europe, of the pair's performance in the unexpected crisis. Between chaos at closed internal borders or unilateral export bans on medical equipment, the continent gave an unfortunate image of selfish disunity as countries chose national interest over European spirit.

The two leaders were helpless against these my-country-first instincts, causing fury in Italy, which was the first and hardest hit by the virus as their EU partners looked on in silence. As thousands died in northern Italy's overwhelmed hospitals, a visit by the two leaders would have been essential, said Yves Bertoncini, European affairs consultant. "They missed a golden opportunity."

In their defence, the very nature of EU leadership makes it difficult for the



European Commission President Ursula Von Der Leyen (L) and European Council President Charles Michel at the end of the news conference at the European Council in Brussels, Belgium. — AFP

THE TWO WERE
HELPLESS AGAINST
THESE MY-
COUNTRY-FIRST
INSTINCTS, CAUSING
FURY IN ITALY

top officials to shine.

Both are unelected and chosen by the EU's 27 national leaders, who hold the real cards of power in Brussels, and they are rarely household names to average European voters. But, when things go wrong, national politicians are quick to blame Brussels — at the risk of feeding the euroscepticism that, in the case of Britain, snowballed into a full-blown EU divorce.

In April, former German defence minister von der Leyen apologised to Italy and much of the next months was devoted to making up for the EU's shortcomings in those first crucial days. This came thanks to Chancellor Angela Merkel who, at the urging of

France, reversed a long-held German position to propose a massive stimulus plan that would be paid for by EU-wide borrowing.

At a historic four-day summit in July, the other EU chief, former Belgian prime minister Michel, corralled the 27 leaders into accepting a 1.2 trillion euro (\$1.4 trillion) recovery and budget plan, defying strong opposition.

With that package, von der Leyen won more influence "in the cathedral of the EU", said Balfour.

It will be her commission, the EU's executive arm, that will dispatch the money to members, making key decisions on Europe's economic recovery. — AFP

sport

HM FOOTBALL CUP
CONTRIBUTES IN DEVELOPMENT OF SOCCER



OMAN OBSERVER
www.omanobserver.om
follow us: @observersportz



Dhofar celebrate HM Cup triumph

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, NOV 30

The Oman Football Association (OFA) concluded the longest 2019/2020 season on a successful note.

The season ended with crowning Dhofar as champions of the HM Cup after they edged their opponents Al Oruba in a penalty shootout 5-4 after a goalless draw in the regulation and extra time to lift their ninth title in style.

The triumph of Salalah giant levelled them with Fanja's record of nine titles. Coach Rasheed Jaber's men added another accomplishment to the team this season after their Super Cup victory in September 2020.

Dhofar fans celebrated on Sunday near the headquarters of the club inside vehicles. Dhofar players will arrive on Tuesday to Salalah and due to the current situation of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, there will not be any kind of gathering or celebrations.

Shaikh Ali bin Ahmed al Rawas, the chairman of Dhofar club, expressed his joy after claiming



the prestigious title. "One of the objectives that I would like to achieve during my chairmanship at Dhofar is registering the record and reaching the tenth title of the HM Cup. I hope we can accomplish this dream in the following season," he added.

The chief of Dhofar club said this season was exceptional and very lengthy due to the ongoing

COVID-19 pandemic. "Despite the obstacles, the team managed to win the HM Cup title. I was following up personally all the small details including the admin and technical staff to prevent any mistakes could happen. This was one of the supported factors to have this success," he ended.

Salalah based star and former national team player Hani al

One of the objectives that I would like to achieve during my chairmanship at Dhofar is registering the record and reaching the tenth title of the HM Cup. I hope we can accomplish this dream in the following season

SHAIKH ALI BIN AHMED AL RAWAS
Dhofar Club chairman

Dhabit affirmed that Dhofar was awaiting this title since 2011.

"The coveted cup came in a right time after team's missed the league title and positioned in as runner up. A dedicated thanks to all the technical, admin and Dhofar heroes and another special thanks to the chairman for their top contribution and efforts," he said.

AWAITED TITLE

The experienced national head coach of Dhofar, Rasheed Jaber, stated that the HM Cup was one of our top targets for the team this season.

"The coveted cup was vital to us more than the league competition and HM Cup is ranked as top domestic competition. Obviously, league is another crucial competition but this edition of the HM Cup was targeted by all the local teams and we managed to lift the title," he added.

Commenting on his messages to the players during the regulation and extra time breaks, Coach Rasheed responded: "I informed the players during the break that they are the best and have the right technical capability and ability to end the match. We reserve the title.

This message translated very well by the players. On the other hand, Al Oruba was a very tough opponent especially they entered the game to escape their relegation to the first division league and end the season with the HM Cup title."

TOP ASSIGNMENT

Dhofar striker Qasim Said pointed out that the coveted cup was the top domestic assignment for the team this season.

"During the previous technical staff led by the Tunisian coach Ayman al Zulfani, then the Egyptian coach Mohammed Azeemah and now with coach Rasheed Jaber, the plan was to lift the HM Cup title besides other aims. The team succeeded to clinch the title of the showpiece event," he said.

Commenting after the team played with reduced number of players in second half, "I was confident that we will not suffer and can return to the match. We have the right experienced players who had played in many finals and that supported us to manage winning the title," he concluded.

Dhofar player Lopez Hugo said that this glittering trophy that needed by the team. "We managed to win this crucial title and it came in the right time. We were very enthusiastic for this victory and finally it happened. My teammates delivered fantastic final game and we reserve this title," he ended



‘Perfection is a goal, not at any price’

BERLIN: The strive for perfection is part of the job for Liverpool manager Juergen Klopp but the German has said that it must not come at any price.



Arteta not worried about his job

LONDON: Arsenal’s fifth Premier League defeat of the season dropped them to 14th on Sunday but manager Mikel Arteta said he is not worried about losing his job.



Wolves ‘pray’ for Jimenez recovery

LONDON: Wolves captain Connor Coady said he is praying teammate Raul Jimenez will make a full recovery after he was taken to hospital with a head injury during his side’s win.

GCC Olympic Committees’ 32nd meeting held

MUSCAT: Sayyid Khalid bin Hamad Al Busaidy, Oman Olympic Committee (OOC) chairman, headed the Sultanate’s delegation yesterday, Monday, at the thirty-second meeting of GCCOlympic Committees States via video call, in the presence of Sheikh Saif bin Hilal Al Hosni, OOC Vice Chairman, and Taha bin Sulaiman al Koshari, OOC Secretary-General, and Saada Bint Salem al Ismailiya, Board Member.

The meeting came out with many important decisions that will contribute to promoting joint sports work among the GCC countries.

The heads of the Gulf Olympic Committees decided to assign the formed work team to prepare a strategic plan for developing joint work in the sports field.

It will do that by taking advantage of the unified advisory system issued by the Supreme

Council, the general directions and principles and the executive plan for joint work in the field of volunteer work, which was approved by their Excellencies and Ministers of Social Affairs in the GCC countries.

With regard to the Gulf Sports Dispute Resolution Commission, the heads of the GCC Committees decided to form the Board of Trustees of the Gulf Sports Dispute Resolution Commission with expertise and competence to whom the conditions mentioned in the statute of the Authority meet.

The Olympic Committees in the Council countries to provide the General Secretariat with the names of its candidates in the Board of Trustees, and to activate the headquarters of the authority in Bahrain, and approval of the appointment of Dr Abdulrahman bin Rashid al Khashram as its Executive

Director.

The presidents also approved the mandate of GCC Olympic Committees to implement the recommendations contained in the unified vision to enhance sports practice among all segments of society, and urged national sports federations to support and sponsor school sports competitions, and recommend taking into account the mechanism by which physical education classes are dealt with in schools in the GCC countries in order to develop the practical aspects are on the theoretical side in these lessons.

The attendees agreed on a strategic plan to develop joint work in the sports field, provided that its implementation would start next year for a period of five years. They also approved the formation of a working group headed by Taha bin Sulaiman al Kishri, OOC Secretary-General

and a member of the Executive Office to follow up on the implementation of the plan and lay down the general framework for implementation and submit periodic reports explaining the progress of work in their implementation.

