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HAMILTON 'GUTTED' AFTER POSITIVE COVID-19 TEST



P13

OMAN SEEKS TO PHASE OUT ENERGY INEFFICIENT LIGHT BULBS



P19

DINOSAUR-ERA BIRD WITH SCYTHE-LIKE BEAK SHEDS LIGHT ON AVIAN DIVERSITY



OMAN

HM THANKED BY TURKEY, ALGERIA

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has received a cable of thanks from President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey in reply to His Majesty's condolences cable to him on victims of the earthquake that struck Izmir. In his cable, President Erdogan expressed on his own behalf and on behalf of the Turkish people utmost thanks for His Majesty the Sultan's sincere condolences and sympathy. He wished His Majesty good health and happiness, and the Omani people further welfare and prosperity. His Majesty also received a cable of thanks from President Abdelmadjid Tebboune of Algeria in reply to His Majesty's congratulatory cable to him on the occasion his country's National Day. In his cable, President Tebboune expressed his utmost appreciation for His Majesty the Sultan's congratulations and good feelings, praying to the Almighty Allah to perpetuate good health and well-being on His Majesty, wishing the Sultanate and the Omani people further progress and prosperity. — ONA

HM GREETINGS TO LAO PRESIDENT

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Bounnhang Vorachith of the Lao People's Democratic Republic on the occasion of his country's National Day. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere greetings and best wishes to President Vorachith and his country's friendly people. — ONA

Now get news on the go



OMAN OBSERVER

INSIDE



INDONESIANS FLEE AS JAVA VOLCANO BELCHES HOT GAS

P7



ONE NOBEL WINNER WON'T MISS THE POMP AT AWARDS

P9

NATIONAL MUSEUM REOPENS



In implementation of the Supreme Committee's decision, the National Museum reopened its doors to the public from Saturday.

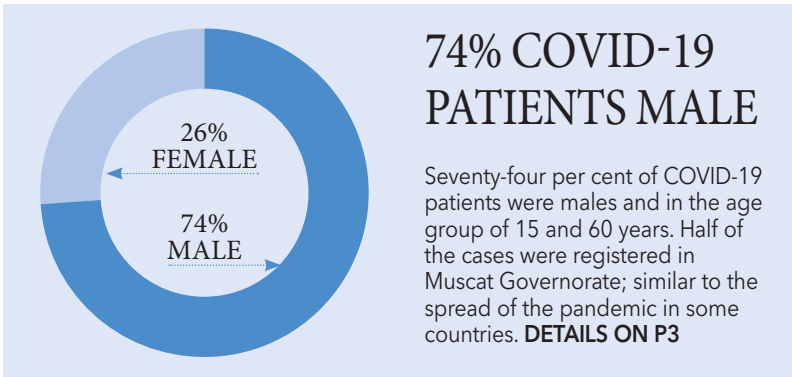
New set of activities opened

VINOD NAIR @vinot_nair

Following the announcement of opening up of more activities by the Supreme Committee on COVID-19, the government has opened up a wide range of activities under the seventh package, from Tuesday.

Even as life is set to return to normal, the Supreme Committee said on Tuesday, "The reopening of the activities does not mean ignoring the preventive procedures, and the virus is still around."

The activities opened include wedding halls (only up to 50 people), cinema halls, exhibition halls



and conferences, kindergarten and nurseries, play areas, amusement centres and food courts (only 50 per cent capacity) in malls.

Additionally, children below 12 years will be allowed to visit malls, while parking spaces will be opened for visitors to its full

capacity from now.

Among others, sports activities can resume without audience, and so will be bowling centres, resorts, parks, beaches, retail shops at the main vegetable markets, health clubs, the second phase of activities at beauty sa-

Oman-UK trade balance stands at RO 7.5 bn

MUSCAT: The United Kingdom tops the list of investors in the Omani market in terms of volume of direct investments, with the trade balance in this segment standing at RO 7.5 billion by the end of the first quarter this year, compared to RO 7.3 billion during the corresponding period last year.

This was revealed by the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion on Tuesday at a forum titled "Invest In Oman" in cooperation with the UK Department of International Trade to outline available opportunities in fields of tourism, logistics and financial services.

During the event, held via videoconferencing, Qais bin Mohammed al Yousuf, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, commended the depth of economic ties between the Sultanate and the UK.

He pointed that bilateral economic cooperation covers a wide range of sectors, including oil and gas, technology and infrastructure.

Al Yousuf said that the Sultanate has the right setup for investment and business activities and that it represents an ideal gateway for flourishing regional and international markets. — ONA

SEE ALSO P5

Mystery monolith vanishes — alien action or local prank?

BUCHAREST: A shiny metal monolith vanished on Tuesday from Romania's mountainous Neamt county, four days after its sudden appearance close to an ancient Dacian fortress sparked speculation it may be related to a mystery structure seen in the United States.

A similar alien-looking pillar, was spotted in a Utah desert in the United States about two weeks ago. It disappeared after generating much excitement internationally among science-fiction fans, hearkening to Stanley Kubrick's 1968 film, "2001: A Space Odyssey", based on a novel by Arthur C Clarke. In the Kubrick movie, an alien monolith is a recurring symbol that appears to play a role in the development of human evolution. Rather than being an alien structure, the truth of the Romanian monolith may be more prosaic.



A metal monolith stands on the hills of Batca Doamnei, near Piatra Neamt, Romania, on Friday. — Reuters

lution. Rather than being an alien structure, the truth of the Romanian monolith may be more prosaic.

"The 9 feet tall structure disappeared overnight as quietly as it was erected last week", journalist Robert Iosub of the Ziar Piatra

Neamt local newspaper, who had seen the structure, said. "An unidentified person, apparently a bad local welder, made it... now all that remains is just a small hole covered by rocky soil", local reporters had discovered, he said. — Reuters



China's lunar probe lands on Moon, says Xinhua

BEIJING: An unmanned Chinese spacecraft landed on the Moon on Tuesday, state media reported, the latest milestone in a mission to collect samples from the lunar surface.

