

USHERING IN SECOND RENAISSANCE

HIS MAJESTY SULTAN HAITHAM BIN TARIK
RESTRUCTURED HIS GOVERNMENT THROUGH 28 ROYAL
DECREEES ISSUED ON AUGUST 18 MARKING THE MOST
SIGNIFICANT GOVERNMENT RESHUFFLE IN 50 YEARS,
REMOVING MORE THAN FIVE GOVERNMENTAL ENTITIES
AND MERGING MORE THAN 10 MINISTRIES

SAMUEL KUTTY
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Oman Vision 2040 is the foundation of the second Renaissance with its pillars of decentralisation, diversification of sources of national income, attractive economic environment for foreign investment and more job opportunities for young Omanis.

The late Sultan Qaboos, during his nearly 50 years as head of state, brought immeasurable progress to Oman and reshaped this country into a sparkling oasis of peace and stability. That the Sultanate is today prosperous and secure, is a monument to his decades of singular resolve and sweat.

There is no doubt that Sultan Qaboos will be missed dearly not only in Oman, but also in countries across the globe.

Immediately after ascending the throne, his successor His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik vowed to uphold the principles of his predecessor. He called for efforts for further development of the country and pledged to continue working towards raising the standard of living of the people.

In a speech on February 23, 2020, His Majesty Sultan Haitham clearly outlined the most important principles and steps that would guide his governance of the country.

The Sultan also pledged to “take the necessary measures to restructure the state’s administrative apparatus” in order to “achieve good governance, performance, integrity and accountability.” He has adopted an approach which delegates more power to other parts of government.

He restructured his government through 28 royal decrees issued on August 18 marking the most significant government reshuffle in 50 years, removing more than five governmental entities and merging more than 10 ministries.

The number of ministries was reduced from 26 to 19. The changes came as part of efforts to address the nation’s looming challenges, including unemployment, fiscal deficit, and maintaining a foreign policy of neutrality amid regional conflicts.

The changes to the government apparatus were based on the following criteria:

- ★ a new government apparatus with the

aim of achieving the Vision 2040

- ★ reduction of centralised government and giving power to the governorates
- ★ ensuring the effective and efficient management of the public sector
- ★ clarifying the competencies of each of the government entities and efficient use of manpower
- ★ provision of high quality government services

The Sultan’s measures turned the page in other ways as well, reorganising ministries, liquidating many state bodies, and appointing new heads for various government-owned institutions. He also relinquished portfolios of foreign affairs and finance.

Whilst this may not be a full devolution of power, the move demonstrates His Majesty’s aim to move away from purely personal rule and an increase the delegation of executive power. This change will undoubtedly streamline decision making and reduce bureaucratic delays which have been a source of frustration in Oman.

His Majesty the Sultan has appointed Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy as the Foreign Minister, replacing the veteran Yusuf bin Alawi bin Abdallah. Sayyid Badr is no stranger to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as he has been working at the ministry for many years, with his most recent post being the Secretary-General of the Ministry.

Royal Decree 94/2020 establishes the Ministry of Economy, some nine years it was abolished.

The new ministry seems in keeping with the government’s commitment to directing its financial resources in the most ideal and sustainable manner to ensure the reduction of sovereign debt and an increase in revenue.

The Sultan also named some elected Majlis Ash’shura members as new ministers, integrating them into his new government. This suggests a sensitivity to public opinion as some of them have been very active in public seminars and on social media.

The announcement of the royal decree regarding Oman’s accession to the International Convention on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, the United Nations Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, and the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance is seen as an encouraging sign by experts.

They also view this decree as an indication of more legislative and legal reforms to come. Several regional and international civil society organisations also welcomed Oman’s accession to these conventions, considering it a step towards a greater commitment to human rights.

This was followed by an important step concerning workers’ rights, namely, the abolishment of Article 11 of the Foreigners’ Residence Law.

This legal provision had obliged workers to obtain a no-objection certificate from their employer to move from one job to another within the private sector, which was considered by many international organisations to be a form of human trafficking.

While His Majesty Sultan Haitham’s ruling style has been calm and deliberate, the steps he has taken during his first 100 days as head of the state have occurred quickly from the perspective of Oman’s citizens.

“These changes have come at a difficult time for Oman, they give an idea of how His Majesty Sultan Haitham wants to shape his rule and his priorities as he seeks to marshall the continued growth of Oman,” says a report by Trowers & Hamblins.



ENVOYS GREET HM ON NATIONAL DAY

L A T E H M ' S P E R S O N A L W E B S I T E R E C E I V E S S P E C I A L M E S S A G E S

MUSCAT: On the occasion of the Sultanate's 50th National Day, a number of ambassadors accredited to the Sultanate have expressed their sincere congratulations to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and the citizens of Oman, on behalf of their governments and the people of their homelands.

Ambassadors were interviewed by the late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos' personal website – the first Omani website that highlights the life and achievements of Sultan Qaboos and which have been translated into 35 languages.

On this national occasion, Hamoud bin Mohammed al Azri, General Supervisor of Oman Qaboos, expressed sincere appreciation to their excellencies the ambassadors for the continuous support over the years in the right of a great and dear person to our hearts, stressing that the next phase will witness broader cooperation. I am honoured to raise my deep greetings to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik.

It gives me great pleasure to extend warm congratulations to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on the occasion of Oman's 50th National Day, an important milestone in Oman's history and our bilateral partnership. Since 1840, when the Sultanate's first envoy arrived in New York bearing gifts of friendship and goodwill, the United States and Oman have enjoyed strong bonds between our governments and our peoples. The US Embassy and the American people wish all Omanis a joyous national celebration.

Leslie M Tsou, Ambassador of The United States

On the occasion of the 50th National Day of the Sultanate of Oman, it is a privilege for me as Ambassador of Spain to convey, in the name of His Majesty the King Felipe VI and the Spanish people, our best wishes for permanent prosperity to the Omani people under the ruling of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, to whom may God grant long life and lasting happiness.

I would like to also express my best wishes and thanks to Hamoud al Azri for his continuous great efforts.

María Luisa Huidobro, Ambassador of Spain

I would like to convey our sincere congratulations and best wishes to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and the people of Oman on the glorious occasion of Oman's 50th National Day. We look forward to continuing the strong bilateral relations between our two nations and to further strengthening those bonds in the years ahead.

Laetitia van Asch, Ambassador of the Netherlands

In this remarkable day, I would like to commemorate late Sultan Qaboos and applaud his dynamic vision that led the Sultanate to development path. Taking the opportunity of this special day representing Government of Nepal and Nepali people, I would like to extend greeting to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and friendly people of Oman.

I am confident that the comprehensive Oman Vision 2040 engineered for the development of the Sultanate under guardianship of His Majesty Sultan Haitham



bin Tarik will be able to cater the desires of Omani people.

Sarmila Parajuli Dhakal, Ambassador of Nepal

It is a distinction to serve as the Ambassador of the Republic of Turkey during the 50th anniversary of the National Day of the Sultanate of Oman.

On behalf of Turkey, I have the honour to extend sincerest congratulations to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and the Omani people on this joyous occasion. May Allah continue to bestow his blessing to the people of Oman as well as His Majesty Sultan Haitham with good health, peace and prosperity.

Ayşe Sözen Usluer, Ambassador of Turkey

I am honoured to express, both on my personal behalf and of that of my government, admiration and respect on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of a re-born Oman.

The merit lies entirely with the late sovereign His Majesty Sultan Qaboos. Sultan Qaboos' rule not only propelled Oman's economy into the 20th and 21st centuries, putting it on a par with those of the most advanced countries, but it also brought to its citizens and the hundreds of thousands of expatriates living here harmony, social peace, prosperity and real aspirations for the future. The years of Sultan Qaboos' rule have made Oman a beacon and an example to the countries of the region.

Today I would like to congratulate and to wish His Majesty the Sultan Haitham bin Tarik a long and happy reign, rich with rewarding success, in light of the task he has given himself and so deftly begun, in circumstances much harsher than imagined, to lead the country from Renaissance to the Future, in the challenging path of reform he has drawn.

Federica Favi, Ambassador of Italy

It is with great pleasure that I extend, on behalf of the Embassy

of Philippine and the Filipino community in Oman, warmest congratulations and best wishes to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the government and the friendly people of Oman on the occasion of the 50th National Day.

I am grateful for the hospitality afforded to the close to 45,000 Filipinos living and working in the Sultanate. I am likewise pleased that our countries maintain a strong relationship that is defined by mutually beneficial exchange in trade and commerce. I look forward to enhancing the bilateral relations between the Philippine and Oman, which coincidentally is also marking its 40th anniversary this year, as both countries continue to expand and flourish in support of each other's development and progress.

Imelda M Panolong, Ambassador of the Philippines

On the occasion of the National Day of the Sultanate of Oman, on behalf of the Republic of Korea, I would like to express my deep congratulations to the Omani people. The late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos laid the foundation of not only the Renaissance, but also long-lasting friendship between Oman and Korea by establishing our bilateral ties in 1974.

Under the wise leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham, I will remain dedicated to deepening our friendship while remembering the benevolence and generosity of the late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos.

Kim Chang-Kyu, Ambassador of Korea

On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the National Day of the Sultanate of Oman, which coincides with the 50th anniversary of the establishment of relations between Iran and Oman, I would like to extend my congratulations to the friendly and neighbouring Sultanate, its leadership, people and government on this glorious occasion, wishing them health, progress and prosperity.

I am confident that as the relations between the two countries witnessed during the reign of the late Sultan Qaboos stability and steadfastness and turned into an example to follow, and as a continuation of this path, these relations will witness under the wise leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik further development and prosperity. In this context, we will seek to enhance economic cooperation between the two countries.

Najafi Khoshrud, Ambassador of Iran

On behalf of the Royal Thai Embassy and the people of the Kingdom of Thailand, I have the great honour to extend to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik our heartfelt congratulations on the auspicious occasion of the 50th National Day of the Sultanate of Oman. The Kingdom of Thailand has been working closely with Oman to promote our friendly cooperation in all dimensions for the benefit of our two countries and peoples.

Suwat Kaewsook, Ambassador of Thailand

On the auspicious occasion of the 50th anniversary of the National Day of the Oman and as the newly accredited Ambassador to the Sultanate, it gives me a great pleasure to express to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and the friendly people of Oman, the warmest wishes and sincere congratulations of the Embassy and the people of Cyprus for continued peace, prosperity and progress. Oman's time-honoured commitment to peace, dialogue and mutual understanding between the nations and peoples of the world, make it an indispensable partner to our mutual endeavours to advance the well-being of mankind.

Andreas Nikolaidis, Ambassador of Cyprus

It is a great honour on this special occasion to commemorate

the passing of our great late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos whose memory remains in our hearts and the hearts of the great people of Oman, to inspire the Omani people and to continue the march of prosperity and success under the wise leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik.

I am confident that the long-standing friendship that exists between Brazil and Oman will be further strengthened and our mutual understanding will be enhanced in the years to come under His Majesty's leadership.

Jose Marcos Nogueira, Ambassador of Brazil

Just a few weeks after celebrating the 30th anniversary of Germany's peaceful reunification, the German Embassy in Muscat conveys sincere feelings of friendship and esteem to the people of Oman on the noble occasion of the 50th National Day.

The Golden Jubilee of Oman's Renaissance marks a significant moment in the Sultanate's rich history. When late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos passed away earlier this year, he left behind a modern state with a proud history and a wealth of tradition and culture. This solid groundwork which the founding father of modern Oman had laid allowed a swift transition of power to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik whom we wish good health, happiness and well-being.

Thomas F Schneider, Ambassador of Germany

I congratulate His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and the people of Oman on the glorious 50th National Day. Oman has come a long way in this past half century. A magnificent vision and dedication towards the welfare of his people by the late Sultan Qaboos and the commitment along with the continuous support rendered by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has brought Oman to this privileged period. Even in this time of the

pandemic, the way Oman has pooled in the resources to support healthcare sector and keep the infection at bay, is truly commendable. I, as the Ambassador of Japan, take this opportunity to wish His Majesty and the people of this beautiful country on this splendid occasion abundance of peace, prosperity and good health always.

Toshinori Kobayashi, Ambassador of Japan

India and Oman enjoy close and friendly relations rooted in millennia old historical contacts. The relationship has now transformed into a multifaceted and dynamic strategic partnership. Both India and Oman share common values and approaches and are firm believers in promotion of peace and harmony.

I extend, on behalf of the Government and people of India, warm greetings and best wishes to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik as well as the government and friendly people of Oman for continued peace, progress and prosperity of Oman. I also take this opportunity to pay tribute to late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, under whose reign Oman transformed into a modern and prosperous nation. He was a global statesman and peacemaker.

Munu Mahawar, Ambassador of India

It is my profound honour to convey my sincere and warmest felicitations on the glorious occasion of 50th National Day of the Sultanate.

The historical bonds of affinity and kinship existing between our brotherly nations are deeply rooted in common faith, cultural values. I am sure that under your able and benevolent leadership, these would continue to grow stronger and deeper in times to come.

K K Ahsan Wagan, Ambassador of Pakistan

On the glorious occasion of the 50th National Day of the Sultanate, on behalf of the citizens of Hungary, it is my greatest honour to express to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and the people of the Sultanate my most heartfelt appreciation, greetings, congratulations and best wishes for the years to come.

This year we celebrate the 30th anniversary of establishing diplomatic relations between the Sultanate of Oman and Hungary and it was almost exactly one year ago when the Embassy of Hungary in Muscat was officially inaugurated.

Dr Tibor Szatmari, Ambassador of Hungary

Indonesia and the Sultanate of Oman continue to enjoy very close and friendly relations that have developed into concrete cooperation in various sectors. There is a shared desire between the two brotherly countries to further enhance and expand this cooperation. On behalf of the government and people of the Republic of Indonesia, allow me to extend our warmest congratulations on the occasion of the 50th National Day of the Sultanate, Wishing His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik good health and well-being and the friendly Omani people continuous progress and prosperity.

Mohammed Arzan Jawhan, Ambassador of Indonesia

HOME TO HISTORIC LANDMARKS



SEEB IS THE JEWEL OF MUSCAT FOR THE COMPREHENSIVE ARCHITECTURAL RENAISSANCE THAT IT EMBRACES. THE WILAYAT IS BORDERED BY BARKA FROM NORTH, BIDBID FROM SOUTH-WEST AND BAUSHER FROM SOUTH-EAST

The Wilayat of Seeb, overlooking Sea of Oman, is counted as Muscat's gate for those coming from other governorates and neighbouring areas either by air or land. It was earlier named Dama due to abundance of water besides historic landmarks. Today, Seeb is the jewel of Muscat for the comprehensive architectural renaissance that it embraces. The wilayat is bordered by Barka from north, Bidbid from south-west and Bausher from south-east.

The Wilayat of Seeb comprises 24 towns and villages which are: Mahilat al Yousuf, Mahilat Wadi al Bahais, Mahilat al Souq, Mahilat al Shiraijah, Mahilat al Qala'h, Mahilat Sur Aal Hadid, Al Manuma, Al Mawaleh South, Al Mawaleh North, Hail al Awamer, Hillat al Rahbieen, Khrais al Awamer, Khrais al Hibos, Al Maabela South, Al Maabela North, Al Rusayil, Al Khoudh al Qadima and Al Khoudh al Jadidah.