It was agreed to include equestrian sport (free jumping competition) and winter games (hockey competition) as part of the optional games in the third Gulf Sports Games to be held in Kuwait during the period from 7 to 17 March 2021, and for the Kuwait Olympic Committee to integrate the competitions of the Sports Games the third GCC Beach Games with the Gulf Sports Games to be in one tournament, and exceptionally for this session, with a number of sports games added to it: beach soccer, beach handball, 3x3 beach basketball, beach volleyball, and jet ski.

Mehta bowls Renaissance to victory

MUSCAT: Renaissance started its Premier Division 50-over League campaign on a winning note, handing AER a 133-run drubbing thanks to Yash Mehta’s match-winning 4 for 11 at Oman Cricket Turf 1 in Amerat on Saturday.

Abdul Rauf (64) and Shubo Pal (62) struck attractive half-centuries while Mehta made useful 26 as Renaissance collected 247 all out in 50 overs. Old fox Ghazanfar Iqbal was AER’s most successful bowlers, taking 4 for 42 while Abdus Rubella claimed 2 for 30.

Mehta made life difficult for AER, causing early setbacks that led to the whole side getting dismissed for a paltry 114 in the 37th over. Asif Khan and Mohammed Bilal bowled well too, taking two wickets each. Only Imran Rijvi made a notable contribution with the bat, scoring a defiant 34 off 57.



16 overs. Shareef al Balushi also bowled well, taking 2 for 25.

BRIEF SCORES (B Division): Oct Seeb 192 all out in 29.4 overs (Salim al Balushi 44 – 4x4, 1x6, Asif al Balushi 36 - 4x4, Shareef al Balushi 33 – 4x4, Zakir Khan 5-35, Uday Pisharody 3-25) trounced PDO RC 88 all out in 15.3 overs (Javed Iqbal 18 – 4x4, Younis Murad 5-21, Shareef al Balushi 2-25) by 104 runs.

OC set to have record number of qualified umpires

MUSCAT: As part of building world-class cricket infrastructure Oman Cricket added another set of highly qualified match officials to its growing pool of umpires with as many as 17 contenders attending the Asian Cricket Council certified Level Two Umpires Course at Al Falaj Hotel.

On successful passing of all the umpires who attended the course, Oman Cricket would have a record number of Level Two umpires among the ICC Associate Countries in the region.

By organizing the higher qualification course Oman Cricket has achieved yet another landmark in the field of training umpires. The course was single-handedly presented by AR Srinivasan, the only ACC certified Level Two Umpires Educator in the country, earning another feather in the cap.

The full-day course, lasting for four days, from the November 25 to 28, had 17 certified Level One Oman Cricket umpires aiming to obtain the Level Two certification which would qualify them to officiate in the higher levels of the domestic and international tournaments.

Varied topics relating to umpiring at highest levels were covered in the classroom sessions the first three days followed by a written exam and on-field exam on the last day.

Injured Warner a doubt for India Tests, Short called up for T20s

SYDNEY: Star opening batsman David Warner faces a battle to be fit for the India Test series after Cricket Australia said Monday he will miss the last one-day international and the three-match Twenty20 series next month.

Warner limped out of Sunday’s one-day international against India after straining his groin while fielding as Australia secured the series 2-0 in Sydney.

After typically swashbuckling innings of 83 on Sunday, Warner fell awkwardly and had to be helped from the field.

Warner will miss Wednesday’s final ODI and all three Twenty20 internationals beginning Friday in Canberra to undergo rehab in an effort to ready for the Test series which begins on December 17 in

Adelaide.

Opening batsman D’Arcy Short has been called up to the Twenty20 international squad as a replacement.

Cricket Australia also announced that leading pace bowler Pat Cummins will be rested for the remainder of the white-ball matches against India, putting pressure on an out-of-form Mitchell Starc.

“Pat and Davie are critical to our plans for the Test Series,” head coach Justin Langer said.

“Davie will work through his injury rehab and in Pat’s case it is important all of our players are managed well to keep them mentally and physically fit throughout what is a challenging summer.

“The priority for both is being fully prepared for one of the biggest and most important

home Test Series we have played in recent years, especially with World Test Championship points up for grabs.”

‘Massive confidence’

While Warner played an important role in Australia’s ODI series win, the hosts have no shortage of talented batters who could replace him.

Left-hander Short was the Twenty20 Big Bash League’s leading run-scorer in 2017-18 and 2018-19.

Rising star Will Pucovski is also waiting in the wings, with Test greats such as Michael Clarke, Ian Chappell and Mark Waugh all backing the 22-year-old’s cause.

Marnus Labuschagne, who scored 70 in Sunday’s ODI, said he was ready to move up the order into Warner’s opening spot.

— AFP

Classy Cavani no longer looks like a ‘panic buy’

MANCHESTER, England: When Edinson Cavani joined Manchester United on transfer deadline day in October it was widely described as a “panic signing” with the 33-year-old’s arrival viewed as a desperate deal by a club who had failed to get their main targets.

But after his outstanding performance at Southampton on Sunday, coming on at the break to create one goal and score two, including the late winner in a 3-2 comeback, the Uruguayan looks far from the washed-up player

some suspected he might be. His goals were superbly taken, his movement in the box won plaudits from his manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer and many observers and, even though it had only been 45 minutes, he looked far from a player past his sell-by date.

“For me, he’s one of those strikers that can smell the goal, as you saw twice,” said United midfielder Bruno Fernandes.

“He smelt the goal, you need to have this feeling to score these two goals. As I said some weeks and some months ago, Edi will help us



Manchester United’s Edinson Cavani celebrates scoring their second goal. – Reuters

and he is helping already.”

The question marks over Cavani were certainly justified though. He was available on a free transfer — and had been throughout the close season — and many wondered why, if he really was a player United wanted, they had not signed him shortly after he left Paris St Germain.

The suspicion was that after failing to get Norway striker Erling Haaland in the January window and then ultimately being unable to pull off a deal for his Borussia Dortmund team-mate — Reuters



Tottenham Hotspur's Steven Bergwijn in action with Chelsea's Reece James.
— Reuters

Defensive Tottenham go top after draw

ANDY JALIL
LONDON: This eagerly-awaited fixture between two of the top teams produced a goalless draw, for the first time since November 2015, but it was enough to see Spurs lead the Premier League. Neither they, nor their opponents Chelsea, were prepared to take any chances in maintaining their unbeaten run, with Spurs currently on nine and Chelsea on eight in the league. Spurs manager Jose Mourinho said: “We came here to win but we didn’t because the opponent defensively was very good. They didn’t take risks, they were solid.

They didn’t project many players in attack like they normally do.” Despite their elevated positions, both managers played down their chances of eventually winning the league and indulged in mind games. They were fully aware of each other’s tactics with Frank Lampard, having been a player under Mourinho during his days as manager at Chelsea. Mourinho went on to say: “They know how powerful they are and the squad that they have and they know that this is a long season. We are not even in the race. We are not a horse, we’re just a pony. They are one of the

“**We came here to win but we didn’t because the opponent defensively was very good. They didn’t take risks, they were solid. They didn’t project many players in attack like they normally do.”**

JOSE MOURINHO
Tottenham Hotspur manager

biggest contenders, there is no doubt about that.” He added: “The one thing that I take from the game is that a draw here normally is a positive result. To stay top of the league with that result is also positive.” Lampard immediately countered Mourinho’s claim: “Jose can say how he sees it but, if we are contenders then they have to be. Any team with Harry Kane and Son Heung-min in it would expect to be in the race. They had Gareth Bale on the bench and Dele Alli wasn’t even here, so they have plenty of quality in their squad.”