The Chang'e-5 spacecraft "landed on the near side of the moon late on Tuesday", the Xinhua report said, citing the China National Space Administration.

China has poured billions into its military-run space programme, with hopes of having a crewed space station by 2022 and of eventually sending humans to the Moon.

The mission's goal is to shovel up lunar rocks and soil to help scientists learn about the Moon's origins, formation and volcanic activity on its surface. — AFP

Environment Authority, PDO hold joint meeting

MUSCAT: The Environment Authority and Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) held a joint meeting on Tuesday in the presence of Dr Abdullah bin Ali al Amri, Chairman of Environment Authority, and Raoul Restucci, Managing Director of PDO.

The meeting discussed the existing cooperation between the Environment Authority and PDO and identified the projects being implemented by the

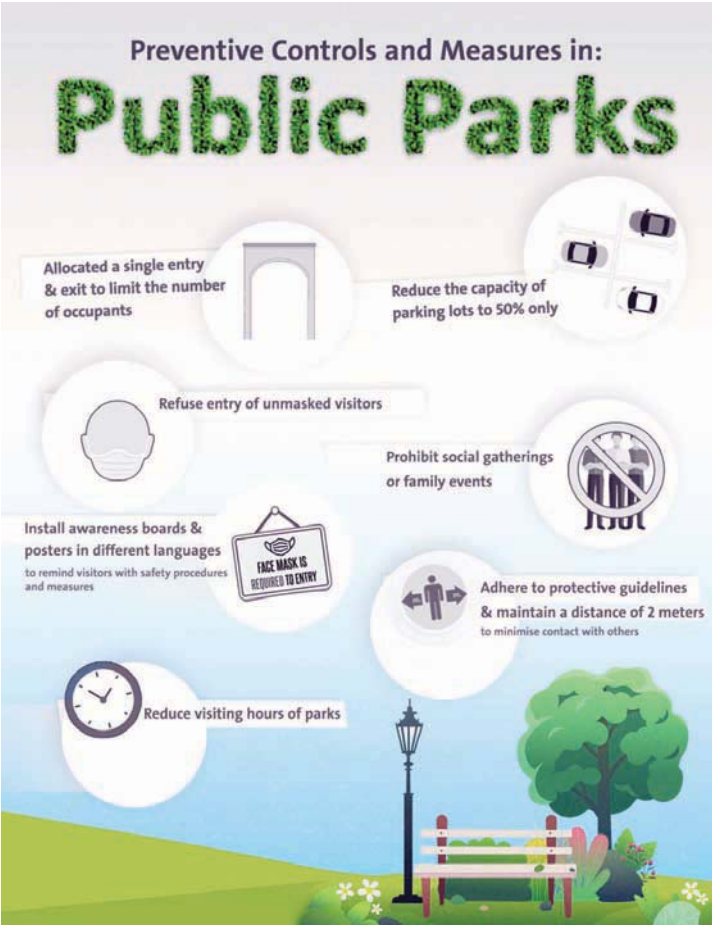


authority and the ways of redressing some environmental issues. The meeting shed light on the green award and the best environmental initiative for reducing plastic pollution and the national initiative for planting 10 million wild trees.

The meeting also reviewed research projects and studies in the field of reusing natural resources in a sustainable manner and the implementation stages of Lean methodology. — ONA

New set of activities reopened

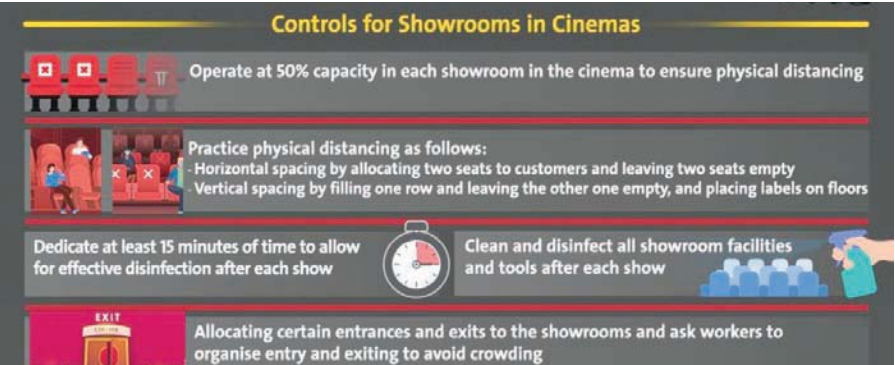
FROM PAGE 1



Parks should have a single point for entry and exit to limit the number of visitors, parking lots at 50 per cent capacity, reduced visit hours and no family events and social gatherings.

Amusement centres in commercial centres will also operate at 50 per cent capacity.

The Supreme Committee has decided to allow issuance of tourist visas for entry to the country as part of tourist delegations organised by hotels and tourism companies.



Ministry of Commerce, Industry & Investment Promotion

Announcement 7/2020

As the end of the financial year 2020 is approaching, the Ministry of Commerce, Industry & Investment Promotion announces that the last date for receiving any financial claims related to the year 2020 is Monday, 7/12/2020.

Therefore, all companies, establishments and individuals dealing with the Ministry are requested to submit their financial claims to the Department of Financial Affairs before the end of the receipt period.

The Ministry is not responsible for any delay in payment of any claims received after the date stated above.

Your cooperation is appreciated for the public interest.

modi.gov.om @modip_om @modip.om mcioman

Sultanate attends CSP-OPCW session

THE HAGUE: The Sultanate is currently participating in the 25th session of the Conference of States Parties (CSP) of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).

The Sultanate is represented by Dr Shaikh Abdullah bin Salem al Harthy, the Sultanate's ambassador to the Kingdom of the Netherlands, and its permanent representative to the organisation.