The wilayat is reputed for its fort named Dama, that was considered as a cultural university where multi-disciplinary symposiums and lectures were delivered. Seeb has 140 mosques in addition to a number of historic landmarks scattered across the wilayat.

People of the wilayat practise many professions like trade, agriculture, fishing and livestock breeding. It has a special market for selling summer agricultural crops including mango, dates and lemon. Those products are

auctioned twice a day.

Based on the agricultural censuses (2012/2013), Seeb has (1,168) agricultural holdings run by (1,500) cultivators. Seeb fishery harbour is seen as a strategic project as it received 48 motor fishing and merchant vessels.

Construction of new facilities is now on at the harbour. Among these are the main building of the port and fish market keeping up with global standards and specifications.

Seeb has gained a number of development projects in different domains. To reduce traffic congestion, roads have been widened and improved.

The five-year plan of 2020 includes mega projects like waterfront (second phase), central slaughterhouse and second-hand automotive market.

The wilayat embraces numerous landmarks of industrial, technical, educational, agricultural and commercial importance.

It has over 45 government institutions that offer public services like Sultan Qaboos University, Muaskar al Murtafa'a, Office of the Chief of Staff Sultan's Armed Forces, Muscat International Airport, SQU Hospital, Armed Forces Hospital, Seeb Post Office and malls like Al Bahja, City Centre, Lulu and many others.

The wilayat is rich with dams and wadis like Al Lawami and Wadi Al Khoudh.

The well-known dam is Al Khoudh dam that stores large quantities of water.

VOICES

Build resilience to face challenges

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
@lakshmioman

Mark Evans has been in Oman for the last 17 years inspiring youth to explore outdoors of Oman and learn resilience, but what attracted him to Oman so many years ago was its beautiful coastline when he kayaked all the way from Oman to Yemen.

All this and the spirit for adventure led to Outward Bound Oman.

He reflects, "We have such tremendous support from the government and the private sector and we are doing everything we can to support the Vision 2040, by developing the national talent of Oman to realise their potential, to be socially active in the community and have the ability to make the vision a reality."

"We started 11 years ago with myself and three full-time staff and we now have two international level training centres one in Sharqiya Sands and one in Muscat. The third centre is under construction on top of the Jabal Al Akhdhar. And all of this is because of the generosity of late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos and his support. The youth is the future of the nation to continue the renaissance."

Today, Outward Bound Oman has 33 staff members and 92 per cent of the trainers are Omanis and 84 per cent of the whole organisation is Omanis.

This is the message he

would like to convey to the youth: "This country provides tremendous opportunities for its people and late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos and His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik put great amount of emphasis on the development of the youth of Oman because if the Vision 2040 is to become a reality, these young people are going to be needed to be given the exposure to future skills, have their resilience developed to face challenges like COVID-19."

"You have the opportunity to come out of your comfort zone, to get something new on your CV and enhance your employability. The competition for young people to get jobs today is tougher than ever. About 60,000 people will be coming out of higher education every year and there are not that many jobs available. So you have got to get something on your CV that differentiates you from other people. So challenge yourself — come with Outward Bound, it does not cost a baiza and if you are lucky, you will be offered a place in one of our courses, which lasts four days in the mountains or the desert and it is a chance to get something different on your CV."

JEWEL IN THE SAND

"When we advertise for an opening we get about 500 CVs, but almost all of them are identical. We are looking for the jewel in the sand. My message to the youth of Oman is to make the most of these opportunities that are provided to you by the government and

the private sector in order to give yourself the potential to get the job and the future you want for yourself," he pointed out.

According to him, when you challenge yourself, it makes one learn about himself or herself, in addition to the fact that by demonstrating resilience one increases employability.

"You have something in your CV that people want to talk about — it makes the difference of your CV going to the bin or making it to the shortlist and being interviewed," he pointed out.

What makes Outward Bound Oman different is that the training takes place in the outdoors of Oman.

"No mobile phones, total focus and no doors to hide behind. You have to stand up and take all the challenges that come at you without any handrails and everything that is familiar like going to bed on a certain time, shower, checking messages — none of that is there. And you might be with another 17 unknown people. This is fantastic because this is when you grow up really quickly."

So the Jabal Centre runs around the whole year because of the temperature, while the Desert Centre runs for seven months because of the climate. The Muscat Centre is the first step and the introduction to Outward Bound and it is a great facility for corporates to develop their emerging talent," said Evans, Managing Director, Outward Bound Oman.

State Council session today

MUSCAT: Pursuant to the orders of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the State Council will open the activities of the second annual session of the 7th term 2019-2023 by holding its first ordinary sitting on Sunday.

The agenda of the first ordinary sitting, to be held under the chairmanship of Shaikh Abdulmalik bin Abdullah al Khalili, Chairman of the Council, will be attended by

Council members and the Secretary-General of the Council.

The agenda includes the opening speech of the Chairman of the Council, approval of the minutes of the eleventh ordinary sitting of the first annual session of the seventh term, review of letters and reports, in addition to the review of the report of the Council's General Secretariat on the Council's activities.



You have the opportunity to come out of your comfort zone, to get something new on your CV and enhance your employability. The competition for young people to get jobs today is tougher than ever.

MARK EVANS,
MD, Outward Bound Oman




Tender Announcement

The Internal Tender Committee of **Ministry of Social Development** hereby announces the following tender:-

Tender No.	Tender Subject	Grade	Last date for obtaining of tender document	Last date for tender submission	Tender Document Price (non-refundable)
10/2020	Provision & Installation of Office Furniture for the Autism National Center Building at Al Khoud	Excellent & One	Wednesday 3-12-2020 02:00 PM	Thursday 23-12-2020 10:00 AM	R.O. 25/=

- ❖ Specialized Companies, registered with the Tender Board may obtain the Tender documents at the Tender Board e-tendering digital portal link (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>), on Sunday 15/11/2020.
- ❖ Tender shall be submitted in compliance with the technical specifications and terms along with a local bank warranty at (1%) of the tender value, valid ninety (90) days from the date of e-submission.
- ❖ The original (1%) bank warranty to be submitted at same day of submitting at tender box located in Directorate of Finance & Administration at MOSD HQ.
- ❖ For Inquiry, please contact through the e-tendering website (reg@tenderboard.gov.om) tel. (24402222 or 24166670).

"The lowest or any other tender shall not be binding to the Ministry"

www.mosd.gov.om

50 BIKERS TAKE PART IN MARCH OF LOYALTY, GRATITUDE



MUSCAT: As part of the National Day celebrations, 50 bikers participated in a march covering 50km from Burj Al Sahwa, passing through the airport road, Sultan Qaboos Street, Royal Opera House, Muttrah Sea Road, and finally reaching Al Alam Palace. Bikers returned to the closing point of the race at Children's Museum in Qurum. The 50 bikers, who represented various governorates of the Sultanate, took part in the march to express their loyalty and gratitude to the nation.

Meet on medical qualification amid COVID-19

MUSCAT: The Directorate-General of Specialised Medical Care at the Ministry of Health, represented by the Department of Qualification Services, held a virtual international medical conference under the theme 'Medical Qualification amid COVID-19, Challenges and Solutions'.

The conference was attended by local and international health professionals.

The meet was aimed at sharing

international experiences in medical qualification and the impact of COVID-19 on the provision of medical services and identifying the strategies for overcoming the existing challenges.

The conference highlighted the international mechanisms applied in the provision of medical qualification services amid the COVID-19, and discussed the proposed strategies for overcoming pandemic

associated neurological and psychological disorders.

A number of medical experts from the Sultanate, the World Health Organization (WHO) as well as Arab and foreign countries, shared their international experiences in the medical qualification field from the WHO perspective and the global clinical evidence for fighting COVID-19.

— ONA



NOTICE

The National Museum hereby announces the following Tenders:

Tender Number	Name/Description	Grade	Tender Document Cost	Deadline for collecting tender documents	Closing date for submission of tender documents
4/2020	The Supply and Installation of Handmade Clay Planters and Public Seating	All registered companies at the Tender Board.	25 OMR	30/11/2020	15/12/2020

- Companies who are interested in participating in the above Tender shall collect the Tender Documents during office hours from 08:00 am to 12:00 pm. From the National Museum, Administrative and Finance Department, 1st floor, al-Saiyda Street, historical Muscat, opposite Qasr al-Alam Palace.
- The payment of the Tender Documentation must be done by cheque or cash prior to acquiring the document at above mentioned address
- Bids shall be submitted in closed envelopes, sealed with red wax and addressed to: His Excellency the Chairman of Internal Tender Board Committee, the National Museum Sultanate of Oman. The Tender submission must be placed inside the Tender Case. The tender number and the name of the tender shall be mentioned on the Tender Document. It is not accepted to indicate the Bidder's identity, name and/or its logo on the envelope.
- The tenderers shall submit with the form of tender a certified cheque or tender bond in the sum of (1%) of the tender value valid (90) days, issued in the name of The Ministry of Finance by locally registered bank in the Sultanate of Oman.
- The Tender is subject to the Tender Law of the Sultanate of Oman.
- Bids received after due date will not be considered.
- Any enquiries and questions regarding the Tender please contact by email tender@nm.gov.om.
- Any enquiries must be raised before the deadline for the submission of tender documents.
- Any Tender Bond which does not meet the requirement of Tender Bond will not be considered. The Museum is not obliged to accept the lowest tender. Therefore, Preference will be given to companies with the highest proportion of Omani workers.

Note: The National Museum reserves the right to accept/reject any offer and cancel the Tender inquiry altogether.

Mosques reopen today, safety top priority

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, NOV 14

Mosques in the Sultanate of Oman will open doors to the believers for prayers on Sunday after eight months of closure due to COVID-19.

The decision to reopen the mosques was announced by the Supreme Committee tasked with tackling developments resulting from coronavirus on November 10.

Mosques whose capacity is not less than 400 worshippers will allow worshippers except for Friday prayers.

Speaking to the *Observer*, Abdul Aziz al Ghafry, Assistant General Manager of Preaching and Guidance at the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs, said strict vigil on safety should be observed in accordance with the COVID-19 protocol.

“The opening of big mosques is on a trial basis and upon successful implementation of the same, we hope to see smaller mosques too are allowed to open with full COVID-19 protocols soon. For that, we earnestly urge all responsible citizens and residents of Oman to follow the

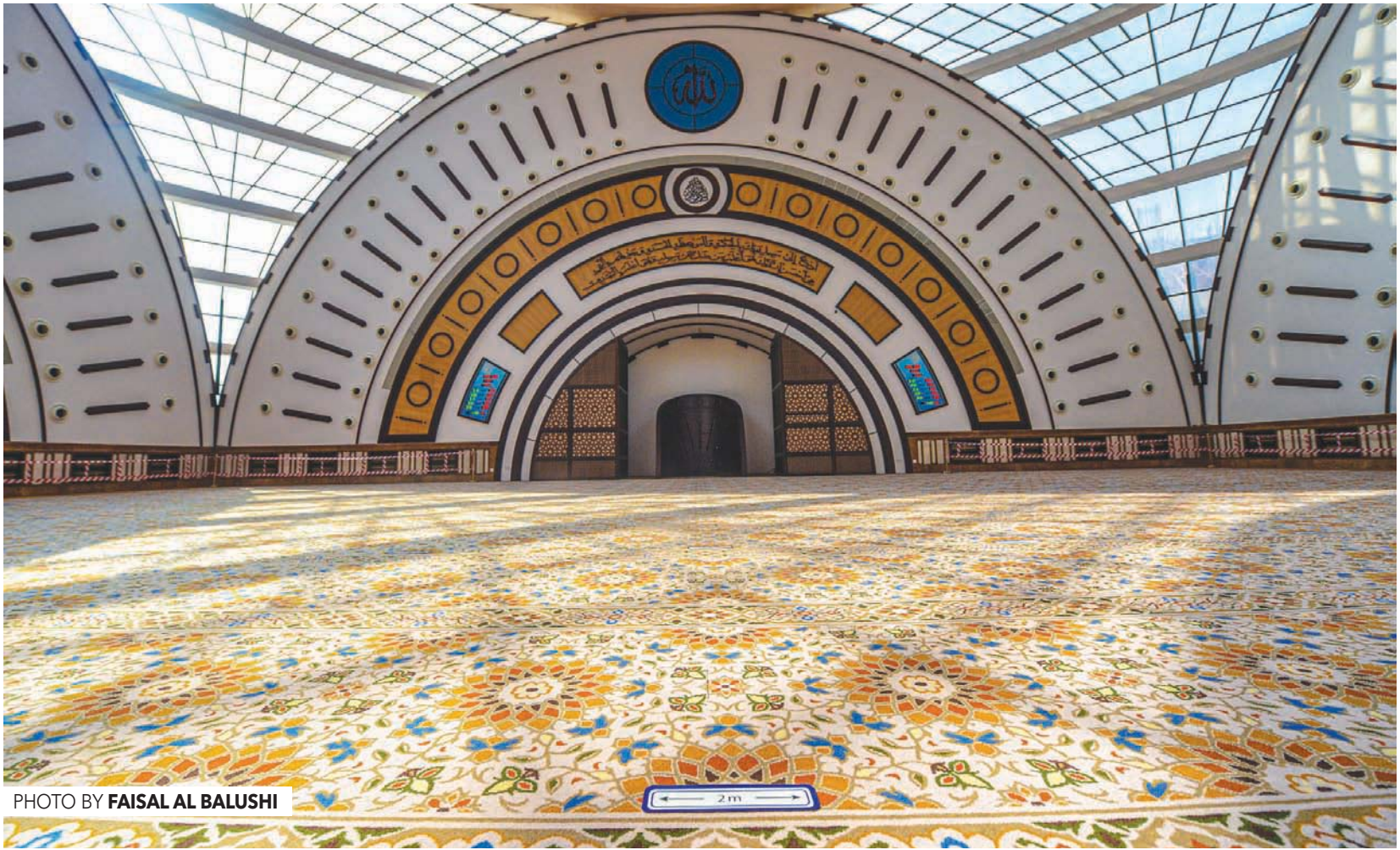


PHOTO BY FAISAL AL BALUSHI

safety measures,” said Al Ghafry.

First of all, a worshipper with fever, throat infection or uneasy breathing should avoid going to the mosque. If any of the worshipper’s family members

have similar symptoms, then also he should stay away from the mosque.

Mosques will be open for 25 minutes for each prayer including the ‘Adhan’ (call-for prayer) and

time for entry and exit of the worshippers.

They cannot use the Holy Quran or water dispensers kept inside the mosque premises. Similarly, toilets have to be totally

shut.

“Each worshipper shall bring his prayer mat and take them back with them while returning,” said Al Ghafry.

Wearing masks, sanitising

The opening of big mosques is on a trial basis and upon successful implementation of the same, we hope to see smaller mosques too are allowed to open with full COVID-19 protocols soon. We urge all to follow the safety measures

ABDUL AZIZ
AL GHAFRY
MARA official

hands and a social distancing of 1.5 metres are applicable to worshippers too.

Representatives of the ministry who are in charge of the mosques shall ensure that the worshippers comply with the “Instructional Guide and Procedures for Mosque Preparation and Equipment” issued by the ministry.



Avoid gatherings for National Day fete

SAMUEL KUTTY
MUSCAT, NOV 14

Amid fears of novel coronavirus spread and precautionary measures, the Sultanate started celebrations to mark 50th National Day that falls on November 18.