Lampard added: “We dominated large parts of the game and did really well to nullify their counter-attacking threat. It was what we expected from them because we know the style of their manager and how they tend to play. There was only one team trying to win it at the end.” With Spurs employing defensive tactics throughout and Chelsea to a lesser extent, there were not many shots on target by either side. The number of times there were 11 Spurs jerseys in a defensive third of the field was eye-catching if not surprising. Spurs did miss two early chances

when after nine minutes Bergwijn took a pass from Kane but shot over the bar and six minutes later Edouard Mendy saved a ferocious shot by Serge Aurier. For Chelsea Timo Werner had the ball in the net within ten minutes of the start but was unlucky to be fractionally off-side and later Hugo Lloris had to dive full-length to palm-off a powerful, deflected drive from Mason Mount. Two minutes into injury time a poor back pass to Spur’s goalkeeper gave substitute Olivier Giroud a great chance for a late winner but he lobbed the ball into Lloris’ arms.

business

MUSCAT
STOCK
MARKET

3,643.52

CRUDE
OIL PRICE

Oman Crude \$47.85

Brent Crude \$47.76

Light Crude \$45.20

OMAN OBSERVER

www.omanobserver.om

follow us: @oman_biz

For the first time in the Sultanate,
BankDhofar introduces the PaySticker

Now you do not have to worry about forgetting your debit card. Place the sticker on your mobile phone and use it to pay by tapping your mobile phone on the POS machine.*

*The maximum payment via the PaySticker is OMR 40 per transaction, OMR 100 per day.

For more information
<https://www.bankdhofar.com/en-GB/PaySticker.aspx>

مرور وادفع
بنانية
Tap & Pay
in 1 second

بنك ظفار
BankDhofar

the best bank for you 24/7 011 www.bankdhofar.com

Terms & conditions apply

AXA to sell GCC insurance operations



BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, NOV 30

AXA, one of the largest global insurers, announced on Monday that it has entered into an agreement with Gulf Insurance Group (GIG) to sell its insurance operations in the Gulf region, which includes its shareholding in AXA Gulf, AXA Cooperative Insurance Company and AXA Green Crescent Insurance Company.

GIG is a leading insurer in the Gulf region, strengthened by the global footprint and insurance expertise of Fairfax, a financial holding company headquartered in Toronto, Canada, as well as the regional market knowledge of KIPCO, its shareholders.

As part of the transaction, Yusuf Bin Ahmed Kanoo (YBA Kanoo), one of the largest conglomerates in the Gulf Region, will also sell its shareholding in AXA Gulf and in AXA Cooperative Insurance Company.

“Myself and the management team of AXA in the Gulf region are delighted that our new investors have a strong commitment and established footprint in the region through GIG complemented by the global Insurance brand of Fairfax,” said Paul Adamson, Chief Executive Officer of AXA Gulf.

“We are confident that this investment will enable us to build on our success story, further expand our product offering and enhance the quality of services to customers, partners and our employees.

Our cultures are closely aligned, with experienced leadership teams and successful long term partnerships focused on protecting what matters most for our individual and corporate customers.

This new and promising chapter in our story of 70 years in the region will create more value as we become one of the largest players in GCC.”

Oman taps leading French firm to support mega fisheries hub at Duqm

STRATEGIC VENTURE: Diverse expertise of SEM Lorient Keroman will contribute in the delivery of a first-of-its-kind integrated fisheries port and industrial fisheries hub in the Sultanate

CONRAD PRABHU
[@conradprabhu](https://twitter.com/conradprabhu)

The operator of one of France’s busiest fisheries ports has been chosen by an Omani-led consortium to lend its formidable expertise in the development and operation of a mega fisheries hub at the Special Economic Zone (SEZ) in Duqm.

SEM Lorient-Keroman, which operates the Lorient-Keroman fishing port in the Brittany Region of France, oversees an integrated operation that goes beyond the mere handling of fishing vessels.

The estimated 275 companies operating within the port specialise in fisheries marketing, processing, exports, fish breeding, R&D, ship repair, marine services, logistics, and related services.

It is this wealth of expertise that the state-led consortium will be looking to harness by roping in SEM Lorient Keroman in the delivery of a first-of-its-kind integrated fisheries port and fisheries industrial hub at Duqm.

Heading the consortium is Fisheries Development Oman (FDO), the fisheries sector investment and development arm of Oman Investment Authority (OIA), with equity stakes also held by Oman Food Investment Holding Company (OFIC), Al



(Lorient-Keroman fisheries port in France)

The multipurpose fisheries port on Oman’s southeast coast is expected to be biggest of its kind in the Sultanate, anchoring a fisheries industrial hub that will attract investments across the fisheries value chain, as well as in related maritime activities.

Wusta Fisheries Company, Oman Fisheries Company, and Port of Duqm. The multinational alliance has committed to investing \$130 million in the development of the multipurpose fisheries port at Duqm.

In tapping SEM Lorient-Keroman, the consortium will be looked to replicate the French port’s considerable success in Duqm as

well. The multipurpose fisheries port on Oman’s southeast coast is expected to be biggest of its kind in the Sultanate, anchoring a fisheries industrial hub that will attract investments across the fisheries value chain, as well as in related maritime activities.

As many as 280 fishing vessels of all sizes use the Lorient Keroman port as a base for their operations, particularly to auction their fresh catch of fish.

The estimated 26,000 tonnes of fresh fish landed every year are supplemented by volumes shipped in from other regions of France and elsewhere around Europe for processing at the port’s string of plants.

A total of 80,000 tonnes of processed seafood flows through the port annually.

An integral part of the French port is a ship repair yard catering to a wide range of fishing vessels, as well as leisure boats and modest size marine vessels – a model that is proposed to be replicated in the Duqm hub as well.

Wholly state-owned Fisheries Development Oman (FDO), the lead partner in the consortium, is already the biggest investor in the Sultanate’s fisheries sector.

Created earlier this year out of the consolidation of Blue Waters LLC, Al Wusta Fishery Industries, and Oceanic Shrimp Aquaculture LLC, FDO has pledged to invest around RO 625 million in an array of fisheries projects, including aquaculture, shrimp farming and tuna fishing initiatives, as well as the development of a modern fleet of fishing vessels.

Misfat Al Abriyeen heritage tourism project completed

NEW LANDMARK: Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, Al Misfat Al Ahlia Co and Bank Muscat announce the completion of the Old Misfat Heritage Project

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, NOV 30

As part of 50th National Day celebrations, the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism and Bank Muscat announced the successful completion of the Misfat Al Abriyeen heritage tourism project. The landmark tourism development project in Misfat Al Abriyeen in the Wilayat of Al Hamra was initiated in 2019 by the Bank in line with its commitment to partnership in sustainable development and promotion of national goals.

The virtual opening ceremony was held under the auspices of Eng Ibrahim Said al Kharousi, Under-Secretary of Heritage Affairs at the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism and attended by Shaikh Waleed K al Hashar, Chief Executive Officer, Bank Muscat and a number of senior officials.

The Misfat heritage tourism project



This unique tourism project highlights a sustainable development model that benefits local communities and strengthens the country’s environment and cultural heritage

was completed on the basis of a study originally commissioned by the bank, following a detailed study by ArChiam, the interdisciplinary architecture forum at the University of Liverpool, UK.

This unique tourism project highlights a sustainable development model that benefits local communities and strengthens the country’s environment and cultural heritage.

Based on international specifications, it included the restoration of the main gate of Misfat Al Abriyeen by preserving its original features. The restoration of a number of old mud houses was also done so as to set up a restaurant to serve authentic Omani cuisine to visitors. Vehicle parking facilities, a tourist information centre and office, a souvenir shop and signage leading to the tourist spots were also developed as part of the project.

The project will give a significant boost to heritage tourism and help in the sustainable development of Al Hamra and the surrounding areas. It will be operated by the Al Misfat Al Ahlia Company, a local SME set up by young

Omani entrepreneurs, in line with the government’s vision to develop SMEs.

Ibrahim al Kharousi, Under-Secretary of Heritage Affairs, said: “The project of developing the old Misfat village was successfully completed with great cooperation and partnership between the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism and Bank Muscat. It is a wonderful boost to heritage tourism in the country and will preserve the architectural and cultural heritage of Oman. The old Misfat village, which is noted for its location and pristine views, was restored meticulously and with great effort by preserving its original features and architecture.”

Shaikh Waleed al Hashar, CEO, Bank Muscat, said: “We are very pleased to inaugurate the landmark Misfat Al Abriyeen project, which has greatly contributed to the further development of Public-Private partnership. The bank has been keenly implementing many sustainable programmes and activities in line with its social responsibility. We would particularly like to thank the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism and the implementation team for their support.”