The five-day conference discusses a number of topics, including appointing the Director-General and the deputies, electing members



of the executive council, the external auditor, approval of the organisation's budget and amendments to the organisation's financial regulations, as well as violations of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the

threat arising from the use of chemical weapons.

The session also discusses the organisation's annual report on the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention in 2019. — ONA

Employers get grace period to change work status of non-Omani staff

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

The Ministry of Labor has announced that employers will get a grace period to correct the status of their expatriate employees between December 6 and January 6, as part of the efforts to regulate the labor market. The decision was announced on Tuesday.

The decision allows modifying the professions of the non-Omani workforce from the banned sectors to other professions or vice versa and permitting the amendment of occupations at different professional levels in accordance with the requirements of the profession.

Transfer of non-Omani manpower data from one activity to another in the same establishment according to the licensing requirements of the

business.

The decision allows amending the wages of the non-Omani workforce according to the approved work contract. Permission to transfer non-Omani manpower services from one employer to another according to the controls and prescribed actions.

An employer may apply for a license to recruit and engage in work a non-Omani citizen from inside the Sultanate in the suspended activities if conditions are met.

It allows cancellation of the worker leaving the work notification after paying the fees decided to cancel the report, fees and fines resulting from the expiration of the worker's license to practice work, and an exception to the period stipulated for canceling the notification by the employer.

Diam completes pipeline works in Al Dakhiliyah

MUSCAT: The Public Authority for Water (Diam) has completed improvements to its main water pipeline feeding Al Dakhiliya Governorate after 12 hours of non-stop work that has not affected the water supply in the governorate.

The improvement works which involved changing some pumps and valves, connecting new lines and conducting some mechanical and electrical works, was originally scheduled to last for 48 hours, was accomplished in just 12 hours thanks to the experience the members of the maintenance team have acquired and the good preparation for the task in hand.

The water pipeline improvement works was aimed to provide better water supply to all wilayats of the governorate.

ANNOUNCEMENT

RECALL CAMPAIGN
2019 - 2020 (JL) Jeep® Wrangler

Sultanate of Oman
Consumer Protection Authority

Starting Date of Campaign: **02.12.2020**
Recall Segment: **Electrical**
Recall Type: **Safety**
Recall Code: **W53**

Product Description:

MODEL AND MODEL YEAR	CHASSIS RANGE	NUMBER OF UNITS AFFECTED
2019 - 2020 (JL) Jeep® Wrangler	From	1C4HJXAG0KW629326
	To	1C4HJXFGXLW273140

Note: This recall only applies to the above vehicles.

Description of Recall:
Fiat Chrysler Automobiles, through its endeavor to deliver continuous quality improvement, has informed the market that in a batch of 630 vehicles sold in Oman, the Electronic Steering Lock (ESL) wiring harness on the above vehicles may come in contact with the steering column shaft while turning. This condition may cause wiring abrasion and may damage the wires over time. If certain wires become damaged, it may lead to a loss of motive power and/or power steering assist which may increase the risk of a crash without any prior warning.

Rectification Procedure:
Inspect the Electronic Steering Lock (ESL) wiring harness for any abrasion or damaged wires. Repair the wires if damaged and install a tie strap to secure the steering lock wire harness on all of the above vehicles mentioned.

Parts Number	Description
See Recall	Steering Column Wiring Harness

Service Procedure:
Should your vehicle fall in the range mentioned above, please contact our Customer Centre at Dhofar Automotive on 24584530 to make an appointment for your vehicle to be repaired if required.

Contact Details:
Telephone No: +968 2458 4530

E-Mail:
info@da-oman.com

Wattayah, Sohar, Niwra, Salalah, Mabela
For more information **245 845 30** | info@da-oman.com | www.dhofarautomotive.com

Download the **Zubair Automotive App** on Google Play | App Store

TO DOWNLOAD THE APP NOW SCAN THIS QR CODE

C.R.No. 1011003

74% COVID-19 patients are male

MUSCAT: Seventy-four per cent of COVID-19 patients were males and in the age group of 15 and 60 years. Half of the cases were registered in Muscat Governorate; similar to the spread of the pandemic in some countries.

This was revealed by a study conducted by the Ministry of Health's (MoH) Directorate General of Disease Surveillance and Control.

With the registration of the first case in the Sultanate on February 24, as a travel-related case followed by the spread of the pandemic across the Sultanate in line with the spread of the pandemic worldwide, an increase in the number of cases and deaths has been observed in the Sultanate. Therefore, there was a need to conduct a study to identify hospital admissions, intensive care units (ICUs) admissions and deaths related to the disease.

The study aims to facilitate the classification of risks for infected patients, especially the elderly, before and when they enter the hospital. This helps in improving the acceptance protocols for patients who require admission, in addition to improving the efficiency of epidemiological surveillance of COVID-19 patients.

It is hoped that the results of this study, conducted by the MoH, will enable the country's health sector to better manage the pandemic highlighting the most vulnerable groups, in addition to employing the results of this study in the classification of vaccine target groups.

To achieve these objectives, this study was conducted through data obtained from the National Surveillance Database of COVID-19. In this study, 68,967 laboratory-confirmed cases of COVID-19 were included, diagnosed from February 24 to July 19.

MAJOR FACTORS

Factors including gender, age groups, nationality and location, as well as symptoms of fever, cough and sore throat were studied. Furthermore, the study included the effect of the following chronic conditions like diabetes, hypertension, asthma, BMI >40, nervous system diseases, chronic lung diseases, patients using immunosuppressive drugs, chronic kidney disease, chronic blood cell disease and chronic liver disease. Pregnancy was among the factors included in the study.



This was also reflected in the high number of ICUs admissions, as well as deaths in Muscat. It was noted that the majority of recorded cases (81 per cent) were mild to moderate category in terms of severity of the disease while (14 per cent) were classified as severe and (5 per cent) as critical conditions.