Although it is not a grand annual event this year unlike in the past, some of the streets have already been bedecked with red, white and green decorations and lit with decorative lights for the big day.

Safety is the top priority this year for the country with the coronavirus still around and so-

cial distancing a golden rule.

Dr Saif bin Salim al Abri, Director-General of Surveillance and Disease Control of the Ministry of Health has already alerted the public about gatherings that can further deteriorate the situation.

“We know people want to celebrate the 50th National Day, but we want to remind you all gatherings are banned and all of you have to abide by precautionary measures,” his advice came during the weekend media briefing about the pandemic.

November 25 and 26 have already been announced as holi-

days for both public and private sectors.

National Day is the annual celebration of the Sultanate since the blessed Renaissance in 1970 and it brings together the citizens and multitude of nationalities to express patriotism, unity and gratitude to Oman’s leadership.

Retail outlets are witnessing brisk sales of mementos, accessories, garments and other souvenirs through which people can express their love for the country.

“Both citizens and expatriates are looking to express their love and support for the country and

its leadership, and hence there is a huge demand for these items,” said Nasser Ali Ahmed, a shop-keeper.

A number of goods including wall hangings, coffee cups, bottles, trays, key chains, table tops etc. carry slogans hailing the Sultanate and its leaders.

“The National Day brings everyone together in the country. The use of clothes and accessories based on this theme helps in the external manifestation of people’s feelings for the country. It is a very important day because it symbolises national unity”, said Mubarak al Wahaibi in Ruwi.

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A pro-democracy protester holds up the three-finger salute during an anti-government rally in Bangkok. — AFP

Thousands of Thai protesters call for removal of PM

BANGKOK: Thousands of people protested in Bangkok on Saturday in the latest in months of anti-government demonstrations that have also called for reforms to Thailand's powerful monarchy.

A few kilometres away, thousands of royalists gathered in yellow shirts and waved Thai flags as they waited to greet King Maha Vajiralongkorn, who was expected to attend a local event.

The initial focus of protests that began in July was to seek

the removal of Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha, a former junta leader. "Not only is he incompetent, he also lacks legitimacy", activist Sombat Boonngamanong said from loudspeakers on the back of a truck wearing a pirate hat.

"Thailand has not progressed because of Prayuth." Some 2,500 protesters gathered at Democracy Monument in Bangkok, according to police, putting on songs and dances mocking the government.

— Reuters

Vietnam braces for Typhoon Vamco, 53 dead in Philippines

HANOI: Thousands of people fled their homes in Vietnam on Saturday as Typhoon Vamco barrelled towards central regions already pummelled by weeks of successive storms.

Airports have been shut, beaches closed and a fishing ban put in place, as the country braces for winds of up to 100 kilometres per hour when the typhoon makes landfall on Sunday, likely close to Hue.

Thousands of people have been evacuated from their homes in four central provinces, according to the disaster management authority, while state media said hundreds of thousands more may have to flee.

A series of storms have hit central Vietnam over the past six weeks, causing flooding and landslides that have killed at least 159 people, authorities said, while 70 others are missing. The severe weather has also damaged or destroyed more than 400,000 homes, according to the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

Roads and bridges have been washed away, power supplies disrupted, and crucial food crops destroyed, leaving at least 150,000 people at immediate risk of food shortages, it added.



A resident paddles a wooden boat around houses surrounded by floodwaters in the town of Ilagan in Isabela province, north of Manila. — AFP

"There has been no respite for more than eight million people living in central Vietnam", said Nguyen Thi Xuan Thu, Vietnam Red Cross Society President.

"Each time they start rebuilding their lives and livelihoods, they are pummelled by yet another storm." Typhoon Vamco has already caused devastation in the Philippines. Vamco has killed at least 53 people, injured 52 and left 22 missing in the Philippines,

according to the Philippines police and army. Emergency response teams were dispatched to the northeast on Saturday where more than 340,000 people have been affected by severe flooding following Vamco that killed at least 53 people across the country, disaster agencies said.

Twenty of the deaths were recorded in the provinces of Cagayan, Isabela and Nueva Vizcaya, which have become the

focus of rescue efforts.

Hundreds of people were trapped on rooftops in the hardest hit areas along the Cagayan river with rescuers unable to reach them due to the strong current, said the spokesman for the regional Office of Civil Defense. Vast swathes of the region were under water in what officials have described as the worst flooding in living memory.

—Reuters/AFP



شركة المطاحن العمانية (ش.م.ع.)

Oman Flour Mills Co. (SAOG)

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BOARD OF DIRECTORS' REPORT

RESPECTED SHAREHOLDERS,

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I present Oman Flour Mills Company SAOG (the Parent Company along with its subsidiaries (The Group's) un-audited financial statements for the nine months ended 30th September 2020.

GROUP PERFORMANCE HIGHLIGHTS:

Revenue: The total revenue recorded is RO 68.8m as compared to RO 70.9m recorded in the same period of previous Year. The Group has witnessed a 3% decline in the total consolidated revenue. A major decrease (value-wise) was observed in the Bakery segment. It may be noted that last year results included the revenues of MPF. As a result of the Sale of MPF earlier this year and in accordance with requirements of the international financial reporting standards, the accounts of MPF were not consolidated with the parent company.

Expenses: Group total expenses decreased by 7% compared to the same period in 2019, from RO 66.2m to RO 61.8m. The main decrease was driven by the purchasing of raw materials at last year's purchasing prices:

Net Profit: As a result of the above, the net profit recorded for the period is RO 7,929,005, including the profit on sale of shares in MPF amounting to RO 2.03 million during the first quarter of 2020, compared to RO 3,813,098 recorded in corresponding period in 2019.

PARENT, SUBSIDIARY AND ASSOCIATES COMPANIES:

The standalone performance (after tax) along with our subsidiaries and associates is as follows:

- Oman Flour Mills SAOG (OFM):** OFM recorded a profit totaling RO 8.58m as compared to previous year profit of RO 5.07m. Sales volume were almost the same as the last year. However, the revenue recorded a decrease of 0.75% due to change in product mix. On the other hand, the raw material cost per ton decreased by 8%, this resulted in an overall increase in the profit.
- Atyab Food Industries LLC (AFI) (100%):** The bakery made a profit of RO 603 K as compared to previous year profit of RO 731 K. The bakery profitability has been affected due to decrease in sale due to the recent circumstances (COVID-19).
- Atyab FoodTech LLC (AFT) (100%):** AFT made a profit of RO 260 K as compared to the previous year profit of RO 410 K. The decrease in profit is due to decrease in revenue and increased administration overheads. Staff count has increased in anticipation expansion of activities.
- Atyab Technical Services LLC (ATS) (100%):** ATS earned a net sponsorship fee of RO 116 K as compared to RO 130 K in the previous year.
- Sohar Flour Mills LLC (SFM) (60%):** In the current period SFM has incurred a loss of RO 1.4m compared to a loss of RO 1.6m in the same period last year. With the progress of the Grain Silo project (160Mt capacity), it is expected that this important addition will help improve the SFM position when the project is ready.
- Oman Oilseeds Crushing Company (30%):** Until the end of the 3rd quarter of 2020, the company has incurred RO 345 K in administrative expenses of which OFM Group's share is RO 104 K.
- Atyab IFFCO Poultry (50%):**
 - Sohar Poultry Co SAOC (SPC):** SPC made a profit of RO 266 K (previous year loss of RO 71 K). The improved performance is due to better production performance and reduction of feed cost and own production.
 - Osool Poultry:** The project is at an advance stage, it is expected to be delivered Q1-2021
- Arabian Food Production Company SAOC (AFPC) (33.33%):**
 - Modern Poultry Farms SAOC (MPF):** MPF has made a profit of RO 360 K as compared to previous year loss of RO 245 K. The increase in profit is due to higher sale and lower cost of sales. Following the resolution by the shareholders of OFM in the Ordinary General Meeting held on 13-Feb-

Unaudited group statement of comprehensive income For the nine months ended 30 September 2020

	Group		Parent Company	
	2020	2019	2020	2019
	RO '000	RO '000	RO '000	RO '000
Revenue	68,818	70,939	57,734	58,171
Cost of sale	(64,262)	(58,643)	(47,386)	(50,775)
Gross profit	14,566	12,296	10,348	7,396
Selling & distribution expenses	(3,108)	(2,877)	(335)	(227)
Administration & general overheads	(3,821)	(4,051)	(2,337)	(1,640)
Profit from operations	7,637	5,368	7,676	5,529
Finance cost - net	(675)	(654)	(30)	(37)
Net investment income	1,869	87	1,869	87
Other income	428	464	267	368
	9,249	5,265	9,772	5,947
Share in Profit/(Loss) of subsidiary	-	-	144	(597)
Share in net Profit/(loss) of associates	(67)	(454)	(223)	-
Net profit before tax	9,182	4,811	9,693	5,350
Tax expense	(1,253)	(997)	(1,187)	(879)
Net profit for the year	7,929	3,814	8,506	4,471
Net profit for the period attributable to:				
Shareholders of the parent company	8,506	4,471	8,506	4,471
Non controlling interest in the subsidiary	(677)	(658)	-	-
Net profit for the period	7,929	3,813	8,506	4,471
Net profit margin	11.52%	5.38%	14.73%	7.69%

2020, OFM's entire shareholding in MPF has been transferred to Arabian Food Production Company SAOC (an associate of Atyab Investments LLC) under a wider plan of investing in the poultry project in partnership with Gulf Japan Food Fund and IFFCO Group of UAE. Profit realized on transfer of the shareholding is included in the income of OFM.

b. Emirates Poultry Farms (EPF): The group (AFPC), completed the acquisition of EPF on 18th March 2020. Emirates Poultry has made a profit of RO 93 K.

c. Gulf Poultry Farms: The new farm site selection is finalized and the project is progressing further.

AWARDS AND ACHIEVEMENTS:

Several new initiatives were undertaken by the group featuring introduction of new products/solutions.

During the current period the OFM has successfully completed two projects initiated last year. Implemented new ERP system and Lean Management.

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (CSR):

On the **Society and Environment** fronts, the Group has initiated several project as part of its CSR program.

These projects covered a wide range of activities/beneficiaries such as sponsoring schools, youth training, sporting events, SME development, Ramadan initiatives, and other humanitarian aids.

FUTURE OUTLOOK:

Macro factors that are affecting the globe, such as the outbreak of COVID-19 and the historical drop in the oil prices, caused extra turbulence on the overall Grain market which is going through a vortex.

Shifts in both demand and supplies balances also played a role in the overall market situation.

Unaudited group statement of financial position as at 30 September 2020

	Group		Parent Company	
	2020	2019	2020	2019
	RO '000	RO '000	RO '000	RO '000
Non-current assets				
Property, plant and equipment	41,267	46,394	12,192	12,662
Investment property	37	37	37	37
Investment in Subsidiaries	-	-	18,439	17,436
Investment in associates	9,404	2,277	2,170	-
Intangible assets	173	153	-	-
Biological assets	-	1,454	-	-
Right to use asset	3,732	3,316	75	75
Investment available for sale, non-current	355	355	355	355
Total non-current assets	54,968	53,986	33,268	30,565
Current assets				
Inventories, net	23,934	24,390	20,423	20,542
Receivables and prepayments, net	24,792	15,942	16,913	12,073
Amounts due from subsidiaries-1	-	-	7,067	7,254
Amounts due from related parties	2,641	760	2,179	300
Investments available for sale	1,498	2,416	1,498	2,416
Short term deposits	5,000	6,000	5,000	6,000
Cash on hand and at bank	3,444	2,924	1,323	1,415
Total current assets	61,309	52,432	54,393	50,000
Total assets	116,277	106,418	87,661	80,565
Current liabilities				
Payables and accruals	9,645	1,951	6,766	2,359
Payable to related parties	-	-	271	-
Taxation	1,303	1,059	1,236	928
Interest bearing loans	3,901	3,899	1,500	1,773
Total current liabilities	14,849	6,909	9,763	5,060
Non-current liabilities				
Interest bearing loans	17,892	18,078	-	-
Lease Liability	4,004	3,287	77	66
End of service benefits	1,018	1,081	472	441
Deferred tax	810	860	462	497
Total non-current liabilities	23,724	23,306	1,011	1,004
Minority Interest	463	1,564	-	-
Total liabilities	39,036	31,779	10,774	6,064
Net assets	77,241	74,639	76,887	74,501
Shareholders' equity				
Share capital	15,750	15,750	15,750	15,750
Legal reserve	6,021	6,263	5,250	5,250
General reserve	2,500	2,500	2,500	2,500
Fair value reserve	105	105	105	105
Retained earnings	52,865	50,021	53,282	50,896
Total shareholders' equity	77,241	74,639	76,887	74,501

On the product offering front, OFM's plans to launch new products are progressing well, we expect these new products to hit the market in the upcoming months. In particular, the new rice line and, healthy breakfast and snacks are at an advance stage of finalizing the product design.

THANKS AND APPRECIATIONS:

The Members of the Board of Directors would like to extend their the most sincere appreciation and gratitude to His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tariq and his Government for their support to the Company.

Best Regards,

Salah Hilal Al Maawali
Chairman, Oman Flour Mills Board of Directors

The complete accounts in either Arabic or English will be sent by mail within 7 days to any shareholder who requests for them.
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Missiles target Ethiopian airports as Tigray conflict widens

ADDIS ABABA: Two airports in Ethiopia's Amhara state which neighbours Tigray where federal troops are fighting local forces were targeted by rocket fire late on Friday, the government said, as an 11-day conflict widened.

The airport in Gondar in Amhara state, which neighbours Tigray, was hit on Friday, while another rocket aimed at the Bahir Dar airport missed the target, the government said.

The ruling Tigray party, the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), said the Tigray Defence Forces conducted missile strikes in military bases in Bahir Dar and Gondar in retaliation for air strikes conducted by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's forces in various parts of the state.

"As long as the attacks on the people of Tigray do not stop, the attacks will intensify," Getachew Reda, a spokes-

person for the TPLF, said in a statement on the Facebook page of the Tigray state's communications office. Abiy sent the national defence force on an offensive against local troops in Tigray last week, after accusing them of attacking federal troops.

Hundreds of people have been killed. The prime minister has said government warplanes were bombing military targets in Tigray, including arms depots and equipment controlled by the Tigrayan forces. The government says its military operations are aimed at restoring the rule of law in the mountainous state of 5 million people. One of the rockets hit the airport in Gondar and partially damaged it, said Awoke Worku, spokesperson for Gondar central zone, while a second missile fired simultaneously landed just outside of the airport at Bahir Dar. — **Reuters**



Number 10 special adviser Dominic Cummings leaves his residence in London. — **AFP**

Brexit architect Cummings steps down

LONDON: Dominic Cummings, the controversial brains behind the 2016 campaign for Britain to leave the European Union, will step down as Prime Minister Boris Johnson's top aide, a government source said on Friday.

Cummings, a divisive figure who carved out a uniquely powerful role in government, said on Thursday he expected to leave at the end of the year, following the final stage of Brexit.

But he was seen leaving Johnson's 10 Downing Street office on Friday carrying a cardboard box.

The government source said Cummings would officially be employed until mid-December, but news outlets including Sky News and the BBC reported he would no longer be reporting for duty.