Oil buyers in Asia look to Middle East crudes



DAN COLOVER

Oil buyers in Asia are increasingly turning to heavy sour crude oil grades from the Middle East, which as a result, have seen their value increase relative to light sweet crudes.

Oil markets have witnessed unique demand destruction in 2020 due to the coronavirus pandemic, with S&P Global Platts Analytics forecasting that consumption will drop by 8.5 million b/d this year, leaving the global Dated Brent oil price in the upper \$30s to lower \$40s/b range.

However, crude grades are not homogenous and there are hundreds of different types, each with their own qualities and characteristics.

Typically, the value of a grade of crude oil is defined by the underlying value of the products that are made when it is refined.

The refinery yields of different



crude grades and underlying refinery economics are critical in analysing the competitiveness of competing crudes in big consuming markets, such as Asia.

The international market has settled on using certain benchmarks, against which the value of crudes is measured.

Values for Platts Dubai, the Middle East sour crude benchmark assessment, have been supported in recent weeks by the ongoing tightness in the sour crude complex. Platts Dubai rose to a 1 cent/b premium to Cash Brent at the Singapore market close on

November 9.

This means that the market is valuing sour Middle Eastern crude above North Sea sweet crude, which the Brent benchmark reflects. By contrast, in 2019 Platts Dubai was assessed at a 74 cents/b discount to Cash Brent at the Singapore close.

The market has seen a combination of strong buying interest from Asian refiners — buoyed by a resurgence in the region's major economies, especially India and China — and production cuts from the so-called Opec+ grouping of producer nations.

The refinery yields of different crude grades and underlying refinery economics are critical in analysing the competitiveness of competing crudes in big consuming markets, such as Asia.

crude has picked up against a backdrop of improving domestic gasoline margins.

Opec and its alliance have managed to keep to high levels of output compliance in recent months, with some member countries even contributing to overcompliance as they have looked to recover previous slippage in their quotas.

The most recent Platts Opec+ survey for October shows that the Opec+10 non-Opec alliance members produced 34.40 million b/d in October, reflecting 100.2 per cent compliance with their quotas.

Meanwhile, Western benchmarks — Brent and WTI — remain under pressure from poor refining margins, linked to weak refined product demand due to ongoing lockdowns and reduced movement across the Western Hemisphere.

In Europe, news of second-

wave coronavirus lockdowns across much of the continent in October and November sent further shockwaves through crude markets, but the consequences on fundamentals have been notably different from those seen in the spring.

The dominant reason for this has been that same resurgence in crude demand from Chinese and Indian refiners seeking a mix of West African and Mediterranean sweet crudes, which are providing economic options for those buyers.

While values for the Platts Dated Brent benchmark have found some support solace following reports of effective coronavirus vaccines, prices remain fundamentally weak as oil product demand remains stuck on the back foot.

Oil markets are still vulnerable — and on a net basis, Platts Analytics sees oil demand in 2021 being lower than that of 2019.

However, there will be winners and losers, and the premium of Platts Dubai to other major oil benchmarks highlights the extent that heavier sourer grades of crude from the Middle East are in strong demand from buyers in Asia in a two-tier recovery. *[The writer is Head of Middle East Structured Market Engagement, S&P Global Platts]*

Sohar Port and Oman Sail launch Sohar works programme



BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, NOV 30

Sohar Port and Freezone, in collaboration with its tenants, kicked-off the Sohar Works Graduate Development Programme through Zoom.

Launched under the patronage of Dr Mahad bin Said Baowain, Minister of Labour, the programme stems from the commitment of Sohar to support the development of a strong Omani workforce, provide relevant training and increase the generation of job opportunities. This initiative is organised together with the Ministry of Labour and will be managed by Oman Sail.

Commenting on the launch of Sohar Works, Omar Mahmood al Mahrizi, CEO of Sohar Freezone — DCEO of Sohar Port, said, “At Sohar, we strive to play our part in contributing towards the efforts of the Omani government to generate job opportunities for the youth, in line with the objectives of the Oman Vision 2040. With the support of our tenants,

this initiative will enable us to create an interactive business environment by providing the youth in the local community with a first-hand experience at our complex.

Additionally, they can also develop the required skills and enhance their knowledge, which will be viable for their careers in the future.”

The ‘Sohar Works’ programme has been structured to combine the efforts of relevant employment entities and Sohar Port and Freezone tenants, to create the foundation of enabling the national workforce to fill job vacancies in the respective companies. The graduates will be a part of a one-year comprehensive development programme conducted in three stages, comprising of seven weeks of behavioural competency development with Zimam, five weeks of technical training with the International Maritime College Oman (IMCO) and 40 weeks of on-the-job training with the above-mentioned companies.

Agreements signed for construction of vocational training workshop buildings

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, NOV 30

The Ministry of Energy and Minerals (MEM) and the Ministry of Social Development (MoSD) have launched the construction project of vocational training workshops at the Al Wafa Centres. This is part of MEM's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative in cooperation with the oil and gas producing companies.

A contract agreement to build one of the workshops at the Al Wafa Centre in Salalah was signed between the MoSD, the winning contractor (Bin Dablan Projects) and Petroleum Development Oman (PDO), who will be managing the construction contract on behalf of the six oil and gas operating companies (Occidental Oman, BP Oman, OQ, Daleel Petroleum, and CC Energy Development).

PDO had signed a contract for building the second vocational



training workshop at Al Rustaq earlier this week with (Nasaym Balad Sayt Alalamya) and is expecting to sign contracts for the remaining two locations next year to maximise the number of beneficiaries from this initiative.

These are the first two of four similar workshops sponsored under the MEM's initiative

aiming to oversee and highlight CSR efforts across the oil and gas sector, align these efforts by the operating companies and provide the necessary guidance to enhance sustainability and social responsibility.

The project includes building four workshops at Salalah, Al Rustaq, Nizwa, and Al Mudhaibi

to help people with special needs at Al Wafa Centres to learn and develop their vocational skills to further assist in creating future employment opportunities.

Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Energy and Minerals said: “Our commitment towards the community continues by providing support in various aspects of life and across the Country in a partnership with the Communities where we operate and the Society at large. We believe in inclusiveness of all segments of the society, and are working with our operating companies on this CSR initiative, which reflects this commitment. These training workshops will provide the disabled with the necessary environment and develop their skills so that they can be productive and integral members of our collective society. It gives us great pleasure and pride to serve this important part of our society.”

PRESS RELEASES

NLG WINS AIWA AWARD FOR BEST PERFORMING COMPANY

National Life and General Insurance Co SAOG (NLG) has won the award as the #1 Best Performing Company in Large Cap Segment 2020 and S Venkatachalam, CEO, NLG has won The Best CEO of the Year 2020 Award in the Alam Al Iktisaad Awards.

Sixty-eight companies listed on the Muscat Securities Market (MSM) were in contention for the top positions in AIWA Best Performing Companies Survey this year and the research survey



and analysis is conducted by U Capital based on various business performance parameters like- Top Line Growth, Earnings Growth, EBIT Growth, RoAA, RoAE, EBIT margin and Net Profit Margin.

ALIZZ ISLAMIC BANK 50TH NATIONAL DAY VIDEO GOES VIRAL

The Alizz Islamic Bank 50th National Day Video ‘Haitham Alizz’ recently went viral and was well received by the public. The video has seen over 182,000 views and counting.

Reflecting its commitment to provide a world-class customer experience, Alizz Islamic Bank has risen to become one of the Sultanate's most popular brands across



the various social media platforms. Murtadha Jawad (pictured), AGM — Head of Marketing and Corporate Communications said, “We are extremely proud of the popularity of the Alizz Islamic Bank social media channels and our National Day video going viral is a testament to how the public loves to engage with the bank's social content.”

China's factory activity expands at fastest pace in over three years

BEIJING: China's factory activity expanded at the fastest pace in more than three years in November, while growth in the services sector also hit a multi-year high, as the country's economic recovery from the coronavirus pandemic stepped up.

Upbeat data released on Monday suggests the world's second-largest economy is on track to become the first to completely shake off the drag from widespread industry shutdowns, with recent production data

showing manufacturing now at pre-pandemic levels.