During the study period, the rate of admission in general wards was (4 per cent) whereas (0.4 per cent) were admitted in ICUs, COVID-19 has been recorded as a cause of death in (0.5 per cent) of the cases, with an estimated mortality rate of 8.2 per 100,000 population out of the total population of the Sultanate (4.49 million).

SYMPTOM

With regard to symptoms, 40 per cent of these cases suffered from fever, 38 per cent had coughs, 37 per cent had sore throats, 34 per cent did not suffer from any symptoms studied and 12 per cent reported the presence of the three mentioned symptoms together.

The symptom of fever and cough was statistically associated with a higher rate of admission in general wards and admission in the ICUs while people who suffered sore throat were found to be the least admitted in the hospital, indicating that sore throat could not be used as a risk factor.

The most affected chronic diseases

The study aims to facilitate the classification of risks for infected patients, especially the elderly, before and when they enter the hospital. This helps in improving the acceptance protocols for patients who require admission, in addition to improving the efficiency of epidemiological surveillance of COVID-19 patients

in admissions in general wards and ICUs, as well as deaths were diabetes (2.9 per cent) and high blood pressure (0.7 per cent).

It was observed that patients over 60 years of age had a higher risk of admission (eight times), ICU admission (11 times) and mortality (4 times higher) than those aged 15 to 60. In addition, the results showed an increased risk of death among patients with certain chronic diseases including chronic lung diseases (4 times), as well as a BMI >40 and chronic kidney disease (3 times) each.

VULNERABLE GROUPS

While this study has clarified the most vulnerable groups and the high-risk rates associated with them, it may be possible for some to think that they are safe from danger as long as they are not belonging to these groups. However, the study stresses to all other people among the low risk groups the importance of taking preventive measures to spare the high-risk groups whom are living among us, the risk of infection transmission, which may lead to possible admission or death. Consequently, the results of this study can be invested in the best way to curb the pandemic and prevent individuals and institutions from its short and long-term effects. — ONA

3 workers drown in South Al Sharqiyah



MUSCAT: Rescue teams of the Public Authority for Civil Defence and Ambulance (PACDA) on Tuesday recovered bodies of three Asian workers who drowned while carrying out maintenance work in a well in Al Kamil W'al Wafi in South Al Sharqiyah Governorate. PACDA has called for following safety procedures while handling work in wells to avoid such incidents. — ONA

POLYCLINIC WITH DIALYSIS CENTRE FOR SALE IN AL KHUWAIR, MUSCAT

Fully operational Polyclinic with Operation Theatre, Dialysis Machines, and other Medical Equipment.

Successful track record of outsourcing dialysis services for Ministry of Health.

Contact: Tel: 99515261





Dhalkout



Harmony between mountain and sea

The Wilayat of Dhalkout, situated on the farthest coastal strip of Dhofar Governorate, is one of the border crossings to Yemen. The place is characterised by its natural landmarks, which make it one of the most attractive destinations in the governorate. With the availability of rain water during Khareef and the trees remaining green in the hills adjacent to the coasts for more than six months, it's generally believed the fall season in Dhofar begins and ends in the Wilayat of Dhalkout. The wilayat is famous for its crowded and long trees, especially the big-trunk Hirim Zairi. These trees are seen on the left side of the road before reaching the wilayat. Beautiful shore stretching out from the Wilayat of Rakhyout to the farthest border region is another attraction of Dhalkout. While sailing past the tranquil inlets, it is an exciting experience to see the luxuriance of the mountains in harmony with the wild beauty of the sea. These shores are also the

habitat of some rare types of sea-birds and migratory birds such as magpies. The four-kilometre shore situated in the heart of the wilayat is famous for its sunrise and sunset. Streams like Hazfut, Dhala'a, Sarfit, Zino and Quhud are the other attractive tourist destinations in the wilayat. The most prominent landmark is the stunning nature and environmental diversity. Despite its rugged terrain, the Government of Oman has successfully implemented paved roads that connect the area with other wilayats of the governorate. As it borders the Wilayat of Rakhyout on the east and Yemen on the west, it has a strategic location and has become a gateway for commercial transport from Oman to Yemen and vice-versa. Dhalkout is known for abundance of fish varieties such as squid and lobster, in addition to other different species that exist in Dhofar Governorate. Dhalkout is similar to the rest of the Dhofar wilayats in terms of traditional arts such as Hab-

bot, Al Raboub, Al Nana and Al Debarart. People of Dhalkout mainly depend on livestock rearing, fishing, beekeeping, farming and dairy products. Since the Blessed Renaissance, the wilayat has been enjoying qualitative health and education services. The Office of Dhofar Governor jointly with other service apparatus work constantly towards providing and upgrading services and facilities for the citizens. Dhofar Municipality supervises residential assemblies stretching out from Al Mughsayl to Diam Wafi in addition to other parks, springs and beaches. Work on a water desalination plant in the wilayat is going on, which will help resolve the issue of water shortage and raise the production capacity. Among other remarkable landmarks is Wadi Seeq, where trekkers can enjoy jumping off the rocks into the natural pools. A place called Khadrafi in the wilayat is known for its utmost fertile land, where plenty of local trees like wild fig grow.



British businessmen briefed about investment opportunities in Oman

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment on Monday organized a forum titled "Invest in Oman" in cooperation with the UK Department of International Trade to outline available investment opportunities in fields of tourism, logistics and financial services.

During the event, held via videoconferencing, Qais bin Mohammed bin Moosa al Yousuf, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, commended the depth of economic ties between the Sultanate and the UK. He pointed that bilateral economic cooperation covers a wide range of sectors, including oil and gas, technology and infrastructure.

Al Yousuf said that the Sultanate has the right setup for investment and business activities and that it represents an ideal gateway for flourishing regional and



international markets.