Downing Street has been mired in a power struggle that spilled into public view, even as Britain passed the grim milestone of 50,000 COVID-19 deaths with England in partial lockdown. Cummings on Thursday reiterated comments made in a blogpost in January that he would make himself "largely redundant" within a year. — **AFP**

Biden solidifies US election win, Trump says 'time will tell'



Supporters of US President Donald Trump gather in front of the White House near counter protesters in Washington, DC. — **AFP**

Trump has claimed without evidence that he was cheated by widespread election fraud and has refused to concede

WASHINGTON: US President-elect Joe Biden solidified his election victory on Friday by winning the state of Georgia, and President Donald Trump said "time will tell" if another administration takes over soon, the closest he has come to acknowledging Biden could succeed him.

Edison Research, which made the Georgia call, also projected that North Carolina, the only

other battleground state with an outstanding vote count, would go to Trump, finalising the electoral vote tally at 306 for Biden to 232 for Trump.

The numbers gave Biden, a Democrat, a resounding defeat of Trump in the Electoral College, equal to the 306 votes that Trump, a Republican, won to defeat Hillary Clinton in a 2016 victory Trump called a "landslide."

At a White House event where

he predicted a coronavirus vaccine would be available for the whole population by April, Trump edged closer to acknowledging he might leave the White House in January but stopped short.

"This administration will not be going to a lockdown. Hopefully the, uh, whatever happens in the future — who knows which administration it will be? I guess time will tell," Trump said in his first public remarks since Biden was projected as the election's winner on November 7.

Trump did not take questions after the event. Trump, a Republican, has claimed without evidence that he was cheated by

widespread election fraud and has refused to concede. State election officials report no serious irregularities, and several of his legal challenges have failed in court. While Trump had yet to concede, Biden officials reiterated they were moving ahead with transition efforts regardless.

Although the national popular vote does not determine the election outcome, Biden was ahead by more than 5.3 million votes, or 3.4 percentage points. His share of the popular vote, at 50.8 per cent, was slightly higher than Ronald Reagan's share of the vote in 1980 when he defeated Jimmy Carter. — **Reuters**

Trust in vaccines vital to halting pandemic: WHO



Kate O'Brien, director of WHO's immunisation department

GENEVA: As the world celebrates advances in vaccines against the novel coronavirus, a top WHO expert warned in an interview that public distrust risked rendering even the most effective treatments useless against the pandemic.

"A vaccine that sits in a freezer or in a refrigerator or on a shelf and doesn't get used is doing nothing to help shorten this pandemic," said Kate O'Brien, director of the World Health Organization's immunisation department.

US pharmaceutical giant Pfizer and its German partner BioNTech announced on Monday that their

prospective vaccine had proven 90 per cent effective in preventing COVID-19 infections in ongoing final phase trials involving more than 40,000 people.

O'Brien hailed the interim results as "extremely important", and voiced hope that preliminary data from a handful of other candidate vaccines in similarly advanced trials would come through soon. If the complete data show that "one or more of these vaccines has very, very substantial efficacy, that is really good news for putting another tool in the toolbox" for fighting the pandemic, she said. — **AFP**

SHORT TAKES

ALGIERS

Polisario says new fighting in W Sahara

The pro-independence Polisario Front said on Saturday that clashes are continuing in the disputed Western Sahara after the Moroccan army launched an operation in the buffer zone on its southern border.

"Fighting is continuing after the crime committed by Moroccan troops in Guerguerat," senior Polisario official Mohamed Salem Ould Salek said.

The ceasefire supervised by the United Nations since 1991 is a "thing of the past", added



Ould Salek, who serves as foreign minister of the Polisario-declared Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR).

KABUL

Afghan forces capture 'mastermind' of varsity attack

Afghan forces have captured the "mastermind" of a brutal attack on Kabul University when militants stormed classrooms and gunned down dozens of students earlier this month, a top official said on Saturday. At least 22 people were killed and another 27 wounded when three gunmen rampaged through the university on November 2, spraying classrooms with bullets for several hours.

The brazen daylight assault came amid surging violence across the country that has only worsened in recent months despite the government holding peace talks with the Taliban in Qatar.

"The mastermind behind Kabul University attack has been arrested," Vice-President Amrullah Saleh announced on his Facebook page.

The attack, which had ended after the three attackers were killed in fighting, was planned by a militant called Adil, Saleh said.

Adil was recruited by the Haqqani network, Saleh said giving only one name of the arrested man. — **AFP**

ATHENS

Greece shuts down all schools

Greece announced on Saturday the closure of its primary schools, kindergartens and daycare centres amid a surge in coronavirus cases that has saturated the national health system.

"The Greek government decided the suspension of the functioning of schools until November 30," said a statement from Health Minister Vassilis Kikilias.

"Closing elementary schools was the last thing we wanted to do. This is a measure of how



serious the situation is," he added. Secondary schools have already closed and all lessons have taken place remotely since Monday. — **AFP**

Value your culture: For it is the willow that bends to the winds of change

The word culture is evident in many conversations today, but is often, in its purest sense, used incorrectly. Mostly, people are referring to the traditional identities of their country such as their national dress, art, literature, architecture, and weapons, by which we recognise them.

For example: The American Indians are distinguishable by their magnificent war bonnets, the African Zulu by their uniquely shaped spears, the natives of the South Pacific by their tattooed bodies, and the Egyptians by the pyramids and sphinx. Such things are iconic, and deserve to be part of a nation's heritage, but while they contribute to the culture, they, in isolation, are not cultural, as much as they are traditional.

Cicero, the great Roman orator and politician, over 2,100 years ago wrote that “cultura animi” embraced the development of the human form to its highest possible level, explaining that cultivation led to growth through many forms, allowing mankind to continually evolve, and which generation does not dare to dream it is getting closer to a perfect, or utopian state?

If we fast forward to the recent history of Oman, it is very evident that the lifestyles of its neighbours have and will continue to affect the Omani way of life, and consequently the culture. Such similarities in culture led the noted Norwegian explorer



Ray Petersen
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Thor Heyerdahl, in the 1960s and 70s to build a craft named Kon-Tiki, from natural materials, and using age-old techniques in South America, sailing it to the South Pacific Islands, a distance of 5,000 miles, to prove that such diffusion of cultures was probable rather than possible.

The anthropologist Dr Edward Burton Tyler, an advocate of cultural evolutionism, defined culture as the distinct and different ways that people live, and that to consciously contribute to a cultural identity, society must act imaginatively and creatively. He may have been correct, but how can a society create cultural change within, when it is continually affected by greater global issues and the societies, dominant or not, close enough to influence their behaviours.

Cultural norms are established by a societal willingness to display certain attitudes and comply with sets of rules that contribute to a common experience. Have you ever lived next to noisy neighbours with kids who are always fighting or crying, who play loud music at all hours, whose kids ring your doorbell at ridiculous hours of the day and night before running away, and who scratch marks on your car?

Mathew Arnold said, culture is the “antithesis of anarchy”, and where we move closer to the ideal human state, and cease to behave as ‘Philistines’, whose manners, habits, character and thinking all allude to despising art,

beauty, spirituality and intellect, thus implying that culture is a positive product of all of these. But, under duress the willow bends whichever way the wind is blowing, and both we, and society change, so culture changes, and not always for the best.

Yes, they are only kids doing childish things, but an ongoing litany of such deeds will change your behaviour, and culture, thus proving that behaviour, the backbone of culture is learned or assimilated.

Change and culture, like rust, never sleep. We are in a global era of accelerated cultural change, and all our cultures continue to change and evolve based on what is happening around us. Changes in social dynamics, technological innovation, and environmental factors, all stimulate change and provide opportunities for change, as Jean-Jacques Rousseau termed it, “creating a unique identity.”

Like the inexorably pounding waves of the sea, the winds of change cannot be denied simply because cannot be denied or changed, by mere words, and no sooner have our cultures been affected by technology, than along came COVID-19, changing and shaping our futures, and our grandchildren's cultures, maybe not forever, but for a time. Life is like that. It is not always fair or fun. In fact, it rarely is, and as Forrest Gump's momma said, “Life is like a box of chocolates. You never know what you're gonna get.”

DON'T GIVE UP

German hospital in for virus long haul

YANN SCHREIBER

No matter if a viable vaccine is coming on the market soon or not, Germany's Aachen hospital already knows there will still be a marathon to run when it comes to treating patients worst hit by the coronavirus.

“We've learnt that it's an illness with very long legs, and we must not give up after 10 or 15 days but keep at it,” Gernot Marx, who heads the intensive care unit at the university hospital, said.

“The patients who have received the longest treatment were with us in intensive care for 60 days and they really came back from the brink. That is certainly a very important lesson we have learnt.”

Marx and his team were on the frontlines when the pandemic first hit Germany in the spring.

During that first wave, half of the COVID-19 patients in Germany who were put on ventilators succumbed to the disease.

This time round, Marx, 54, hopes more lives can be saved as healthcare practitioners have a better understanding of how best to treat the most severe cases.

Recalling a patient in his fifties who ended up in intensive care even though he had no pre-conditions, the doctor said: “We fought for weeks.”

“He was put on all sorts of machines that we had available and today, he's back home and in pretty good shape.”

“That shows that every effort is worth it.”

Behind the glass door of one of the hospital's critical care units, four patients are kept alive thanks to respiratory machines and infusions.

Wearing masks, surgical gowns, glasses and two pairs of gloves each, Marx and his team are on their ward rounds.

Today, it's the patient in bed 9 who needs the most attention. An ultrasound examination is followed by a discussion. Her treatment is adjusted, as doctors hope to save one more life. More than 12,000 people in Germany have died after catching the virus, the grim toll dwarfed by devastating numbers recorded in other European countries, including Britain where over 50,000 have succumbed.

At the next bed, Marx checks on a patient who has a respirator with its multiple tubes as well as drips inserted into his upper body, feeding him drugs that help with blood circulation, send him to sleep among others.

“If he doesn't receive this medication, he will die in a few minutes,” said Marx.

Just across the aisle at bed 12, there's encouraging news. Preparations are under way to move the patient whose condition has stabilised.

The next step for him would be to learn to breathe on his own again, before a physical rehabilitation that would run for a further few weeks. “The first time round, everything was new. There was a lot of fear and uncertainties,” recalled Marx of the emergency in March and April as the world was just waking up to the pandemic. “With experience, all that has given way to routine.”

Germany has so far coped with growing hospitalisations, with 6,000 intensive care beds still available. — AFP

POTENTIAL ROOTS

Joe Biden's possible India links spark genealogical frenzy

ARUN SANKAR & VISHAL MANVE

Already bursting with pride at Kamala Harris's ancestry, India has now started digging up potential local roots for US President-elect Joe Biden.

The next leader of the United States has speculated that he might have had relatives in colonial India. While there is no proof, the Biden name has become a genealogical target of investigation across the country.

A plaque commemorating 19th-century British ship captain Christopher Biden has been a popular selfie spot in the eastern city of Chennai since the US election.

And a Biden family in western India says it has become “exhausted” by calls since their namesake staked his claim to the White House.

The American vote has been under the spotlight in India because Biden's running mate is the daughter of a migrant from Tamil Nadu state.

The 56-year-old Harris has made much of her Indian connections and how she likes to eat “idli with a really good sambar” — typical food from the south.

Less attention has been paid to Biden, who has established Irish links. But he spoke of possible Indian connections on a trip to Mumbai in 2013 when he was vice-president. Biden said in a speech that he had received a letter from an Indian Biden after becoming a senator in 1972,



A pastor shows the burial record of Christopher Biden, a potential ancestor of US President-elect Joe Biden, at a St George's Cathedral in Chennai. — AFP

A BIDEN FAMILY
IN MUMBAI SAYS
IT HAS BECOME
“EXHAUSTED”
BY CALLS

suggesting they could be related.

“One of the first letters I received and I regret I never followed up on it,” he said. The letter said their “mutual, great, great, great, something or other worked for the East India Trading Company back in the 1700s”.

It sparked excitement in Chennai, capital of Tamil Nadu state, which is also home to Harris's Indian relatives.

A plaque at St George's Cathedral in

Chennai that celebrates Christopher Biden, born in 1789, has suddenly become a local tourist draw.

“We've come to know the records of two Bidens — William Biden and Christopher Biden — who were brothers and became captains of the East India Company on merchant ships in the 19th century,” the Bishop of Madras, Reverend J George Stephen, said. — AFP

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Racing Point's Canadian driver Lance Stroll drives during the qualifying session at the Intecity Istanbul Park circuit ahead of the Turkish Formula One Grand Prix. – AFP

STROLL ENDS MERCEDES' STREAK IN TURKEY

ISTANBUL: Canadian Lance Stroll celebrated an astonishing first Formula One pole position for Racing Point in a crazy weather-hit Turkish Grand Prix qualifying on Saturday.

The 22-year-old Racing Point driver's shock result on the slippery surface ended a run of 14 successive poles for dominant champions Mercedes dating back to last year's Abu Dhabi Grand Prix.

Mercedes never looked in contention while Stroll, whose father Lawrence owns the team, stepped up when it mattered as Racing Point made the right call to switch from wet to intermediate tyres.

Stroll, who has come back from missing a race and testing positive for COVID-19, will be the first Canadian to start on pole since 1997 world champion Jacques Villeneuve. "I can't put it into words right now. I'm shocked. I didn't expect to be here," said Stroll, who greeted his pole with shouts of 'let's go, let's go' over the team radio.

"I had the confidence in the car and I just nailed pretty much every corner. It's such a nice way to bounce back after a few rough weeks, so it feels really good."

"It's a special moment for me, one of the biggest highlights of my career."



Racing Point's Lance Stroll celebrates after qualifying in pole position for Turkish Grand Prix at Istanbul Park, Turkey. – Reuters

Red Bull's Max Verstappen joined Stroll on the front row, a disappointment for the Dutchman after topping the time-sheets in every practice session even if the Friday lap times were largely irrelevant.

"When you are first all the time and come out second it's not what you want to do. I just hope we have a good race tomorrow," he said. Racing Point's Mexican Sergio Perez qualified third, dropping back

after taking provisional pole on the intermediate tyres before Stroll's flying lap. Six-time world champion Lewis Hamilton qualified sixth for a race that looks set to seal his seventh title, with team-mate and sole title

rival Valtteri Bottas ninth.

Bottas must score at least eight points more than Hamilton to remain in mathematical contention with three races remaining after Sunday. If his chances of doing that appeared

to have receded, the slippery conditions caused by the rain and newly-laid asphalt left plenty of uncertainty hanging over Sunday with neither Mercedes driver looking comfortable on track. — Reuters

■ Stroll takes first pole in shock for Racing Point

■ First Canadian on pole since Villeneuve in 1997

■ Verstappen also on front row

■ Hamilton sixth, Bottas ninth



Italian Sinner reaches landmark final in Sofia

SOFIA: Teenager Jannik Sinner on Friday became the youngest Italian in the modern era to reach an ATP Tour final when he defeated France’s Adrian Mannarino 6-3, 7-5 in the Sofia semifinals. The 19-year-old earned his milestone victory in 87 minutes and the world number 44 goes on to face Canada’s Vasek Pospisil in final.



Ex-world champion Manangoi banned for 2 years

PARIS: Kenya’s Elijah Manangoi, the 2017 world 1,500 metres champion, has been suspended for two years for failing to make himself available for doping tests, the Athletics Integrity Unit said on Friday. The two-year ban is backdated to December 22, 2019, the AIU said. Manangoi, 27, had won the gold in London worlds in 2017.