China's official manufacturing Purchasing Manager's Index (PMI) rose to 52.1 in November from 51.4 in October, data from the National Bureau of Statistics showed. It was the highest PMI reading since September 2017 and remained above the 50-point mark that separates growth from contraction on a monthly basis.

"The rise in November manufacturing PMI, with broad-based improvements across the



An employee works on a production line at a factory in Huzhou, Zhejiang. — AFP

sub-indices, suggest the recovery momentum in the industrial sector has become more certain", Zhang Liquan, analyst at China Federation of Logistics & Purchasing.

"But the results also showed inadequate demand is still a common issue facing firms. We need to consolidate the policy support aimed to expand domestic demand." China's blue-chip stock market index hit a 5-1/2 year high following the brisk data.

The robust headline PMI points

to solid fourth-quarter growth, which analysts at Nomura expect to quicken to 5.7 per cent year-on-year, from 4.9 per cent in the third quarter, an impressive turnaround from the deep contraction earlier this year.

The economy is expected to expand around 2 per cent for the full year, the weakest in over three decades but still much stronger than other major economies that are struggling to bring their coronavirus outbreaks under control. — Reuters

Oil prices fall as Opec+ members debate output policy for next year

LONDON: Oil prices tumbled on Monday on uncertainty about whether Opec+ would agree to extend large output cuts at talks this week, but vaccine hopes still kept benchmark crudes on track to rise more than a fifth in November.

Brent crude for January delivery, a contract that expires on Monday, dropped 90 cents, or 1.9 per cent, to \$47.28 a barrel by 0944 GMT. The more actively traded February Brent contract was down 89 cents at \$47.36. US West Texas Intermediate crude for January fell 70 cents, or 1.5 per cent, to \$44.83 a barrel.

"Last week's optimism is taking a hit this morning and longs are edging towards the exit ahead of the Opec+ talks", said oil broker PVM's Tamas Varga, after Opec+ failed to agree on policy in informal talks ahead of Monday and Tuesday's formal meetings.

"Some member countries will be hard to convince about further output discipline and in case of an unexpected fallout not only the price repercussions will hurt producers, but the general existence of the Opec alliance will be questioned."

Members of the Organization

of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, Russia and others, a group known as Opec+, will consider extending existing cuts for three to four months or increasing output gradually from January, Opec+ sources said.

Opec+ had been due to ease its existing production cuts by 2 million barrels per day (bpd) from January.

Hussein Sayed, analyst at FXTM, said fuel demand had recovered in Asia but not in Europe and the Americas, presenting Opec+ with a "challenging choice on whether to delay or bring back more oil to the market."

Goldman Sachs said the surge in COVID-19 cases in the winter would not prevent the oil market rebalancing as a result of vaccine progress, saying it saw Brent rising to \$65 in 2021.

Brent and WTI are still set to rise more than 20 per cent in November, the strongest monthly gains since May, boosted by hopes that three promising vaccines could support economic recovery and lift fuel demand. Supporting the demand outlook, China expanded factory activity at its fastest in more than three years in November. — Reuters



A 3D printed oil pump jack is seen in front of displayed stock graph and Opec logo in this illustration picture. — Reuters

Trump to add China's SMIC and CNOOC to defence blacklist

WASHINGTON: The Trump administration is poised to add China's top chipmaker SMIC and national offshore oil and gas producer CNOOC to a blacklist of alleged Chinese military companies, according to a document and sources, curbing their access to US investors and escalating tensions with Beijing weeks before President-elect Joe Biden takes office.

Media reported earlier this month that the Department of Defence (DoD) was planning to designate four more Chinese companies as owned or controlled by the Chinese military, bringing the number of Chinese companies affected to 35.

A recent executive order issued by President Donald Trump would prevent US investors from buying securities of the listed firms starting late next year.

It was not immediately clear when the new tranche, would be published in the Federal Register. But the list comprises China Construction Technology Co Ltd and China International Engineering Consulting Corp, in addition to Semiconductor Manufacturing International Corp (SMIC) and China National Offshore Oil Corp (CNOOC), according to the document and three sources.

SMIC said it continued "to engage constructively and openly with the US government" and that its products and services were solely for civilian and commercial use.

"The Company has no relationship with the Chinese military and does not manufacture for any military end-users or end-uses." Shares in SMIC closed 2.7 per cent lower on Monday.

CNOOC's listed unit, whose



A visitor looks at China National Offshore Oil Corporation's oil refinery in Huizhou in southern Guangdong. — Reuters

shares fell by almost 14 per cent after the report, said in a stock market statement that it had inquired with its parent and learnt that it had not received any formal notice from relevant US authorities.

China's foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said, in response to a question about Washington's planned move, that China hoped the United States would not erect barriers and obstacles to cooperation and discriminate against Chinese companies.

SMIC, which relies heavily on equipment from US suppliers, was already in Washington's crosshairs.

In September, the US Commerce Department informed some firms that they need to obtain a licence before supplying goods and services

to SMIC after concluding there was an "unacceptable risk" that equipment supplied to it could be used for military purposes.

The upcoming move, coupled with similar policies, is seen as seeking to cement outgoing Republican President Donald Trump's tough-on-China legacy and to box incoming Democrat Biden into hardline positions on Beijing amid bipartisan anti-China sentiment in Congress.

The list is also part of a broader effort by Washington to target what it sees as Beijing's efforts to enlist corporations to harness emerging civilian technologies for military purposes.

Media reported last week that the Trump administration is close to declaring that 89 Chinese aerospace and other companies have military ties, restricting them from buying a range of US

goods and technology.

The list of "Communist Chinese Military Companies" was mandated by a 1999 law requiring the Pentagon to compile a catalog of companies "owned or controlled" by the People's Liberation Army, but DoD only complied in 2020.

Giants like Hikvision, China Telecom and China Mobile were added earlier this year.

This month, the White House published an executive order that sought to give teeth to the list by prohibiting US investors from buying securities of the blacklisted companies from November 2021.

The directive is unlikely to deal the firms a serious blow, experts said, due to its limited scope, uncertainty about the stance of the Biden administration and already-scant holdings by US funds. — Reuters

SHORT TAKES

MUNICH

German furlough scheme back on rise, study finds

The number of companies signing employees up for Germany's state-funded furlough scheme rose in November for the first time in months, according to a study released on Monday.

The ifo research institute in Munich found that 28 per cent of companies were making use of the programme, known as short-time work, which covers workers' wages during the economic slowdown sparked by the coronavirus pandemic.

This was up from 24.8 per



cent in October, the ifo said, citing its own surveys. Germany returned to a lockdown in November, closing bars and restaurants, banning tourism, and reintroducing strict limits on socialising. — Reuters

NEW YORK

S&P Global nears \$44 bn deal to buy IHS Markit

S&P Global was nearing a deal to buy IHS Markit for around \$44 billion, reports said on Sunday, in what would be a merger of two of Wall Street's largest data providers.

The all-stock deal could be announced as soon as Monday, the *Wall Street Journal* reported, citing sources familiar with the matter. S&P Global, valued at around \$82 billion, controls the Standard and Poor's ratings agency and traces its roots to the 1860s.

London-based IHS Markit, a much more recent entrant to the hugely lucrative financial data market, is now valued at around \$37 billion.

The move would mark the latest consolidation among firms providing financial data and analytics as competition heats up amid challenges to titans such as Bloomberg and Refinitiv. News of the potential deal comes amid a share rally, with the S&P 500 and Nasdaq both closing at records on Friday. — AFP

ROME

Apple fined \$12m in Italy for misleading claims

Italy's antitrust regulator AGCM on Monday announced it would be fining Apple \$12 million for misleading claims about the waterproof qualities of its iPhone products.

The authority took issue with ads in which latest iPhone models were presented as water resistant for up to 30 minutes, at depths ranging up to 4 metres.

Customers were not properly warned that this could happen only during "specific and controlled laboratory tests" and



"not under normal conditions of use", AGCM noted. Apple was also fined for its refusal to fix under warranty liquid-related damage, as the watchdog considered it an "aggressive business practice." — dpa

WJ Towell Group Company



Quality car rentals at competitive prices.