The forum reviewed working papers presented by the Public Authority for Economic Zones and Free Zones, the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, Asyad Group and Petroleum Development Oman. It also explored the investment climate in the Sultanate, its components and the incentives that it offers in the sectors of manufacturing and logistics services.

The Ministry outlined the services that it offers to entrepreneurs via "Invest in Oman" platform, which provides investors streamlined finalisation of transactions.

The United Kingdom tops the list of investment parties in the Omani market in terms of volume of direct investments, with the trade balance in this segment standing at RO 7.5 billion by the end of the first quarter this year, compared to RO 7.3 billion during the corresponding period last year. — ONA

World Aids Day marked



MUSCAT: Under the theme "global solidarity, resilient HIV services", the Sultanate, represented by the Ministry of Health (MoH), joined the world celebration of World Aids Day, which is observed on December 1.

Meanwhile, the Directorate-General for Disease Surveillance and Control at Ministry of Health held an event to mark the Day under the auspices of Dr Ahmed bin Mohammed al Saeedi, Minister of Health, in the presence of Dr Mohammed bin Saif al Abri, MoH's Under-Secretary for Health Affairs, Dr John Jabbour, Representative of

the World Health Organization (WHO) in the Sultanate, and a number of ministry's senior officials.

The webinar covered spectrum of topics where Dr Zayana al Habsi, Head of HIV, STIs and Hepatitis, reviewed the achievements and challenges regarding Aids and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) in the Sultanate. Moreover, Dr Seif al Abri, Director General of Disease Surveillance and Control, highlighted success story on the elimination of mother to child transmission of HIV and Syphilis in Oman.

— ONA

EduTrac Oman career expo tomorrow

MUSCAT: EducTrac 2020 Higher Education and Career Expo will be held tomorrow, December 3, from 6.30-7.10 pm.

Massrat Shaikh, educational psychologist and career counsellor, will participate in the virtual event as speaker and exhibitor from Al Ahlam Training and Higher Education Services.

She will be speaking to high school students to guide them on their vocational interest and abilities, calling them to recognise their strengths before they make a career decision. EduTrac 2020 is endorsed by Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, Ministry of Education and National Career Guidance Centre Oman.



3 held for trying to smuggle drugs



MUSCAT: The Directorate-General for Combating Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances at Royal Oman Police (ROP), arrested three expats while attempting to smuggle drugs in Muscat Governorate. The anti-drug police seized 29 bars of hashish from the arrestees. Legal procedures against them are currently under way.

State Council panel discusses draft budget

MUSCAT: The Expanded Economic Committee of the State Council at its meeting on Tuesday concluded discussing the draft state budget for the year 2021 and the report of Majlis Ashshura on it.

During the meeting, the committee comprising of members of the Economic Committee and the heads of the standing committees of the Council, headed by Shaikh Mohammed bin Abdullah al Harthy, Economic Committee Head, In the presence of the Secretary-General of the Council, were briefed on the foundations and assumptions on which the budget for the fiscal year 2021 is based.

The meeting discussed various aspects related to the project, including public revenues and aspects of spending, touched on a range of economic and financial aspects, and analysed statistics related to the Sultanate's financial position for the year 2021.

The committee appreciated the efforts made by the government in preparing the draft budget, which took into account the challenges of improving the main indicators of financial performance, and the pursuit of the economic and social goals for which the budget was drawn up in line with the tenth five-year development plan.

The committee also appreciated the observations made by Majlis Ashshura on the draft budget.

Following discussions, the committee decided to refer its report on the draft budget, its observations and opinions about it to the next ordinary sitting of the council for discussion, and then return it to the Council of Ministers, together with the recommendations of the two councils.

To Whom It May Concern

The Engineering Trading and Contracting Est. announces that Mr. Nileen Nampiyar, Indian Nationality, and holding a Passport No. U0098775 who is working in the position of Operation Director is no longer representing the company in any way after 31.12.2020. Those who are dealing with him in the name of the company is doing so at his/her responsibility and the company shall bear no responsibility after the announcement of this advertisement. Furthermore, those who have claims against the company should refer to the company within a month from the date of publishing the advertisement of contact 99289939.

ETCON



Announcement

As the end of fiscal year approaches, the Ministry of Social Development would like to notify all companies, institutions and individuals to submit their financial claims by 07/12/2020.

The Ministry is not responsible for delays in the payment of such claims submitted after the date mentioned above.

We thank you for adhering to our request; your cooperation is much appreciated.

www.mosd.gov.om

Recall Campaign
HINO 500 Series
Vehicles (2017-2020)

Date of Campaign : 2/12/2020
Recall Segment : Safety and Security
Recall Type : GCC Regulation- Workshop Action

Production Year	Brand	Vehicle Model	Affected Vehicle VIN Range	Nos. of Affected Vehicles	
2017 - 2020	HINO	FG8JP7A-PG3	From: JHDFG8JP7H7S10029 To: JHDFG8JP0L7711465	83	
		FM8JL7D-XG3	From: JHDFM8JL3J7S10041 To: JHDFM8JL2J7S10046	6	
		FM8JR7A-SG3	From: JHDFM8JR5H7S10024 To: JHDFM8JR0J7S10227	34	
		GH8JM7A-PG3	From: JHDGH8JM7H7S10085 To: JHDGH8JM4L7711122	36	
		GH8JR7A-PG3	From: JHDGH8JR8H7S10012 To: JHDGH8JRXJ7S10079	45	
		TOTAL			204

Description of Defect:

Fog lamps fitted originally are without Homologation and aiming adjustment function. As per GCC regulations these lamps are to be replaced with Homologation and adjustment aiming function.

Procedure:

Inspection of the vehicle and replacement of fog lamp 2 numbers as per the work procedure prescribed from Hino Motor Limited.

For More Information:

The customer of affected vehicles may please contact M/s. Saud Bahwan Automotive LLC for further details/ booking appointment etc.