NO 1 JOHNSON OFF TO NICE START

THOMAS, SMITH AND ANCER SHARE MASTERS LEAD

AUGUSTA, United States: World number one Dustin Johnson and third-ranked Justin Thomas shared the second-round clubhouse lead on Friday at the Masters with two unexpected contenders, Australian Cameron Smith and Mexico’s Abraham Ancer.

As rain-softened Augusta National surrendered unprecedented success, Thomas closed with back-to-back birdies to shoot a three-under 69 and US compatriot Johnson birdied his final hole to shoot 70 and join the lead pack on nine-under-par 135.

“I like my position going into the weekend”, Johnson said. “Conditions are going to stay relatively the same. You are going to have to stay aggressive. You have to keep shooting well.”

Smith closed with an eagle and three birdies to shoot 68 while Ancer, trying to become the first debut Masters winner in 41 years, birdied two of his last four holes to fire 67.

“It was a very up and down round, a little bit scrappy”, Smith said. “But hung in there and at the end, it was brilliant.”

Im Sung-Jae, a 22-year-old South Korean also making his Masters debut, fired a 70 to share fifth with American Patrick Cantlay on 136.

“I really feel like I’m prepared this week”, Im said. “I did feel like this course suited my style. I just approached the tournament with confidence.”

Three Englishmen were another stroke adrift — reigning Olympic champion Justin Rose, 16th-ranked Tommy Fleetwood and 2016 Masters champion Danny Willett.

“With it being softer this year, some flags are a hell of a lot easier”, Willett said. “Some are a lot trickier. But all in all you’ll see scoring better when the greens are softer.”

World number two Jon Rahm of Spain and Japan’s Hideki Matsuyama were both on 8-under, Rahm 5-under on the round with six holes to play and Matsuyama 4-under on the round with three holes remaining at sunset.

In all, 48 golfers must finish round two on Saturday morning.

With a Thursday rain delay forcing a Friday first-round finish, golfers stung Augusta National for the lowest opening-round scoring average in Masters history, 71.43 strokes, with 53 players under par in round one and 24 scores in the 60s, both Masters round records.

HISTORY FOR LANGER

Germany’s 63-year-old Bernhard Langer became the oldest player to make the cut in Masters history on 141. An expected 1-under cut line would be the lowest in Masters history.

The low cut line could also spell trouble for Bryson DeChambeau.

The big-hitting American, who had been tipped to overpower the Augusta layout, is one over par with six holes of the second round left to play.



Dustin Johnson of the US hits his tee shot on the third hole during the second round of The Masters at Augusta National Golf Club in Georgia, US. — Reuters

DeChambeau could be left ruing a triple-bogey seven on the par-3 third, which was followed by three more bogeys before the turn.

Four-time major winner Rory McIlroy, seeking a green jacket to complete a career Grand Slam, completed a 75 in the storm-hit first round Friday, then rebounded with a bogey-free 66 to revive his chances.

Defending champion Tiger Woods, who matched his best-ever Masters start with a 68, was on level par for the second round after 10 holes, sharing 22nd place as he chases a 16th major title and sixth Masters victory.

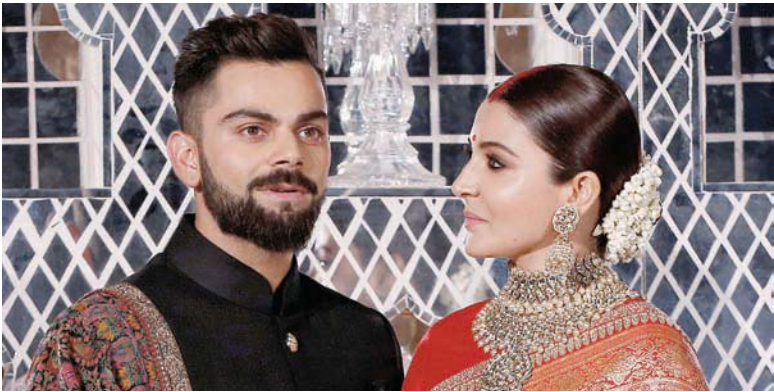
Johnson reeled off three birdies in Amen Corner, Augusta’s famed 11th-13th holes, then followed with back-to-back bogeys and pars all the way until his closing birdie. “Played real solid, had a lot of good looks, none of them seemed to want to go in,” Johnson said. “But it was nice to finish with a birdie.”

ANCER HAS SEEN ENOUGH

World number 21 Ancer, who hadn’t seen Augusta National before playing 27 holes on November 4, hasn’t felt troubled on a course where experience is considered a vital asset.

“It has been fine,” Ancer said. “I’ve been able to get it up and down or make birdie from the pine straw. It has been a lot of fun. I feel good.”

Neither Ancer nor Smith has ever held a 36-hole lead on the US PGA Tour. — AFP



Virat Kohli (L) and his wife Anushka Sharma, pose during a photo opportunity at their wedding reception in New Delhi on December 21, 2017.

Kohli’s absence to impact India, says Langer

MELBOURNE: Virat Kohli is one of the best players Justin Langer has ever seen and his absence from the last three Tests in the upcoming series will be keenly felt, the Australia coach said on Friday.

Kohli will head home after the series-opening test at Adelaide Oval to be with his wife ahead of the birth of their first child, robbing India of their captain and star batsman.

Langer said the impact on India would be like any team taking out their best player. “I’ve said this before, he is probably the best player I’ve ever seen in my life for so many reasons”,

Langer told reporters in a video call.

“It’s not only his batting but his energy, his passion for the game, the way he fields. I cannot believe the energy he displays in everything he does.”

“Are we happy he’s not playing? It’s like taking Dustin Martin out of Richmond, isn’t it?” added Langer, referring to the champion Australian Rules footballer.

Langer said he respected Kohli’s decision and would encourage his own players to miss cricket to be present for the birth of their children if it came up. — Reuters

Renaissance upset IT Works; Muscat, Al Turki keep winning

MUSCAT: Muhammed Bilal and Yash Mehta ran through IT Works’ star-studded batting line-up, bowling Renaissance to a memorable 5-wicket victory at Oman Cricket’s Turf 1 on Saturday.

Capitalising on their decision to bowl first, Renaissance dismissed IT Works for a meagre 105 in 19 overs thanks to brilliant bowling by Bilal (4 for 22) and Mehta 2 for 20). Oman all-rounder Muhammed Nadeem top-scored with a gutsy 26.

Renaissance were made to sweat for every run of the small target they faced but stayed put to cross the winning post in the final over, scoring 107 for 5 thanks to solid knocks by Asif Khan (45), Faizal Jerome (32) and a whirlwind 17 not out by Rafiullah. **BRIEF SCORES (Premier Division T20 League):** IT Works 105 all out in 19 overs (Muhammed Nadeem 26 – 2x4, Nester Dhamba 17. Muhammed Bilal 4-22, Yash Mehta 2-20) lost to



Muscat’s Kashyap Kumar Prajapati

Renaissance 107 for 5 in 19.3 overs (Asif Khan 45 – 3x4, 1x6, Faizal Jerome 32 – 2x4, 1x5. Rafiullah 17 not out – 2x4, 1x6) by 5 wickets.

KASHYAP STARS IN MUSCAT WIN

Earlier on Friday, table toppers Muscat CT stayed unbeaten with

a thumping 9-wicket win over AER in a Premier Division T20 League game at the same venue.

Having a difficult day out, AER found the going tough, limping their way to a disappointing 81 for 9 in 20 overs. Veteran Ghazanfar Iqbal was the only notable scorer with 19.

Ayaan Khan, Siddharth Bukkapatnam and Sandeep Goud all claimed two wickets each.

Muscat had little trouble chasing down the small total, racing to 81 for 1 in 11 overs thanks to Kashyap Kumar Prajapati’s breezy 56 not out off 36 balls and Ayaan Khan’s stylish 22 off 15.

BRIEF SCORES (Premier Division T20): AER 81 for 9 in 20 overs (Ghazanfar Iqbal 19 – 2x4, 1x6, Sachin Kumar 14 – 2x4, Ayaan Khan 2-7, Siddharth Bukkapatnam 2-14, Sandeep Goud 2-14) lost to Muscat CT 84 for 1 in 11 overs (Kashyap Kumar Prajapati 56 – 6x4, 2x6, Ayaan Khan 22 not out - 3x4, Sachin Kumar 1-12) by 9 wickets.

AKSHAY HELPS AL TURKI TO VICTORY

In another low-scoring game, Al Turki NMC eased past Arm Alpha with a solid 8-wicket victory at OC Turf 1 on Friday. Batting first, Alpha managed to collect only 98 runs for the loss of 7 wickets in 20 overs as Al Turki bowled exceptionally well to restrict them to a small total. Only Sanuth Ebrahim offered some resistance with a fighting 21. Hemal Tandel, Mohit Patel and Jay Odedara all bagged two wickets each. Al Turki reached 100 for 2 in the 19th over.

Akshay Patel was their main scorer with 44 not out off 54, while captain Twinkal Bhandari contributed 28 off 41.

BRIEF SCORES (Premier Division T20): Arm Alpha 98 for 7 in 20 overs (Sanuth Ebrahim 21 – 1x6, Hemalkumar Tandel 2-12, Mohit Patel 2-12, Jay Odedara 2-22) lost to Al Turki 100 for 2 in 18.2 overs (Akshay Kumar Patel 44 – 3x4, Twinkal Bhandari 28 – 2x4, Nalinda Prasad 2-15) by 8 wickets.



STRIKERS ON TARGET AS NATIONAL TEAM POSTS WINS IN DOMESTIC FRIENDLIES

Branko focuses on striking prowess

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, NOV 14

The national football team beat Olympic team 3-0 in a friendly match at the Seeb Stadium on Friday. Abdulaziz al Maqbali scored the opening goal from penalty while Khalid al Hajri struck the second and third goals.

This is the second victory for the 'Red Warriors' after they had edged Muscat team 1-0 on Tuesday at the same venue. The goal in Muscat preparatory match was scored by striker Khalid al Hajri as well. In the local friendlies, coach Branko is focusing to assure efficiency of the attacking side and conversion of scoring attempts.

The Olympic team suffered two losses and held one draw in the last three preparatory matches that the team had during the under way camp. In the first match, the team received a 2-0 defeat from Bausher while they played out a 1-1 draw against Al Khabourah.

The Red Warriors will end the ongoing domestic camp on November 19 and one more preparatory match is pending for the team against the Olympic team on Monday before completion of



the warm-up camp. The warm-up matches will support the head coach of the national team, Branko Ivankovic, on having better ideas on each player's technical performance and abilities. Moreover, the coach will also be able to decide the starting line-up.

According to the Asian Football Confederation (AFC), the dates for the Asian Qualifiers for the Fifa World Cup Qatar 2022 and the AFC Asian Cup China 2023, were approved by the AFC Competitions Committee. The Asian Qualifiers Round 2 matches should be completed by June 15,

2021 with Match Day 7 and 8 in March 2021 and Match Day 9 and 10 in June 2021 with the Final Round of the Asian Qualifiers beginning in September 2021. The 10 match days of the Asian Qualifiers Final Round should be finished by the end of March 2022 with the Asian and Inter-

Continental Play-offs proposed for the Fifa window May/June in 2022. The Asian Play-off for the Fifa World Cup Qatar 2022 is proposed as a single match.

With the above clarifications and announcement by AFC, it is expected that the Croatian coach will announce soon on

comprehensive plan for better preparation for Oman to the top assignment at the joint qualification for World Cup and Asian Championship.

In a previous press conference for coach Ivankovic in last September, he affirmed that he will keep track of the players performance in the league matches in December, January and February. The comprehensive technical preparation for the national team to the joint qualification of the World Cup and AFC Asian Cup will begin in March. From December to March, the players will be busy with their local teams. However, we will try to utilise the Fifa days to arrange camps for 10 days or for a shorter period," he said.

At the 2022 Qatar World Cup and 2023 China Asian Cup double qualifiers, the Red Warriors are currently positioned second in Group E with 12 points while Asian champions Qatar are topping the group with 13 points from five games. Afghanistan are placed third with four points. India (3 points) and Bangladesh (1 point) are in the third and fourth positions respectively.



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OPAZ represents unified brand for 2,045 square kilometres of Omani free zones

ONE-STOP: New government entity to explore potential for new SEZs, free zones in the future

CONRAD PRABHU
@conradprabhu

The newly established Public Authority of Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) will serve as a unified brand and one-stop marketing agency for all four of the Sultanate's free zone developments currently spread over an area of 2,045 sq kilometres.

According to a key official, OPAZ will not only oversee the regulation of Oman's existing quartet of SEZs and free zones, established at Duqm, Suhar, Salalah and Al Mazyuna, but also explore the potential for the growth of future zones as well.

Jalal al Lawati, Director, said the new government entity has the mandate to, among other things, propose and implement policies and strategic plans to drive the growth of SEZ and free zones in the Sultanate.

A key part of this remit is to regulate the investment environment governing all four zones and the usufruct rights available to investors, he noted.

"Our team at OPAZ would like to catalyse investment inflows into Oman and work with the different free zones to see these investments happening in the Sultanate," Al Lawati stated during a presentation held as part of the 'Oman-Singapore Investment Forum', a webinar organised recently by the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment



With streamlined incentives across all SEZs in the Sultanate, investors can take advantage of the free and open eco-system to attract, grow and foster their businesses and investments

Promotion. Singapore Ambassador Theng Dar Tang and Oman's Consul General in Singapore, Anwar Muqibail, were among a number of dignitaries and officials who took part in the online proceedings.

Among OPAZ's first endeavours is the introduction of a unified One Stop Shop to process applications for investment in any of the four zones in the Sultanate. This portal has been empowered to process and approve the full spectrum of licences and permits required for industrial projects, commercial registrations, environmental approvals, and so on, said Al Lawati.

"With streamlined incentives across all SEZs in the Sultanate, investors can take advantage of the free and open eco-system to attract, grow and foster their businesses and investments," Al Lawati noted.

Significantly, OPAZ will look to promote all four zones distributed across the Sultanate as a collective destination for investment, while emphasising at the same time the distinctive value propositions of the individual zones.

By investing in any of the Sultanate's free zone developments, investors will be able to leverage Oman's advantageous geographical location — situated midway between Asia and Europe (and the Americas beyond) — to target a potentially 2.5 billion-strong market of consumers in south Asia, Middle East and East

Africa, he said.

Indeed, in positioning Oman as an attractive logistics hub in the Middle East, OPAZ will be looking at the successful example of Singapore, whose success as an economic powerhouse has its roots in its distinctive geographical location as well, he stated.

Duqm SEZ, the biggest of OPAZ's assets, represents a unique model in which an entire city has been incorporated into a free zone development, said Al Lawati. This allows for all manner of investors — industrial, commercial, tourism, and so on — to be eligible for all of the incentives earmarked for free zone investors.

Salalah Free Zone, anchored by a transhipment and logistics hub, has already pulled in \$8.7 billion worth of industrial and economic investments. Freezone Sohar, adjoining Sohar Port, has succeeded in capitalising on its proximity to markets in the Middle East, India and East Africa to garner sizable investments in a number of fields, notably, plastics and chemicals, metals, industrial minerals, logistics, automotive, food processing, pharmaceuticals and textiles.