Muscat 9014 6672, 9679 0684
Sohar 9731 6218 Salalah 9429 9325
www.orbit-oman.com

• Fleet of 2,000 vehicles
• Choose from a wide range of brands & models
• PDO, OXY and BP spec vehicles available
• Attractive rates for short-term & long-term lease

أوربت ORBIT
Car Rental & Lease

Classifieds

OMAN DAILY
Observer

For Advertisements
Please Contact with our Team:

Head Office
Mohd Al Rashdi
99841230
m.alrahdhi@yahoo.com

Ali Al Maashari
99639264
wadi.almashari@yahoo.com

Salalah Office
Bakht Al Shihri
92998577
bakht.omandaily@gmail.com

Nizwa Office
Abdullah Al Abri
99429094
nizwaofc@omandaily.net.om

Sohar Office
Musalam Al Saidi
99429132
sohardaily@outlook.com

TUESDAY DECEMBER 1, 2020 RABEE AL THANI 15, 1442 AH				
Observer Classified Section		Mohammed al Rashdi: 99841230 m.alrahdhi86@yahoo.com	Ali al Maashari: 99639264 ali.almashari@omandaily.om	Saada al Rashdi 95919344
				94501166 24649593 24649595

■ FOR RENT ■ INVESTMENT ■ BUYING ■ ACC AVAILABLE ■ FOR SALE/RENT ■ RENT A CAR ■ SERVICES

NEW family flats in Darsait near the beach, 5 bedrooms, hall with AC, 4 bathrooms, balcony with sea view, RO 450 per month. Contact: 99315986.

FLAT for rent. 98403020

SOUTH Al Ghubra flat in villa on the first floor, 3 rooms + 3 toilets + majlis + family room and dinning room with balcony very nice view, the house all with AC, RO 400. 96559696.

GENERAL clinic licence along with building and clinical equipment in Maabela. Size: 400 sqm. 99323030.

FLAT for rent in Maabela 3 master rooms. 96088926.

FLATS in Mumtaz, Al Khuwair and Al Ghubrah, 2BHK and 1 BHK. 99341138/ 90991079.

2 BEDROOM flat Al Khuwair. 99322344.

FOR rent in Salalah, north Auqadain. Call 91711118.

ONE bedroom flat at Darsait near Medical RO 170/- . Two BHK Al Khuwair RO 300/- . Athaiba behind Zubair RO 300/- . 24790449, Fax: 24790559

NEW apartment for rent, one room, 2 toilets, kitchen and dinning. Location, Al Khoudh Market, Red Taj building, 7th floor. Per month rent RO 190/- . 92838118

WELL maintained 1&2 BHK and office space/ store available at Rex Road. Contact 92227165

NEW penthouse, N Ghubra — 2 bedroom + 3 toilets + 1 maid room with toilet and 1 big hall 99370300.

FLAT for rent at Al Khuwair 33, 4 bedrooms, majlis, 2 halls, kitchen and store. 99383446.

NEW apartment in Ruwi near church consists of 2 rooms with its facilities. Contact. 94664635, 95850345.

1BHK & 2 bhk flats for rent at Ruwi and Al Khoudh. 93994402, 93994403, 24834644.

3 BHK Flat & studio flat in central Ruwi & 2 BHK in Medinat Al Ilam. Call 99238012/ 24704994.

■ SIT. VACANT

SALES ENGINEER (PEB) B.Tech Mechanical with minimum 7 years of experience in Pre Engineered Steel Building (PEB) sales and marketing. Responsibility involves Technical discussion with the customers, preparing proposals, cost estimation and quotation. Valid GCC driving licence is a must. Contact: hrjob191@yahoo.com.

JOB Vacancy in a private School. 1. Biology teacher; 2. Chemistry or Physics teacher. Required: 1. Appropriate qualification. 2. Experience in teaching languages. 3. IELTS Certificate minimum 6. Contact: 96062530

DENTAL Clinic looking for experienced **Female Nurse** with bachelor/ diploma & three years' experience. Candidates who are ready to join, please send your resume to hiringmedicalstaff@hotmail.com

PROPERTY leasing manager, send CV to vepsupervisor@gmail.com

URGENT requirement, Marble grounding expert 2 nos. External glass cleaner - 2 nos. Visa available. Mobile: 95175645, 97468796

Duct Man/ Fabricator URGENTLY required for Duct Factory
Duct Men/ Fabricator With minimum 4 years Oman experience. Contact: 98901648.

WE are urgently for AC & Auto electrician (car electrician) who can join immediately. Contact: 99677756.

AN organic jaggery (Al Harifayuh)1 manufacturing industry available for partnership or investment in Hubli India. 0091 9742421122.

■ SIT. WANTED

YOUNG experienced Pakistani driver with Omani light vehicle driving licence seeks suitable opening. Speaks Arabic, Hindi, English and familiar with interior and Muscat areas. Contact GSM 95856719.

CIVIL engineer/QS engineer, 11 years in UAE, freelance & Oman driving licence available, looking for full-time or part-time job 97299165.

SALES/Marketing/ retail executive BMS in Marketing. 6 years experience. Contact 93920174. Rehankadri91@hotmail.com

FINANCE Manager/ CFO. Indian Chartered Accountant and Cost Accountant with 25 years of experience in Trade Finance, MIS, Budget, Planning, Strategy, PROJECTS, Procurement, Admin, seeks suitable placement. Contact. 99884291 / 99741875 Email vipul70@gmail.com

SMART Indian professional, excellent English, double Masters — journalism & communication, finance, writing & research skills, Arabic speaker, 15 years diversified Oman experience in Muscat Airport project, healthcare, media, EPC, seeks suitable role. NOC. 99283938

AL Awsad Modern llc, electronic and furniture used. 99834373.

We buy used and broken cars which have instalments in cash. 90202090.

■ SIT. WANTED

LADY Indian English teacher with over 25 year experience, currently seeks full time position in colleges or training institutions. Responsibilities in English language teaching or soft skills trainer with preference for aviation sector. Possess valid Omani driving license. Contact GSM 92541510

33 years, Indian, female having MBA in finance looking for position of accountant, having 8 years of experience in Muscat as accountant. NOC available. Contact No: 79161458.

MECHANICAL engineer. 21, Indian male currently in Oman looking to work at any engineering field. Contact 96511338. Email: rkdhanush11@gmail.com

I NEED a driver job, urgent, with NOC paper. My name: Masum Billah. 968 94991705.

■ FOR SALE

WE supply quantities of excellent mountainous soil in Bausher (suitable for compaction and filling) 99242445, 99327939.

A SHOWROOM in Al Qurum in strategic location with extravagant interior design on 280 sqm is offered for sale at RO 25,000. 92470024.

SINGLE room with attached bathroom and air-condition for executive bachelor, non-cooking, Wadi Kabir/ Al Falaj/ Ruwi High Street area. Contact 99657906

■ MANPOWER

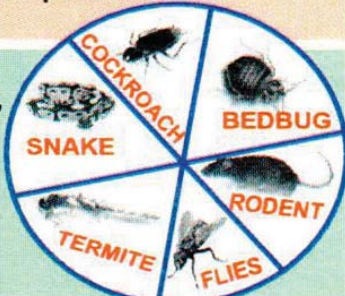
MANPOWER from Philippines. Whatsapp: 91206344.

PEST CONTROL OMAN CO. L.L.C.

Supply of Pesticides, Gel (crocroaches), Public Health chemicals, Agriculture chemicals, Snake repellent, Rodent baits and other insect repellent from UK & USA

PROFESSIONALS in Pest Control Service, Bedbug Treatment, Rodent Treatment, Snake Treatment and Termite Treatment [Pre & Post Construction]

Tel: 24787606, 24787503
Direct Line: 24786077
GSM: 99382355, 99172309
pcomctom@omantel.net.om
P.O. Box 565, Al Wadi Al Kabir 117, Sultanate of Oman



■ FOR SALE

INSTITUTION Licence contact 95595512.

DIESEL Tanker, 1,600 gallon Volvo, 1987. 92836774

COLD store in Al Seeb for lease or sale. Contact: 94272979, 96252664.

NEW 3 storey villas for sale/rents Wadi Kabir/Al Khuwair), (Shops/offices for rent/ Al Khuwair) (Flats for rent/Wadi Kabir). 96596348.