Contact Details:

Telephone: 968-24509676/9684 on all working days from 08.30 to 17:00 Hrs.



World Bank report says Lebanon plunged into ‘deliberate depression’

BEIRUT: Lebanon's economy is sinking into a “deliberate depression”, the World Bank said on Tuesday in a damning report stressing the authorities’ failure to tackle the crisis.

The fall 2020 edition of the Lebanon Economic Monitor predicted the economy will have contracted by 19.2 per cent this year and projected a debt-to-GDP ratio of 194 per cent next year.

“A year into Lebanon's severe economic crisis, deliberate lack of effective policy action by authorities has subjected the economy to an arduous and prolonged depression”, a World Bank statement said.

Lebanon's economy started collapsing last year as a result of years of corrupt practices and mismanagement.

The crisis was made worse by a nationwide wave of anti-government protests that

paralysed the country late last year and the COVID-19 pandemic this year.

The August 4 Beirut port blast, one of the largest non-nuclear explosions in history, brought the country to its knees and further fuelled public distrust.

“Lebanon is suffering from a dangerous depletion of resources, including human capital, with brain drain becoming an increasingly desperate option”, the World Bank warned.

In 2020, Lebanon defaulted on its debt, banks imposed capital controls and inflation has reached triple-digit rates, dragging the country into its worst ever economic crisis.

Instead of taking emergency measures to rescue the economy, Lebanon's political elite has continued to dither and bicker. — AFP

Iranian law to boost nuclear enrichment goes into effect

TEHRAN: A law whereby Iran's scientists can enrich uranium to a level of 20 per cent went into effect on Tuesday, a milestone in the country's incremental violation of a 2015 deal with world powers to curb its nuclear activities.

Currently, Iran is enriching its uranium to a level of just under 5 per cent, even though the 2015 agreement limits it to 3.67 per cent.

An enrichment level of about 90 per cent is needed to create an atomic bomb.

The new law allows annual production of 120 kilogrammes at the 20 per cent level. It also allows the country's atomic agency to produce 500 kilograms of less-enriched uranium a month.

Under the law, the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) is also instructed to facilitate the creation of faster centrifuges so that they can be put to use in at least two facilities.

A 2015 agreement between Iran and other countries required it to limit production to low-enriched uranium, good for only civil purposes, in exchange for the lifting of international sanctions.

But after US President Donald Trump pulled the US out of the deal, Iran said it no longer feels bound by the agreement.



Vehicles drive by a billboard in honour of slain nuclear scientist Mohsen Fakhri-zadeh in Tehran. — AFP

Since then, it has violated the limitations set down several times.

The new law is proving controversial within Iran itself, with both the AEOI and the Iranian Foreign Ministry expressing doubts on Tuesday.

“The government has informed parliament that this legislative

step was neither necessary nor productive and will probably be of little help to the people”, said Foreign Ministry spokesman Khatibzadeh.

Parliament had by passing the law ignored the ministry's position, the spokesman told Irna news agency.

Meanwhile, the AEOI also reacted with incomprehension to the parliamentary decision. “We shouldn't do our enemies a favour”, said AEOI spokesman Behrus Kamalwandi, referring to the United States and Israel, who are against the nuclear deal.

— dpa

Syria graduate doctors set to battle COVID in rebel hub

AZAZ, Syria: Mohammed Mostafa al Mohammed started studying medicine in rebel-held northern Syria to help the victims of war, but instead he has graduated into a world battling the novel coronavirus pandemic.

The 29-year-old graduate from an opposition-backed university had expected to be tending to the wounded under the threat of bombardment by the Russia-backed Damascus regime.

But after endless regime offensives against Syria's last major rebel bastion of Idlib, a ceasefire took hold in March, just as COVID-19 started spreading worldwide.

“Our dream is to build Syria and treat the sick”, Mohammed, 29, said at his graduation ceremony in the town of Azaz in a part of Aleppo

province controlled by pro-Turkey rebels.

But “we're facing a difficult challenge” with the coronavirus, said the rescue worker turned doctor.

Humanitarian workers fear any further rise in novel coronavirus cases would be disastrous in northwestern Syria, where around half of three million people live in overcrowded camps or temporary shelters after being displaced by conflict.

In Idlib and adjacent parts of Aleppo province, opposition officials have recorded almost 15,766 novel coronavirus infections in total, including 166 deaths.

Around two-thirds of all confirmed COVID-19 cases in northwestern Syria have been

“Our dream is to build Syria and treat the sick

MOHAMMED
at his graduation ceremony in Aleppo

announced over the past month.

Mohammed was among the first 32 doctors who graduated from the “Aleppo University in Liberated Areas”, an institution founded in 2014 and backed by Syria's political opposition.

Dressed in dark blue and green graduation gowns, caps and facemasks, the new doctors lined

up on stage in a hall packed with friends and family.

Extending their right hand in front of them, they recited the Hippocratic Oath in unison in Arabic.

Mohammed, who hails from eastern Syria, was delighted to finally be graduating after the war forced him to put on hold his studies in 2012.

For two years, he volunteered as a rescue worker to help those wounded in bombardment on rebel-held areas, before resuming his studies from scratch in 2014.

“We were constantly exposed to air strikes and artillery fire”, he said of his time with the Syrian Civil Defence first responders known as the “White Helmets”.

— AFP



Syrian students from the ‘Aleppo University in Liberated Areas’, controlled by the pro-Turkey opposition, attending their graduation ceremony at the campus in Azaz in the rebel-controlled northern countryside of Syria's Aleppo province. — AFP

JERUSALEM

Pandemic brings dark times to Jerusalem's Old City

As night grips Jerusalem's walled Old City, its ancient alleyways become a ghost town of haunting shadows and light.

Mornings used to reveal bright picture-postcard scenes of tourists from around the world stopping to buy souvenirs at Palestinian shops as they made their way to biblical sites holy to Jews, Muslims and Christians.