Finally, Al Mazyuna Free Zone, a land-based development straddling the border between Oman and Yemen in Dhofar Governorate, primarily seeks to facilitate trade flows between the two countries, he added.

Global Entrepreneurship Week begins tomorrow

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, NOV 14

The Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn), represented by the National Business Centre (NBC), is all set to host a series of events in line with the Global Entrepreneurship Week (GEW) starting tomorrow, November 15. This year, the GEW events in Oman will be held virtually in cooperation with the Public Authority for SMEs Development (Riyada) under the theme of 'Change Management'.

The GEW events in Oman, which are being held by NBC for the eighth consecutive year alongside 170 countries worldwide, will include a set of events that highlight risk management, project growth and sustainability in light of the current crises experienced by the SMEs worldwide, change management, and the significance of entrepreneurship. The events shall also focus on ways to help support youth in starting their



المركز الوطني للأعمال
national business centre

businesses and encourage them to turn their business ideas into reality.

The virtual events will touch upon several topics including project sustainability and risk management. The GEW events will also feature SMEs Clinic, which will provide consultancy sessions in financial management, marketing, risk management and project management for the participants. On the final day of this year's events, ideas participating in the pre-incubation programme will be evaluated.

GEW is a global event celebrated by 170 countries worldwide and aims at connecting experts and entrepreneurs from various sectors under one platform to share their ideas and transform innovative ones into reality.

The events also aim to encourage Omani entrepreneurs to start their businesses, encourage the productivity of SMEs to be able to compete in local and global markets, and generate awareness on entrepreneurship and its importance.



شركة الأسماك العمانية
Oman Fisheries CO.SAOG

DIRECTORS REPORT

For 3rd Quarter (Jan-September) unaudited Results – Year 2020

Dear Shareholders,

On behalf of the Board of Directors, it is my pleasure to present Company's unaudited consolidated results for the nine months period ended on 30th September, 2020.

Our key results are annexed below:

Key Results:

Key Indicators	Group (Oman Fisheries Co.)			Parent Company (Oman Fisheries Co.)		
	Jan-Sept 2020	Jan-Sept 2019	Percentage Change	Jan-Sept 2020	Jan-Sept 2019	Percentage Change
	RO	RO		RO	RO	
Total revenue	9,475,338	11,211,576	-15%	9,217,426	10,945,936	-16%
Total Costs / Exp.	(10,716,530)	(13,943,830)	-23%	(10,650,662)	(13,640,419)	-22%
Profit before tax	(1,241,192)	(2,732,254)	-55%	(1,433,236)	(2,694,483)	-47%
Profit after Tax	(1,241,192)	(2,732,254)	-55%	(1,433,236)	(2,694,483)	-47%

Turnover and summary of results:

The unaudited results of the nine months period ended on 30th September 2020 represent the consolidation of Oman Fisheries Co. SAOG, Oman Fisheries Co. Sharjah (FZE) and Al Ameen Stores and Refrigeration LLC.

Your company has achieved the consolidated turnover of RO 9.48 million in 2020 up to Quarter three compared to the previous year turnover of RO 11.21 million for the same period last year. The group made a net loss of RO 1,241,192/- compared to the net loss of RO 2,732,254/- during the same period of previous year. The losses included RO 308,184 additional provisions in compliance to IFRS on stock and debtors.

In these crucial and challenging times, your Co. delivered a third quarter marked by strong underlying business growth, despite the many headwinds posed by the persistent COVID-19 pandemic which has continued to disrupt lives and economies around the globe. While some countries have been able to emerge from pandemic-related shutdowns, many parts of the world continue to see new infections and deaths rising tragically on a daily basis.

Prime Challenges which the fisheries sector continues to face along with the general persistent problems can be summarised under:

- Due to COVID 19 pandemic there has been global crisis. While the European markets are facing the second wave of coronavirus, Far East is still suffering from economic turbulence, currency volatility and import restrictions due to COVID.
- Latin America and African countries continue to suffer as the socio-economic impact of the pandemic is unprecedented in the region. Despite high heterogeneity across countries, they are all being hit by the crisis.

Despite the severe downturn Oman Fisheries continued to aggressively market its products in newer markets by approaching new customers.

The Company successfully managed to turn COVID-19 challenges into opportunities as follows:

- OFC continued to capitalise on current shift in demand from foodservice to retail through its integrated value chain.
- OFC also concentrated in high demand pelagic species like Mackerels, sardines, hilsa and catfish to ensure faster rotation of working capital with sustained turnover.
- OFC managed to run the operating plants at full capacities with round-the-clock processing supported by back to back sales without storage.
- Besides our own production, OFC supported the SMEs networked under us and managed to do trading business by sourcing processed fish from them.
- OFC also adopted strict policy of direct export from the branches under zero holding days policy for the new procurements thereby increasing stock turnover and reducing cost.
- Alongside maintaining consistent top line margin OFC, also continued its robust efforts in reduction of both variable line costs and fixed costs to the utmost extent possible without affecting quality of production and morale of the workforce.

Besides the above efforts are continuing to restructure the Co. in order to adopt the integrated value chain model as a part of its growth strategy.

Our 100 percent Al Ameen Stores Refrigeration Co. LLC has performed exceedingly well achieving bottom line profit of OMR 186,000 in the past nine months.

Debtors and cash collection cycle has been consistent in relation compared to the volume of sales both in the domestic and export market

Acknowledgement:

On behalf of the Board of Directors and Management of the Company, I wish to acknowledge and expresses my sincere gratitude to His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tariq and his Government for establishing good working environment in the fisheries sector and for taking good steps for food security in the Country.

Further, we are extending our thanks to, government bodies, suppliers, service providers, banks, customers, consultants and employees of the Company for their continuous efforts and we are wishing them all the success for the remaining period of the year.

Unaudited Consolidated Balance Sheet (3rd Quarter) as at 30 September, 2020

Particulars	30-Sep-2020 RO '000	30-Sep-2019 RO '000
ASSETS		
Non-current Assets		
Property, plant and equipment	5,859	6,449
Right-of-use Assets	303	-
Investment in subsidiaries	-	129
Investment in Associate	129	770
Deferred Tax Asset	7,701	675
Current Assets		
Inventories	3,263	4,114
Trade and other receivables	3,050	3,306
Financial assets classified at FVTPL	17	21
Fixed Deposit	1,122	1,048
Cash and cash equivalents	328	1,032
	7,780	9,522
	14,841	16,774
Total Assets		
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES		
Capital and reserves		
Share capital	12,500	12,500
Legal reserve	3,483	3,483
Capital reserve	29	29
Retained earnings/(Accumulated Loss)	(6,900)	(4,759)
	9,112	11,253
Non-current liabilities		
Term Loan	885	1,134
Lease Liabilities	317	-
End of Service Benefits	104	87
	1,306	1,220
Current liabilities		
Term Loan		
Lease Liabilities		
Short Term Loan	2,821	3,250
Trade and other payables	1,596	1,048
Income Tax Payable	5	3
	4,423	4,301
Total Liabilities		
Total Equity and Liabilities		
	14,841	16,774
Net assets per share		
	0.073	0.090

Unaudited Consolidated Profit & Loss Account for 3rd quarter ended 30 September, 2020

Particulars	Jan-Sept. 2020 RO '000	Jan-Sept. 2019 RO '000
Income		
Revenue	9,300	11,188
Direct costs	(7,410)	(9,934)
Gross Profit	1,890	1,253
Administration & General Expenses	(1,899)	(2,191)
Selling & Distribution Expenses	(1,262)	(1,723)
Other Income	260	83
Finance Income	29	28
Operating Profit/(Loss)	(983)	(2,550)
Net Profit/(Loss) from Vessel Division	(106)	(87)
Operating (loss)/profit after Vessel Operations	(1,089)	(2,638)
Finance Costs	(152)	(95)
Profit / (Loss) before Taxation	(1,241)	(2,732)
Tax Income/(Expense)	-	-
Profit / (Loss) for the period / year	(1,241)	(2,732)
Other comprehensive income for the period/ year	-	-
Total comprehensive Income/(Loss) for the period / year	(1,241)	(2,732)
Earnings per share	(0.010)	(0.022)

The complete accounts will be sent by mail to any shareholder who request them, either in Arabic or English as requested within 7 days of receipt of the request.

Chairman



OMAN FISHERIES



11/11: Record breaking online shopping festival

There was a bit of drama in the days prior to the annual appointment with the number one shopping event in Asia. The Chinese regulators put a last-minute hard stop to the highly anticipated Initial Public Offer (IPO) of Ant Group, the financial affiliate of Alibaba.

Regulators raised concerns about “major issues” that might cause Ant “not to meet the listing conditions or disclosure requirements.” Days earlier, Alibaba’s “big boss” Jack Ma publicly criticised Chinese regulators for obstructing innovation, a comment that many noted might have also played a

role in jeopardising the IPO.

Despite so many online platforms, including those owned or controlled by Alibaba, took part in Singles Day, the “anti-Valentine’s Day” celebration that takes place every year on 11/11.

China Consumers Association took actions for the first time to urge against “irrational consumption” during the Double 11 craze. I have noticed how in the past couple of years, the headlines about 11/11 focus more and more on how much money these online giants facilitated in transactions with their merchants. I shall make no exceptions this year.

Alibaba could be considered the brain behind the 11/11 sales event. It was in 2009 when they started



STEFANO VIRGILLI
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11/11 HAS BECOME A CULTURAL PHENOMENON FAR BEYOND THE MERE SHOPPING EXPERIENCE.

offering Singles Day discounts and ever since its inception it has turned into the most hyped online shopping bonanza. Other Chinese e-commerce platforms like JD.com (JD), Pinduoduo (PDD) and Red participate by piggy-back-riding on the popularity of the event.

Alibaba’s rival JD.com’s extends the seasons to almost two weeks. In the last edition of 11/11, JD has scored a new record 271.5 billion yuan (\$41 billion) in sales during the whole duration of the event; a stunning growth of 33 per cent compared to last year.

The Singles Day has also gained traction outside China: in Southeast Asia, Alibaba addresses the market with its subsidiary

Lazada, offering Double 11 discounts in Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Thailand and Vietnam.

11/11 has become a cultural phenomenon far beyond the mere shopping experience. There are 11/11 Galas and 11/11 concerts counting down to the beginning of the celebration much like New Year’s Eve, and the popularity of the event has already crossed borders to the western world. Taylor Swift and Katy Perry have performed in the 11/11 launch concert in the past two editions.

Let us talk about numbers: according to Aliababa, Chinese consumers collectively spent close to \$74 billion during Singles’ Day on their online retail platforms, scoring a new record for the

world’s biggest shopping festival.

Around 500 global brands, such as Apple, Huawei, Xiaomi, Nike, Adidas, L’Oréal, Estée Lauder and Lancôme each surpassed \$15 million on Alibaba’s platforms.

For brands that were heavily relying on offline retail sales, 11/11 came as a blessing and an opportunity to make up for the massive losses accumulated during the extended months of lockdown.

Electronics, fashion and beauty are the categories that usually drive the largest volumes in terms of sales value. Now more than ever is the best time to be in the business of selling online. *(The writer is a member of the International Press Association)*



MSM WEEKLY REVIEW

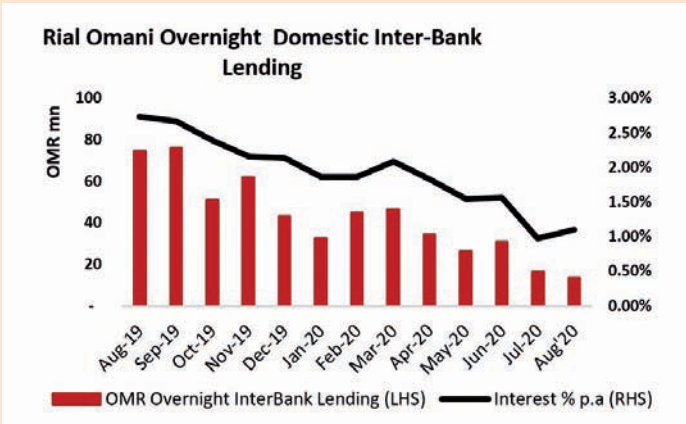
MSM recovery led by financial sector

MSM 30 ended the week up by 2.19 per cent. Financial Index rose 2.43 per cent, Industrial Index rose 1.24 and the Services Index rose 0.79 per cent. The Shariah Index was also up 0.70 per cent. The broad-based recovery materialised as local, GCC and Arab investors absorbed selling pressure from foreigners, while having bought a net of \$11 million worth of securities.

The Government of Oman represented by the Ministry of Finance (MoF) has announced the successful completion of Series 4 of the Omani Rial Sukuk issuance programme. The sovereign Sukuk was issued for an amount in excess of RO 200 million as against the issuance target of RO 175 million following strong demand from local investors and oversubscribed order book of Circa RO 220 million. To share the investment opportunity with the wider public, the government has now announced the launch of the public offer — Series 5 Sukuk certificates due 2022.

The public offer presents a unique opportunity for retail investors to participate in the government’s Sukuk programme with a profit of 4.75 per cent per year and a limited maturity period of 2 years, at profit distribution rate every six months (May and November) until the maturity date of the Sukuk on November 24, 2022. The minimum subscription amount is RO 100. Once issued, the Sukuk will be listed on the Muscat Securities Market (MSM) for trading. Ubhar Capital SAOC and Maisarah Islamic Banking Services (Bank Dhofar SAOG), are the Issue Managers for the Transaction.

Gulf Investment Services announced that it has



successfully reduced the capital from RO 15.0 million to RO 5.0 million. The cut-off date for capital reduction is November 12, 2020. The previously announced cash distribution to shareholders will be distributed upon completion of the capital reduction procedures with MCD and MSM.

The Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning has started implementing a package of measures to rejuvenate Oman’s real estate market. Accordingly, the real estate transaction fees have been reduced to 3 per cent from 5 per cent.

Other steps to revive the real estate market are licensing of rent-to-own or instalment sales and allowing the addition of floors in buildings provided that an annual fee is paid on them and opening the door to non-Omanis to own residential real estate units in multi-storey commercial residential buildings in specific areas.

The initiatives, said the ministry, “will help achieve the goals of the medium-term fiscal balance plan and revitalise the real estate market in Oman.”

The RO overnight domestic inter-bank lending rate rose by 12bps on month-on-month (MoM) basis to 1.1 per cent in August’20. The rate had been roughly on a downtrend since the Fed funds rate cuts began last year and increased slightly during June’20 before easing again in July. It is well below 2.736 per cent recorded a

year ago. The highest ever recorded was 2.770 per cent in July’19. Furthermore, overnight interbank lending amount touched RO 13.71 million, down by 82 per cent YoY and 16.5 per cent MoM.

Within the GCC, an analysis of banks for 3Q20 earnings indicates that Kuwaiti banks posted the highest decline in their combined net profits at -47.6 per cent YoY, followed by UAE banks at -42.1 per cent, Oman banks at -29.5 per cent YoY, Saudi Arabia at -28.2 per cent and Qatar banks at -10.9 per cent YoY, largely due to higher impairment charges given the current macroeconomic situation amid COVID-19 outbreak. Bahrain banks is unavailable on Bloomberg for comparative periods. On QoQ basis, however, all countries except UAE posted large gains in combined net profits, with largest gain posted by Saudi banks (+519 per cent), followed by Kuwait (+180.5 per cent), Oman (+9.8 per cent), and Qatar (+4.3 per cent). UAE banks posted a QoQ decline in combined net profits of 6.6 per cent QoQ in 3Q20.