Buttercup Rent A Car AMAZING OFFERS

- Rent a car for 10 days and get an extra free day.
- Rent for one month and get 5 days free.

All the cars are 2016 brand new special prices for public departments, companies and long-term contracts. ☎972494490.

LUXURIOUS Toyota bus 2016, air-conditioned, 30 passengers, offered for daily/monthly/annually, Muscat. Contact: 98080609, 96316269.

ANNOUNCEMENT

We are a company dealing in ambulance service in the interior and in capital area of OM. We are looking for male nurse (Omani) retired from service between the age of 40 to 55 years. Having ACLS, BLS certificate and Ministry of Health License. Interested parties may please send their CV along with copies of ACLS, BLS and MoH license to: **khalfan@rawabittrading.com** or **george@rawabittrading.com**

abc RENT A CAR
SPECIAL Rates on New Cars & 4 WDs RENTING & LEASING
Tours and Airport Transfer
Tel: 24582663
GSM: 95859497,
Fax: 24582664,
abcrent@omantel.net.om

1. AC maintenance and servicing.
2. Fridge, washing machine and dish washer repairing.
3. Painting and cleaning services.
4. Electrical, plumbing and carpentry work 97014234, 99447257, 24290686.

ORIENT Trading llc, Shampooing, sofa, carpet, floor polishing. Old house repairing. 99834373.

AL SUMRI AC maintenance. We are ready to repair and install all types of Air-Conditioner within Muscat Governorate. 94301888.

■ SIT. WANTED

■ FOR SALE OR LEASE

A STORE which can be made into a two-storey building, has a 350 sqm area. Contact 97811111.

OMAN DAILY
Observer

For Advertisements
Please Contact with our Team:

Head Office
Mohd Al Rashdi
99841230
m.alrahdhi86@yahoo.com

Ali Al Maashari
99639264
wadi.almashari@yahoo.com

Salalah Office
Bakht Al Shihri
92998577
bakht.omandaily@gmail.com

Nizwa Office
Abdullah Al Abri
99429094
nizwaofc@omandaily.net.om

Sohar Office
Musalam Al Saidi
99429132
sohardaily@outlook.com

www.omanobserver.om

12:32

Sunday, April 19, 2020

OMAN DAILY
Observer

Home Highlights Oman Business World Sports Features Magazines **More** E PAPER

About Us

Top Story

BREAKING NEWS

86 new Covid-19 cases in Oman, Muscat crosses 1,000-mark

■ Oman Observer 19/04/2020
Muscat: The Ministry of Health (MOH) in Oman announced 86 new cases of Covid 19 on Saturday, bringing the total ...

Main Stories

- Fishermen village in Ras Madrasah closed**
19/04/2020
- Turkey's coronavirus cases overtake Iran, highest in Middle East**
19/04/2020
- Oman launches project to cover internet in rural areas**
19/04/2020
- Huge government efforts to fight Covid-19**
19/04/2020
- Dubai extends 24-hour coronavirus curfew, Gulf countries implement more drastic measures**
18/04/2020

Oman

WE ARE MAKING A SWITCH.

features

OMAN OBSERVER | www.omanobserver.om | editor@omanobserver.om



What makes the Omanis stand out?

Majority of those who visited Oman always have something positive to say about the country and the Omanis with many pointing out that the Omanis are the friendliest and most hospitable. Here's an anecdote of the few reasons why the Omanis, in general, are seen as friendly... **P18**

INSIDE STORIES

HUMAN INTEREST



SMALL IS BEAUTIFUL: GAZA'S TONED-DOWN COVID-ERA WEDDINGS

To the sound of drums and flutes, a freshly coiffed Palestinian groom dances with his brothers, cousins and friends, anxiously waiting for his veiled bride to arrive in her shimmering gown... **Story on Page P20**

CHANGING WORLD



SOUTH KOREAN HIKER TURNS TRASH INTO ART WITH 'DON'T DROP LITTER' MESSAGE

When hiker Kim Kang-eun found the slopes of Mount Jiri, South Korea's largest national park, littered with rubbish during a two-day trip in 2018, she decided it was time to send out a message about taking better care of nature... **Story on Page 19**

READ



NO ONE ASKED FOR THIS

BY CAZZIE DAVID

A collection of comedic essays on panic attacks, family dynamics and a breakup blasted on social media.

TRAVEL TALES



BIKER DOG BOGIE THRILLS FANS AS HE CRUISES PHILIPPINE HIGHWAYS

With his black sports jacket, reflective aviator sunglasses and bespoke orange helmet with holes so his ears can stick out, Bogie the dog sure is one suave-looking canine, with an Easy Rider look that would earn him a place in any motorcycle gang... **Story on Page 19**

CELEBRATE



DAY WITHOUT ART DAY

Day Without Art Day, also known as World AIDS Day, was created to both acknowledge and mourn the passing of those infected with AIDS, as well as take action against this disease that has killed thousands upon thousand of people the world over since the pandemic started in the 1980s. To celebrate today, visit an art gallery or check out online galleries that hold exhibition of the works of artists that suffered or continue to suffer from AIDS.



What makes the Omanis stand out?

BY KABEER YOUSUF

The current generation and the future generations of Oman have a responsibility toward preserving and continuing Sultan Qaboos's legacy. We all know that it's a humongous task considering the challenges we are faced with today



What makes Oman and Omanis stand out? Why are the foreigners attracted to the country, unlike any other country? How has the unique hospitality appealed to the visitors wanting to come back again and immerse themselves in the time-tested culture and etiquette?

Najat al Kalbani, Head of Sustainable Development Unit, Centre for Preparatory Studies at the Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) was at an airport in one of the gulf countries on her way back to Muscat. She stopped at the duty-free to pick up a few gifts for her family, friends and relatives. While she was there she ran into this lovely, Thai lady.

"We started chatting about our purchases and where we were heading. She then asked me where I was from. When I told her I was an Omani, her immediate reaction was "Ahhhhhhha! That's why you're so friendly!"

On another occasion, Najat was at the check out counter of a leading hypermarket ready to pay for her groceries. At the queue, the man ahead of her in line was chatting with the cashier about their home country. It was obvious that they both came from the same country. She ended up joining the conversation as she shared her opinion about an item he had bought.

"I then discovered that he was an engineer who has been working in Oman for about 20 years. He finished his conversation with me by saying "Your country is good to everyone."

Once, as she was shopping at a mall in a neighbouring country along with sisters, the salesperson, a young Arab national, appreciative of the mere fact that she was polite in dealing with him, asked her if they were Omanis. Then he went to say that he could immediately make out, as Omanis stand out due to their demeanour and humbleness.

"Humbleness is the keyword here. The older generations of Omanis had to

sweat to survive. They had to travel to other countries looking for what could sustain them and their families. In travelling across these countries they came to contact with different people from different cultures and backgrounds. I'm certain that they had to share their meals with strangers. Perhaps they drank water out of the same water skin. They had to learn the languages of their host countries and most likely some aspects of the cultures. This I would presume has made Omanis who they really are. Nothing was given to them on a golden platter. They had to work hard to earn it."

Najat writes in her diary, "Over the past 50 years, the leader of this country, the late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos succeeded in creating a legacy: a country that stands on a solid foundation and firm roots; a country that has maintained a balance between heritage and modernity. One of His Majesty's main goals was to build a country that respects and appreciates diversity, strives to achieve unity, respects boundaries and in so doing expands its pool of friends. In bilateral relations, be it among individuals or between countries the key elements are: staying true to who you are, knowing your boundaries, aspiring for continuous development, staying humble throughout and respecting differences. Keeping all these elements in mind, HM succeeded in achieving his goal which he expressed once: "I want to look at the world map and find no single country that Oman isn't friends with."

The current generation and the future generations of Oman have a responsibility toward preserving and continuing Sultan Qaboos's legacy. We all know that it's a humongous task considering the challenges we are faced with today.