But a modern-day plague, the coronavirus pandemic, is now keeping the visitors away from the Old City and bringing



hardship and heartbreak to residents. “In previous years, the city used to be filled with tourists during Christmas time. — AFP

EGYPT

Photographer detained after Pyramids dancer shoot

Egyptian police have detained a photographer for disrespect after he shot images of a dancer in ancient costume at the Pyramid of Djoser outside Cairo, a security source has confirmed.

Rumours had swirled on social media for days that the model, Salma al Shimi, had been arrested after Monday's shoot at the Saqqara necropolis, 30 kilometres south of Cairo, but the source said police had detained the photographer on Monday.

“A photographer has been



arrested after a private shoot with dancer Salma al Shimi in the archaeological zone”, the source said, adding that his case had been referred to the courts.

— AFP

YEMEN

Shelling kills 7 Yemen children, say medics

Activists shelling of government-held districts of Yemen has killed seven children over the past two days, medics and relief agencies said.

In Yemen's third largest city Ta'ez, which is government-held but almost surrounded by fighter forces, two young girls, one just nine months old, were pronounced dead on Monday evening after a fighter bombardment that also wounded seven other people, medics said.

There was no immediate



reaction from the fighters, who have repeatedly played up the high civilian death toll from air strikes by a coalition that has been supporting the beleaguered government. — AFP



In brief

■ SOUTH KOREA

**FORMER SOUTH KOREAN PRESIDENT CHUN DOO CONVICTED**

SEOUL: Former South Korean President Chun Doo Hwan received a suspended sentence of several months on Monday for defamation. The 89-year-old former dictator was charged in May 2018 on charges of defaming Catholic priest and former democracy activist Cho Chul Hyun, also known as Cho Bi Oh, who died in 2016 - and wrongly calling him a liar in his memoirs published in 2017. According to his own account, Cho had seen gunshots being deliberately aimed at civilians from helicopters when the 1980 demonstrations in Gwangju were suppressed. — **dpa**

■ AUSTRALIA

**AUSTRALIA TO DEVELOP HYPERSONIC MISSILES**

SYDNEY: Australia will jointly develop hypersonic cruise missiles with the United States in a bid to counter China and Russia which are developing similar weapons, Defence Minister Linda Reynolds said on Tuesday. "We will continue to invest in advanced capabilities to give the Australian Defence Force more options to deter aggression against Australia's interests," Reynolds said in a statement. She did not reveal the cost of developing the missiles or when they would be operational. Australia had set aside up to A\$9.3 billion this year for high-speed, long-range missile defence systems. — **AFP**

■ JAPAN

**JAPAN TO LOOSEN WORK RULES ON FOREIGNERS**

TOKYO: Japan is loosening regulations on part-time work for foreigners stuck in the country due to the novel coronavirus and having trouble supporting themselves, the government said on Tuesday. While temporary, the measures - which take effect from Tuesday - are a liberalisation of labour curbs on foreigners in an aging economy suffering from huge shortages of workers but where the ruling party has been reluctant to embrace a full-fledged immigration reform. A number of foreigners in Japan, either as students or on other visa statuses, have been stuck in Japan longer than expected. — **AFP**

India meets with farmers after days of Delhi protests

NEW DELHI: India attempted to calm nearly a week of raucous protests by meeting with farmers on Tuesday after rallies against agricultural reforms sparked violent clashes with police on the outskirts of the capital.

The plight of farmers is a major political issue in India with thousands committing suicide in recent years due to debt and increasingly erratic weather patterns blamed on climate change.

Laws rushed through parliament earlier this year by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government mean growers are now free to legally sell their produce anywhere in India instead of getting guaranteed prices from state-run markets.

Farmers were met with tear gas and water cannon when they marched on New Delhi last week and are now facing-off against heavily-armed security forces at two major entry points to the city.

Many of the demonstrators come from northern Punjab state which is controlled by the Congress party, the main opposition to Modi's administration.

Congress leaders have argued the farming reforms will give private corporations free rein to exploit farmers, an argument echoed by the protesters.



Police detain protesters as they try to demonstrate at a street in a market area against the central government's recent agricultural reforms in New Delhi. — **AFP**

"As big players... enter the field, our existing government agriculture markets will become redundant and private players will exploit the farmers," said Harmandeep Singh, who joined the demonstration from Punjab.

Singh said the farmers are calling for a written guarantee from the government that the existing minimum price for crops would not be removed.

Addressing a rally on Monday, Modi accused the opposition of spreading "misinformation" about the reform package.

THE PLIGHT OF THE FARMERS IS A MAJOR POLITICAL ISSUE IN INDIA WITH THOUSANDS COMMITTING SUICIDE IN RECENT YEARS

But his government brought forward talks with farmer group representatives by two days on Tuesday in an effort to forestall more rallies after protesters announced plans to blockade other routes into the city.

Elsewhere police set up roadblocks and arrested demonstrators trying to march into the capital.

The protests have also provoked a diplomatic spat between India and Canada, which is home to a large Punjabi-origin diaspora. — **AFP**

Hundreds of Indonesians flee as Java volcano belches hot gas

JAKARTA: More than 550 people fled their village after a volcano in Indonesia's East Java province spewed searing gas down its slopes early Tuesday, the country's disaster management agency said.

The alert level for the Semeru volcano in Lumajang district remained at one notch above normal despite the eruption, said agency spokesman Raditya Jati.

There were no reports of casualties, but the fleeing villagers were in urgent need of food and masks, he said. "A public kitchen is being prepared and health

authorities are distributing masks with the help of soldiers and police," he said.

Semeru is the second Indonesian volcano to have come to life in recent days. On Sunday, authorities raised the Lewatolo volcano on Lembata island the second-highest level following a series of eruptions, officials said.

The eruptions forced the evacuation of nearly 3,000 people and the closure of the island's airport. Indonesia sits on the so-called Pacific Ring of Fire, an area known for seismic upheavals, and

has about 128 active volcanoes.