All banks within the GCC that have reported earnings so far (excluding Bahrain) posted a total net profit of US 7.16bn in Q3’20, up by 66.9 per cent QoQ and down by 25.7 per cent YoY for the quarter. On 9M basis, combined net profits of the said banks stood at \$18.78bn for 9M20 vs. \$27.43bn in 9M19, down by 31.7 per cent YoY. *[Courtesy: U-Capital]*

Gulf QR code ensures safety of electrical appliances

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, NOV 14

Consumers in the Sultanate have welcomed the application of the Gulf Conformity Mark and Quick Response Code (QR Code) as defined by the Gulf Technical Regulations for Low Voltage Electrical Devices and Equipment for 13 categories of electrical appliances.

The Gulf Conformity Mark and the QR Code help protect consumers from the dangers of electrical devices which do not conform to the standard specifications.

The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, in cooperation



شارة المطابقة الخليجية
Gulf Conformity Mark

with the Gulf Standardization Organization of the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council, applies the Gulf technical regulation for low-voltage electrical appliances and equipment, which deals with all electrical and electronic equipment and devices and fixtures designed for use with voltage between 50 and 1,000 volts AC and between 75 and 1,500 volts DC.

The standard specification is meant for safety and health of the consumers. This helps in providing them safe and high-quality devices and equipment as it defines basic safety requirements for low-voltage electrical appliances and equipment, and the requirements for electromagnetic compatibility which must be met before placing those devices in the market. It also makes the movement of goods within and among the member countries of the GSO easier. It also has unified procedures to verify compliance with the Gulf standard specifications as well as removes technical obstacles by unifying the conditions of competition in the Gulf market.

PRESS RELEASES

BANK MUSCAT LAUNCHES SPECIAL SAYYARATI OFFER

Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate, has launched an attractive Sayyarati auto finance offer to celebrate the Glorious 50th National Day of Oman. The latest Sayyarati auto finance offer was launched by the bank in line with its commitment to banking convenience and comes with a low interest rate of 5 per cent, the fastest loan processing and absolutely no need for post-dated cheques. The feature-rich Sayyarati auto finance can be obtained for a loan tenure up to 5 years and the lowest equated monthly instalments (EMIs) in Oman.

Abdullah Tamman al Mashani (pictured), Deputy General Manager — Institutional Sales & Products Development, Bank Muscat said: “Sayyarati auto finance has always been the preferred vehicle finance for everybody in Oman. We are very happy to now launch a special offer till December 31, 2020 to celebrate the Glorious 50th National Day at a very special rate of only 5 per cent.”



AHLIBANK CELEBRATES 50TH NATIONAL DAY WITH 50 WINNERS

Celebrating the landmark occasion of the Sultanate’s 50th National Day, ahlibank promises big wins to its accountholders, as 50 of them stand a chance to win RO 1,000 each. Ahlibank’s special draw worth RO 50,000 for National Day holds up the bank’s commitment to promote a savings culture amongst the citizens of the country.

To be eligible for the special draw, a customer must have maintained an average monthly balance of RO 100, and have a minimum amount of RO 100 available in the account on draw day. The draw will take place at ahlibank’s Mussannah branch end of November

Muneer al Balushi — AGM, Head of Retail Distribution, ahlibank, said, “The 50th National Day is a milestone in the history of our beloved nation. It marks a new era, a new renaissance and we, at ahlibank, are excited for a promising future for the people of Oman.”



RENAULT MEGANE RS OFFERS OUTSTANDING DRIVING PLEASURE



Renault Megane RS has been impressing car aficionados with its unparalleled driving performance and motorsport cutting-edge technology.

Suitable for all enthusiasts and driven by its powerful design and focused on performance, Renault Megane RS makes no attempt to hide its motorsport pedigree, offering outstanding driving pleasure on the road and on the track.

The Megane RS features a new generation of 1.8-litre turbo engine, delivering 280hp and 390Nm, thanks to the development work jointly carried out by engineers from Renault Sport Cars and Renault Sport Racing.

The car comes with 6AT Electronic Dual Clutch transmission.

Renault Megane RS takes Renault Sport’s unmistakable hallmarks of agility, efficiency and driving enjoyment a step further.

UK to ban sale of new petrol and diesel cars from 2030



LONDON: British Prime Minister Boris Johnson (pictured) plans to announce next week a ban on the sale of new petrol and diesel cars from 2030, five years earlier than previously planned, the *Financial Times* reported.

Britain had originally planned to ban the sale of new petrol and diesel-powered cars from 2040, as part of efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and in February Johnson brought this forward to 2035.

Citing unidentified industry and government figures, the *FT* said Johnson now intended to move the date forward again to 2030 in a speech on environmental policy he is expected to give next week. The BBC reported a similar plan earlier on Saturday, without giving any sources.

A Downing Street spokeswoman declined to comment on the reports or the content of Johnson's upcoming speech. The *FT* said the new timetable was not expected to apply to some hybrid cars which use a mixture of electric and fossil fuel propulsion and could still be sold until 2035.

An end to the sale of new petrol and diesel cars would mark a huge shift in Britain's automotive market. — **Reuters**

US consumer sentiment falls; producer prices keep steady rise

WASHINGTON: US consumer sentiment fell unexpectedly in early November as households worried about their finances, the resurgent COVID-19 pandemic and the depleted fiscal stimulus, dimming the economy's outlook as the curtain started to close on a challenging year.

The survey from the University of Michigan on Friday also showed Democrat Joe Biden's victory in the November 3 presidential election was weighing on expectations among Republicans, with a slight gain among Democrats.

Daily new coronavirus cases have been exceeding 100,000, with hospitalisations and deaths surging, prompting some state and local governments to impose new restrictions on businesses. Restrictions and consumer avoidance of crowded places could trigger another wave of layoffs and further squeeze incomes following the loss of a government weekly unemployment subsidy.

"The drawdown in sentiment seems to reflect decreased perceptions of household finances, which may be a lagged effect of the dwindling fiscal stimulus," said Tim Quinlan, a senior economist at Wells Fargo Securities in Charlotte, North Carolina. "More consumers reported lower income than higher income for the first time since 2014."

The University of Michigan's consumer sentiment index dropped to 77 early this month from a final reading of 81.8 in October. Economists had forecast the index little changed at 82. The survey's measure of current conditions was steady. Its gauge of expectations fell to 71.3 from 79.2.

A measure of expectations among Republicans declined to



A man shops inside a grocery store in San Bernardino County in California. — **Reuters**

76.4 from 96.4. It edged up to 69.3 from 68.6 among Democrats.

A weekly unemployment supplement, which was part of more than \$3 trillion in government coronavirus relief, has lapsed for millions of unemployed and underemployed workers. A second rescue package is unlikely before President-elect Biden takes office in January.

Economists expect consumer sentiment will trend lower despite promising developments on experimental vaccines.

"With more and more states starting to impose new restrictions on activity, this highlights the growing downside risks posed by the pandemic for the next few months," said Andrew Hunter, a economist at Capital Economics.

Stocks on Wall Street rose on upbeat results from Walt Disney

Co and Cisco Systems Inc. The dollar dipped against a basket of currencies.

Exploding COVID-19 infections and labor market slack are seen keeping a lid on inflation, even as producer prices maintain their steady rise. In a separate report, the Labour Department said its producer price index for final demand climbed 0.3 per cent in October, driven by more expensive food and gasoline, after rising 0.4 per cent in September.

It was the sixth straight monthly increase in the PPI. A 0.5 per cent increase in the price of goods accounted for nearly 60 per cent of the gain in the PPI. Goods rose 0.4 per cent in September.

In the 12 months through October, the PPI advanced 0.5 per cent after rebounding 0.4 per cent in September.

Economists had forecast the PPI would rise 0.2 per cent in October and increase 0.4 per cent on a year-on-year basis.

Excluding the volatile food, energy and trade services components, producer prices gained 0.2 per cent in October. The so-called core PPI advanced 0.4 per cent in September. In the 12 months through October, the core PPI increased 0.8 per cent after rising 0.7 per cent in September.

Coming in the wake of data showing consumer prices unchanged, the PPI report further allayed fears of deflation, a decline in the general price level that is harmful during a recession as consumers and businesses may delay purchases in anticipation of lower prices.

— **Reuters**

GM recalling nearly 69,000 Bolt EVs for fire risks

DETROIT: General Motors Co said it was recalling 68,677 electric cars worldwide that pose a fire risk after five reported fires and two minor injuries.

The recall is for 2017-2019 model year Chevrolet Bolt EVs with high voltage batteries produced at LG Chem Ltd's Ochang, South Korean facility.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) last month opened a preliminary investigation into the Bolt EVs after reports of three Bolts catching fire.

GM said the vehicles pose a fire risk when charged to full, or nearly full capacity. The Detroit automaker said it had developed software that will limit vehicle charging to 90 per cent of full capacity to mitigate the risk, while it determines the appropriate final repair.

"We're working together around the clock to deploy a final remedy as soon as possible after the first of the year", Jesse Ortega, Executive Chief Engineer for the Chevrolet Bolt EV, told reporters on a conference call.

LG Chem said in a statement; "We will cooperate with GM and sincerely proceed with an investigation to identify the exact cause of fire." — **Reuters**



Show attendees look over a Chevrolet Bolt EV at an auto show in Detroit, in this file photo. — **AFP**

US Fed to join global peers in climate-change fight

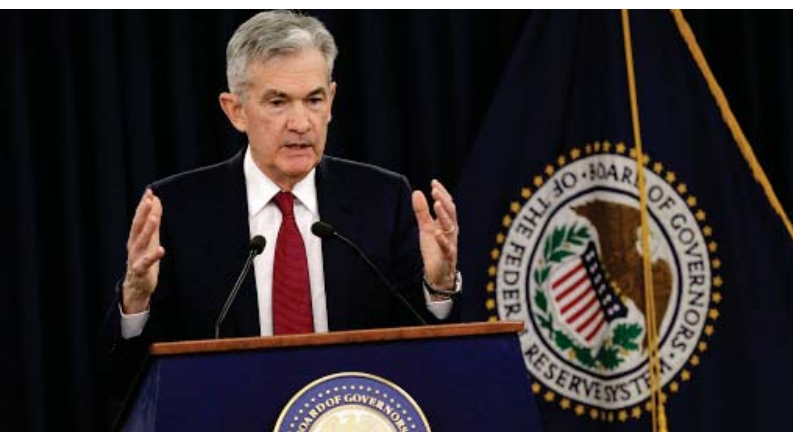
WASHINGTON: The Federal Reserve is moving closer to joining an international group of central bankers working to understand and reduce climate change risk, paving the way for the world's most influential central bank to help shape global financial markets' response to a warming world.

Fed Chair Jerome Powell said the US central bank had been working with the Network of Central Banks and Supervisors

for Greening the Financial System (NGFS), and had been attending meetings. "I think we are in the process of applying for membership there now", he said.

Fed Governor Randal Quarles told lawmakers in testimony, "We have requested membership", adding, "I expect that it will be granted."

The NGFS has not yet received an official letter of application laying out the Fed's motivation for joining and its areas of interest,



US Fed Chairman Jerome Powell speaks at news conference in Washington. — **AFP**

as required by the organisation's charter, NGFS Secretariat head Morgan Despres said on Friday. But the US central bank has been in talks for months with the group about what it needs to do to join and the workload being a member would entail, he said.

Fed staff have also been invited to take part in a couple of workstreams, including one on sizing up the impact of climate change on the economy and financial stability, and another on

bridging data gaps, Despres said.

The Fed is the only major global central bank besides the Reserve Bank of India that is not a member of the NGFS.

The Fed would bring its expertise as regulator and interest-rate setter for the world's biggest economy and center of global capital markets, as well as its deep bench of research economists, some of whom have been delving into climate-change topics in recent years. — **Reuters**

SHORT TAKES

HAVANA

Western Union to close Cuba operations

Western Union will close its Cuba operation on November 23, following new US sanctions that prevent it from working with Havana's military financial firm, Fincimex, the Cuban company announced.

"Fincimex and Western Union have decided to suspend from 23 November the transfer of money from abroad", as well as the US money transfer company's 407 agencies in Cuba, Fincimex said on its Facebook page.

It follows new US sanctions



targeting the involvement of the Cuban military in remittances — money sent from abroad to relatives back home, a valuable daily support for many Cubans.

— **Reuters**

WASHINGTON

US SEC charges former Wells Fargo CEO

The US Securities and Exchange Commission charged former Wells Fargo CEO John Stumpf and retail banking head Carrie Tolstedt with misleading investors, the watchdog announced.

The agency claimed that the former executives misled investors about the widespread sales practice problems at the bank.

Stumpf agreed to pay a \$2.5 million penalty to settle the charges, while the SEC will

litigate fraud charges against Tolstedt in court.

An attorney for Tolstedt said she was an "honest and conscientious executive", and the SEC charges are "unfair and unfounded."

The new charges mark the latest in a long-running set of legal and regulatory woes for the bank and its former leadership, after the firm was embroiled in a massive scandal over the creation of fake accounts by employees. — **Reuters**

TOKYO

Japan offers tax breaks to firms that digitise

Japan is considering offering tax incentives to companies that adopt digitalisation. The pandemic highlighted a need for firms to digitalise to improve their productivity, which prompted the government to consider steps to support their business reforms by digital technology, public broadcaster NHK reported.

Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga has made "digital transformation" in the nation a key pledge, aiming to streamline business and government processes and spur



the country's economy.

The government plans to discuss details of corporate tax breaks to be included in next fiscal year's tax revision, targeting mainly mid-sized companies to promote their digital investment, NHK said. — **Reuters**

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■ 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

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.

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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.

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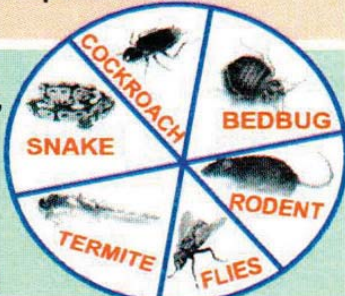
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ANNOUNCEMENT

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■ SIT. WANTED

LIGHT driver, Pakistani male, 39, with good knowledge of Oman roads and areas, speaks English, Arabic, Urdu and Hindi. Looking for suitable placement. Contact 79250786.

A reputed company in Sultanate of Oman is looking for the following personnel :

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- To read SLD, GA Drawing, Schematic drawing & BOM
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- ITI holder (Mechanical), candidate should be able to install insulated cold storage panels, condensing units and evaporator units. Basic electrical knowledge will be an added advantage.

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- ITI holder. Adept in handling package unit/chiller installation and commissioning.

4. **Laundry Technician:**

- ITI/Diploma Holder: Capable to handle the installation of the Industrial Heavy duty Laundry Equipments namely washers, dryers, dry cleaning machines, flat work ironers and finishing presses. Basic knowledge in electronics/programming feature of the machine will be an added advantage.