"We live, today, in a world that seems to be angry all the time. Arguments start because of differences in opinion. Mass gun shootings happen by a disgruntled person. Wars are started because of one person's ego. It's a sea of turmoil that makes it almost impossible to maintain your peace let alone maintaining peaceful relations with your neighbours. Yet, amid a world characterised by turbulence, Oman stands out as a peaceful nation. The challenge lying ahead of Oman's future generations is to maintain this legacy and to hopefully develop Oman to be a role model not only to countries in the region but to countries around the world," adds Najat.

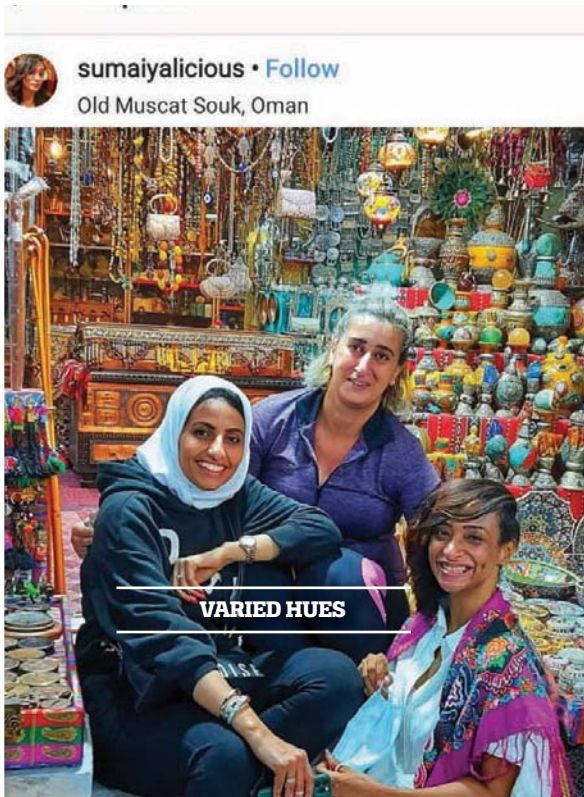


find us on
TWITTER
Scan the QR Code or follow us on
www.twitter.com/omanobserver

OMANDAILYOBSERVER
TUESDAY | DECEMBER 1 | 2020

19

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



SHARE A SLICE OF YOUR LIFE
We select three photos daily for our Instagram Top Picks of the Day. The rules are simple. Follow us on Instagram. Upload your photos. Tag us and use #OmanObserver and #BeAnObserver.



CHANGING WORLD

Get full stories online at www.omanobserver.om



South Korean hiker turns trash into art with 'don't drop litter' message

When hiker Kim Kang-eun found the slopes of Mount Jiri, South Korea's largest national park, littered with rubbish during a two-day trip in 2018, she decided it was time to send out a message about taking better care of nature

She founded Clean Hikers, a group dedicated to picking up trash from there and the country's other mountain parks and turning it into art. "Junk art is more compelling and well received by people, rather than just saying let's not litter. We can make an interesting image and it attracts people's attention," 30-year-old Kim



said. She spoke in front of a collage of a crying cat tagged with the slogan "Save the World", created by herself and other members of the group on the summit of Mount Mani on Ganghwa Island, a park outside Seoul where many stray cats roam. It and similar collages of a fish, a bird, a butterfly and a human being that the group has displayed on mountain-tops were made entirely from trash, including a face mask, collected nearby by members with steel tongs and stuffed into plastic bags. With curbs linked to COVID-19 having restricted indoor activities and large gatherings, more South Koreans are spending time out in the open air. The number of visitors to

three major national parks close to the country's big cities has risen more than 20 per cent in October compared to the same month last year, according to the Korea National Park Service (KNPS). Visits to the 22 national parks it manages generated more than 800 tonnes of rubbish in the first nine months, it added. While most of that trash goes into bins, some does not, and Kim is grateful for the new surge of interest in Clean Hikers that the pandemic has also inspired. "But we cannot clean up the whole mountains. The more important thing is keep doing this activity, tell people about this, and make more people join. This is much more crucial," said Kim. — Reuters

TRAVEL TALES

Biker dog Bogie thrills fans as he cruises Philippine highways



WITH HIS BLACK sports jacket, reflective aviator sunglasses and bespoke orange helmet with holes so his ears can stick out, Bogie the dog sure is one suave-looking canine, with an Easy Rider look that would earn him a place in any motorcycle gang. The 11-year-old cross-breed from the Philippines takes daily motorcycle rides with his owner Gilbert Delos

"One day, he just started following me every time I left the house. As soon as I started the engine, he would get excited and jump on the bike." Bogie is also good for business, helping to lure customers eager to take pictures with him to Reyes' shop, and doling out pawshakes as well. He has even proven himself useful as a guard dog, once chasing after



Reyes, balanced perfectly with his hind legs on the edge of the seat and paws straddling the handlebars. Bogie has become a neighbourhood celebrity and is a magnet for attention on mountain and beach road trips. "The first thing I taught him when he was around four months old was how to ride a motorcycle. I would carry him whenever I rode," said Reyes, who owns a motorcycle shop in Cavite province outside the capital Manila.

thieves who tried to steal his owner's gold necklace at an intersection. Reyes purchased Bogie when he was just a month old for 100 pesos (\$2), but says the dog has been a lucky charm, and is priceless. "I think of Bogie as a son. He's been with me for 11 years and is a big part of my life," said Reyes. "We've had so many adventures and been to many places together, I don't think I can ever replace him." — Reuters



Small is beautiful: Gaza's toned-down Covid-era weddings

To the sound of drums and flutes, a freshly coiffed Palestinian groom dances with his brothers, cousins and friends, anxiously waiting for his veiled bride to arrive in her shimmering gown.

It might have been a normal Gaza wedding, except for the venue — not a luxurious seaside hall, but a narrow alley in the Al-Rimal neighbourhood of Gaza City.

Welcome to Gaza's new pandemic-era weddings: They are small because of strict crowd limits, they are held outdoors, and they finish early to beat the curfews.

And they are a whole lot cheaper than usual.

"I'm not entirely happy because I would have preferred to celebrate it in a wedding hall", said the groom, Mohammed Ahmed Ashour, wearing a blazer and burgundy tie.

But for his family, the 24-year-old merchant said between dances, the pared-down nuptials have also brought welcome savings at a time of economic hardship.

Weddings in the Palestinian coastal enclave are usually extravagant affairs, held in large halls that dot the Mediterranean coastline.

Despite staggering poverty and unemployment rates of around 50 per cent even before the pandemic, many Gazans spend several thousand dollars on weddings.

This year the virus has further impacted the econ-



omy in the strip, which has been under Israeli blockade since 2007, and is currently spreading rapidly across Gaza.

In recent weeks infections have multiplied and "the situation is getting out of control", warned Doctor Ahmad al Jadba of Gaza City's Shifa Hospital.

On Friday, the Palestinian health ministry announced 922 new cases for the last 24 hours in Gaza, a daily record which takes the total number

of people known to have been infected with the virus in the enclave to 18,333, including 86 deaths.

'One-hour weddings'

To contain the spread of coronavirus, the Hamas group that runs the strip, like authorities elsewhere, has banned large indoor gatherings.

Families have been forced to hold smaller weddings in less-than-fairytale settings — like alleys and backyards — but saved bundles in the

process.

Ashour said these days many couples opt for scaled-back daytime nuptials which take "a little over an hour".

Once the Ashours' wedding was over, the musicians — three percussionists and a player of the traditional reed flute called a ney — headed home before the evening curfew.

They had more performances booked for the next day, as their small, travelling business is now thriving.

A few days later they were in Jabaliya, a town in the north of the strip, for the wedding of Ahmed Omar Khallah, a 28-year-old postman.

Khallah said that for him, too, the timing is good: "There is no work, no money, but we have saved a lot by marrying now", he said.

He was picking up his bride from a beauty salon called "Al-Hour al-Ayn", an Islamic expression referring to the beautiful eyes of the women of paradise.

Its proprietor, Fadwi, confirmed that "many young couples prefer to get married during the corona period because the costs are lower. They don't have to rent wedding halls or pay for large buffets."

Fadwi has changed his business hours to accommodate the new routine as Hamas police patrols enforce the night-time curfews.

"We now start work around 7:00 am", he said, "because people only get married in ceremonies until 5:00 pm". —**AFP**