5. **Kitchen Equipment Technician:**

- Preferably ITI / Diploma Holder in Electrical/Electronics.
- Min 5 years hands on experience in installation / Trouble shooting and Maintenance of Commercial kitchen equipments (Combi ovens, All gas and electrical cooking equipments, Dishwashers, Ice machines, Refrigeration system etc.)
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Experience: 5-8 years
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Interested candidates may send in their resume on **igcc.res@gmail.com** or fax on **24816976**.

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A leading company in Oman is looking for suitable candidates for following positions.

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Instrument Technicians	20			Wasim Kazi: +968 93221460
Planning Engineers	4	400 - 500		Khalifa Al Tourshi: +968 99224602

features

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

Local produce, seafood are just as good as imported products

While the import of foreign products has not been fully impeded by the pandemic, local businesses particularly those in the food sector had discovered that for the gaps on their shelves, they can always turn to local produce, seafood and meat. One chef, however, has been championing support for local fishermen and farmers long before the pandemic has happened and it is his belief that what is found in Oman is just as good as those imported to the country... **P18**



INSIDE STORIES

HERITAGE



EGYPT FINDS TREASURE TROVE OF OVER 100 SARCOPHAGI

Egypt announced Saturday the discovery of an ancient treasure trove of more than a 100 intact sarcophagi, dating back more than 2,500 years ago, the largest such find this year... **Story on Page 20**

COOK LIKE A CHEF



YOU MEN DA XIA

Shandong-style shrimp is a classic dish that uses whole shrimp Wok-fried until they are crispy. Braised prawns are one of the main representative dishes of the Shandong region culture... **Story on Page 19**

READ



A TIME FOR MERCY

BY JOHN GRISHAM

The third book in the Jake Brigance series. A 16-year-old is accused of killing a deputy in Clanton, Miss, in 1990.

FASHION



PINK DIAMOND FETCHES \$26.6 MILLION AT SOTHEBY'S GENEVA SALE

An extremely rare, purple-pink diamond mined in Russia, which Sotheby's described as "a true wonder of nature", sold for 24.4 million Swiss francs (\$26.6 million) on Wednesday, the auction house said... **Story on Page 19**

CELEBRATE



PHILANTHROPY DAY

Officially, today is the day of giving. Philanthropy Day has been created to create awareness about the importance of philanthropy and encourage those who do better in life to volunteer and do charity work. To celebrate today, spend a day in your favourite charity and do at least a couple of good deeds for the day.



Local produce, seafood are just as good as imported products

BY YERU EBUEN

While the global pandemic has not put a stop into the import of foreign products into the country, it, however, prompted many local business owners particularly those within the food industry to rethink their strategy and rely on locally grown food to fill the gaps on their shelves.

While official data is yet to be made available, front-liners working in different food shops and stores in the capital have noticed an increase in demands not only of fruits and vegetables but also fishes and other seafood.

Long before the pandemic, however, Chef Thierry Quintric has specialised in dietetics and healthy food and has been known within the industry and among his peers as a follower of new cooking method that incorporates in-value freshness and bioproducts. He has been championing the use of local products ever since he became the official Executive Chef of Hormuz Grand Muscat, A Radisson Collection Hotel and his effort was finally realized and understood not only within his cluster but within the capital as other luxury hotels and hospitality centres started turning to local produce for their establishment's daily needs.

Chef Thierry is not a stranger to Muttrah. He has also been an avid checker of flea markets and local shops and has been collaborating with local producers as a way of stepping up their commitment to support local communities by highlighting the region's speciality produce and relying less on imports.

In his own words, Thierry shared that the menu he creates for the hotel not only immerses guests from all over the world to the array of Oman's wonderful flavours but

also emphasised their commitment to the local community. Many of the intricate details presented on a plate are sustainably sourced from Oman's azure waters and local bio produce within the country.

Chef Thierry works closely with Omani fisherman with small boats and fishing rods, in an attempt to honour the gems the sea provides, albeit in small quantities, as opposed to big boats that use weighted nets that drag on the bottom of the sea, destroying the aquatic ecosystem and discouraging the cycle of life.

"Obviously we know what type of fishes are available by season and we work closely with the fishermen to continue that biodiversity philosophy of fishing. Every two days we communicate with our suppliers and ask them what they have caught and this is how we create our seafood display 'A la carte'", he shared.

"I refuse to take any Omani lobster with eggs. As I've explained to our purchasing team and our fishermen suppliers, if we want to have Omani lobster in 10-20 years and more, we must let mother nature to do her job. I want to encourage and participate in the conservation of biodiversity," he explained.

Other than the seafood, a great percentage of the ingredients in their kitchen are sustainably sourced from nearby farms. From herbs to salad greens, from vegetables to meat poultry, it's all about exploring Oman's bounty.

"We try and incorporate the fresh produce of the season in order to encourage local production. For example, last month we added locally sourced long beans and eggplant for vegetables. Lettuce for the month of November and tomatoes for December," he shared.

"These are only a few examples among many others. In seafood, we still offer large varieties such as Halibut, Red mullet, Red Humped bream, Hammour, Grouper, Seabream, Parrotfish, Seabass,

Octopus, Omani lobster, Grey mullet and Local shrimps, to name a few," he added.

Chef Thierry is a firm believer that many of the locally produced vegetables, poultry, meat and seafood in the country can easily be incorporated even to the pickiest of luxury establishments.

"When our guests come to dine in our restaurants, especially in Omny, our signature Mediterranean a la carte restaurant, we want to take them on an incredible culinary journey and we had been doing that with the help of locally sourced seafood and produce. The thing about Oman is, it has plenty to offer in the cooking arena, it just takes a matter of innovation and reinvention," he said.

"Overall, this initiative of looking into locally produced products encourage the growth of the local economy. It helps create jobs and sustain demands and appreciation for what is found in the country. At the heart of local purchasing is a commitment to environmental sustainability, the need of the hour," he said.

Chef Thierry is convinced that food should bring the ultimate joy to guests, and he believes that the creative approach to cooking creates a lovely occasion to get together at the table. Sourcing locally for ingredients has also become a great asset for him and his team and the current condition has proven that they are on the right track when it comes to their policy and strategy.





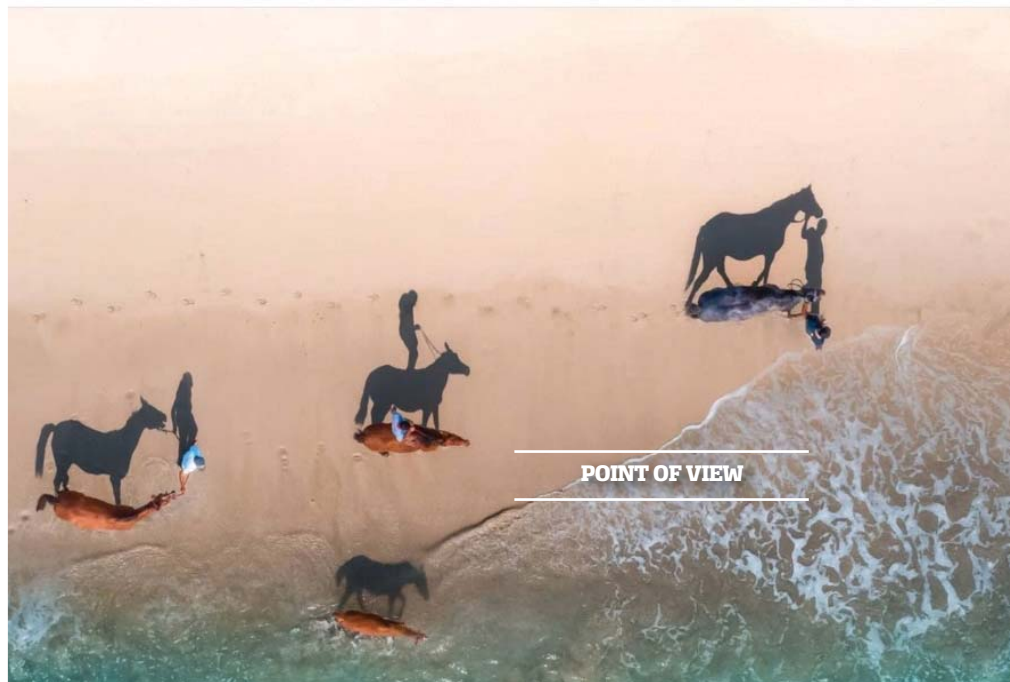
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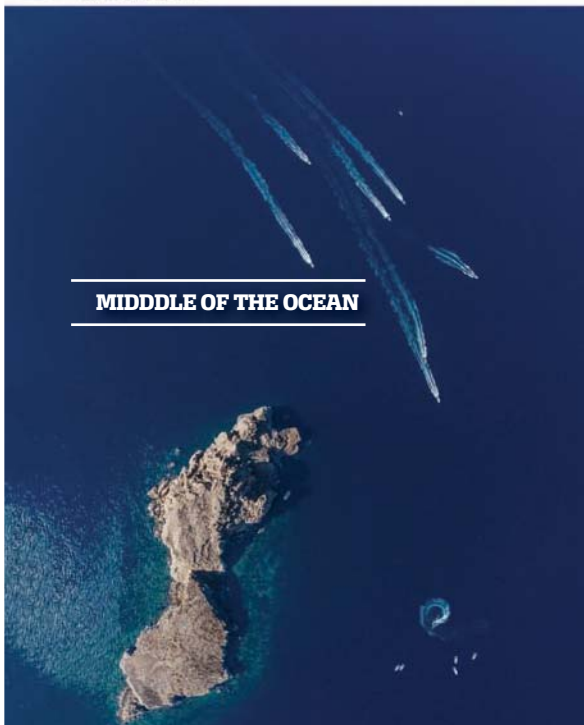
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YOU MEN DA XIA (SHANDONG-STYLE SHRIMP)



SALALAH FOOD SCENE

Shandong-style shrimp is a classic dish that uses whole shrimp Wok-fried until they are crispy. Braised prawns are one of the main representative dishes of the Shandong region culture. It selects the Bohai Bay speciality, large-bodied and best tasting wild sea shrimp, as raw materials. The shrimp are first sautéed and then braised with various seasonings of which some are seasoned corn oil, sugar & Chinese black vinegar as the seasoning sauce. This Shrimp bowl also happens to be a favourite Shanghai Chinese New Year dish.

PREPARATION METHOD

Half cook the tiger prawn in a deep fryer and set aside. Sauté garlic and ginger and add prawn, leave it for 1 minute. Add sugar and water. Simmer for another 1 minute. Add vinegar and allow the sauce to thicken.



ABOUT THE CHEF

CHEF ZHIWU LAI (ELVIS)

Executive Chef

Chef de Cuisine

Anantara Salalah

Born in Hainan China, Zhiwu (Elvis) commenced his career at Crown Plaza Int. China, at the age of 19. He then made his way to Kihavah Maldives where he worked for Anantara and progressed his career into the culinary industry as a part of the kitchen brigade.

He joined as a Sous Chef and progressed to Senior Sous chef. Chef Elvis continued working with passion through his time at the Mekong, Al Baleed Resort's signature restaurant to eventually become the current Chef de Cuisine in the same property.

Chef Elvis was a key member when he flew to Tunisia for a month-long task force for the preopening of Mekong at the Anantara Tozeur. Here Chef Elvis has conducted all preopening tasks including sourcing all kitchen equipment, connecting with suppliers, organising training and implementing the same Mekong standards as the other MINOR properties. The kitchen brigade has been very successful with the innovative menus proposed by Elvis and has been increasing in popularity within the northern region of Africa.

INGREDIENTS:



160g local prawns
3g chopped garlic
5 g chopped ginger
25g Sugar
25ml white vinegar
25ml water
3g salt



FASHION

Pink diamond fetches \$26.6 million at Sotheby's Geneva sale



GENEVA: An extremely rare, purple-pink diamond mined in Russia, which Sotheby's described as "a true wonder of nature", sold for 24.4 million Swiss francs (\$26.6 million) on Wednesday, the auction house said.

Sotheby's had estimated that the flawless oval gem, "The Spirit of the Rose," could fetch \$23 million-\$38

Mined by Russian diamond producer Alrosa in July 2017, it was cut from the largest pink crystal ever found in the country, Sotheby's said.

The diamond was shown in Hong Kong, Singapore and Taipei.

Coloured stones have been greatly valued as an asset class by the super rich in recent years with



million at the Geneva sale.

Bidding opened at 16 million Swiss francs and climbed to the final hammer price of 21 million Swiss francs, plus commission. It was bought by a telephone bidder who chose to remain anonymous, Sotheby's said.

Jewellery expert Benoit Repellin, who led the sale, said it set a record for a diamond graded fancy vivid purple pink sold at auction. The stone weighing 14.83 carats was the largest pink diamond with that colour grading to go on the block.

The diamond was named after a ballet performed by the Ballets Russes and its legendary dancer Vaslav Nijinsky in 1911.

top-quality pink diamonds especially prized.

The Argyle mine in western Australia, which produced the world's largest supply of pink diamonds, halted production last week due to depletion.

"The lucky buyer could well profit from prices soaring for pink diamonds in the coming years thanks to increased rarity," Tobias Kormind, managing director of 77 Diamonds, Europe's largest online diamond jeweller, said in a statement.

Naturally coloured diamonds occur because they possess a particular lattice structure that refracts light to produce coloured, rather than white, stones. — **Reuters**



Egypt finds treasure trove of over 100 sarcophagi

Egypt announced Saturday the discovery of an ancient treasure trove of more than a 100 intact sarcophagi, dating back more than 2,500 years ago, the largest such find this year.

The sealed wooden coffins, unveiled on site amid fanfare, belonged to top officials of the Late Period and the Ptolemaic period of ancient Egypt.

They were found in three burial shafts at depths of 12 metres (40 feet) in the sweeping Saqqara necropolis south of Cairo.

Archaeologists opened one coffin to reveal a mummy wrapped in a burial shroud adorned with brightly coloured hieroglyphic pictorials.

Saqqara, home to more than a dozen pyramids, ancient monasteries, and animals burial sites, is a vast necropolis of the ancient Egyptian capital of Memphis, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

The huge find came just over a month after archaeologists in the area found 59 other well-preserved and sealed wooden coffins, also dating back more than 2,500 years ago.

"Saqqara has yet to reveal all of its contents. It is a treasure," Antiquities and Tourism Minister Khaled al-Anani said at the unveil-



An archaeologist cleans a statue during the unveiling of an ancient treasure trove of more than a 100 intact sarcophagi, at the Saqqara necropolis 30 km south of the Egyptian capital Cairo, on Saturday. — AFP

ing ceremony.

"Excavations are still underway. Whenever we empty a burial shaft of sarcophagi, we find an entrance to another."

More than 40 statues of ancient deities and funerary masks were also discovered, he said.

Another two wooden statues were found in the tomb belonging to an ancient judge of the 6th dynasty, according to Mostafa Waziri, secretary general of the Supreme Council of Antiquities.

The sarcophagi will be distributed among several museums in Egypt including the yet-to-opened Grand Egyptian Museum at the Giza plateau.

The minister attributed the flurry of discoveries in Saqqara to extensive excavation works in recent years.

Another discovery in the vast necropolis is expected to be announced in the coming weeks, Anani added.

Archaeologists also hope to find an ancient workshop for manufacturing wooden coffins for mummies soon, said Waziri.

Egypt hopes archaeological discoveries will spur tourism, a sector which has suffered multiple shocks ever since a 2011 uprising up until today's coronavirus pandemic.

— AFP