Meanwhile, hundreds of Papuans held rallies across at least eight cities in Indonesia on Tuesday to renew calls for independence, as a separatist group declared it had established a provisional government in exile.

The demonstrations marked the anniversary of West Papua declaring independence from Dutch rule in 1961, which was followed by a contentious UN-sanctioned referendum in 1969 that brought Papua under Indonesian control.

— **Agencies**



An eruption of Mount Ije Lewotolok is seen in Lembata, East Nusa Tenggara Province, Indonesia. — **Reuters**

Lonely no more as Kaavan the elephant makes new friend

ODDAR MEANCHEY, Cambodia: It was his first contact with another elephant in eight years.

Reaching out with his trunk, Kaavan tentatively greeted a fellow inhabitant of the Cambodian sanctuary where he is beginning his new life after being rescued from grim conditions in a Pakistani zoo.

The 36-year-old bull elephant — dubbed the "world's loneliest" — was the sole Asian elephant at Islamabad's dilapidated zoo.

Animal rights groups launched a campaign to save him from the substandard conditions there, boosted by spirited social media support from US actress and musician Cher.

He arrived in Cambodia on Monday to much fanfare — including a welcome from Cher herself, who not only travelled to see him off from Pakistan, but also arrived ahead of him at Siem Reap airport.

Tuesday saw Kaavan settling into his enclosure at Kulen Prom Tep Wildlife Sanctuary, where he was seen touching trunks with another elephant, captured in images provided by rights group Four Paws.

"First contact with an elephant in eight years — this is a huge moment for Kaavan," said Martin Bauer, a spokesman with the Austria-based group that worked for months to get him ready for the flight.



Newly arrived Asian elephant Kaavan in his new enclosure at the Kulen Prom Tep Wildlife Sanctuary in Cambodia's Oddar Meanchey province. — **AFP**

"Kaavan will finally have the chance to live a species-appropriate and peaceful life," Bauer said, adding that the entire

team was extremely moved to witness the interaction.

"He has a very bright future ahead of him."

Thailand urges calm after 4 test positive for virus

BANGKOK: Thai authorities urged calm on Tuesday as they scramble to trace a potential coronavirus outbreak after at least four women tested positive on returning from neighbouring Myanmar.

Since detecting the first case outside of China back in January, Thailand has managed to keep COVID-19 infections low, at just over 4,000 cases, in part by imposing strict entry rules.

But it shares an extremely porous 2,400-kilometre border with Myanmar, where the virus is rampant, with more than 1,000 new cases a day in recent months.

Four Thai women who worked in the notorious Myanmar border town of Tachilek and returned to Thailand have now tested positive, health officials said Tuesday.

Prime Minister Prayut Chan-O-Cha said so far more than 100 people the women may have been in contact with have been tested, and officials are tracking down more.

The authorities have not confirmed where the women worked in Tachilek, but Thai media reported that they were employed at an "entertainment centre" — a euphemism that can include bars, karaoke lounges and brothels. — **AFP**

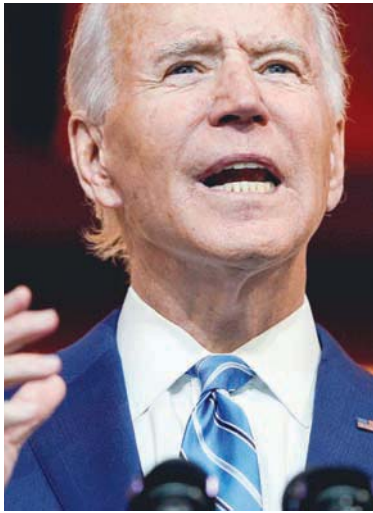
Biden to introduce top economic advisers as pandemic threat worsens

WILMINGTON: US President-elect Joe Biden will formally introduce his top economic policy advisers on Tuesday as his administration prepares to take power amid a slowing economic recovery hampered by the resurgent coronavirus pandemic.

Biden will appear at an event in his hometown of Wilmington, Delaware, alongside his selections for senior roles, including his nominee for US Treasury secretary, former Federal Reserve Chair Janet Yellen.

The team's makeup reinforces Biden's view that a more aggressive approach to the pandemic is required. The advisers have all expressed support for government stimulus to maximise employment, reduce economic inequality and help women and minorities, who have been disproportionately hurt by the economic downturn.

Other picks include Cecilia Rouse, an economist at Princeton



US President-elect Joe Biden

University, as chair of the Council of Economic Advisers; economists Heather Boushey and Jared Bernstein as council members; and Neera Tanden, chief executive of the liberal Center for American Progress think tank, as head of the Office of Management and Budget.

The transition to a Biden

administration has proceeded despite Republican President Donald Trump's false claims that he lost the election as a result of voter fraud.

On Monday, Biden received his first full classified intelligence briefing since winning the November 3 election, after Trump's refusal to concede delayed the formal transition process for weeks. Arizona and Wisconsin, two battleground states where Trump has pursued fruitless efforts to overturn the results, each certified Biden's victory on Monday. The certification of vote totals is typically a formality, but the process took on added significance amid Trump's baseless allegations.

The Trump campaign planned to file a lawsuit in the Wisconsin Supreme Court on Tuesday, alleging abuse around the process of absentee voting, Fox News reported. The campaign did not immediately reply to Reuters'

request for comment. Trump has pursued a series of legal challenges in numerous states, although none has thus far resulted in any meaningful gains for the president. Most of the lawsuits have been rejected by judges, who have expressed skepticism about the claim that the election results are illegitimate. The Electoral College, which selects the presidential winner based on state-by-state results, is scheduled to meet on December 14.

Biden, the Democratic former vice president, will take office on January 20.

Biden's latest nominations would place several women in top economic roles, reflecting his commitment to increasing diversity at the highest levels of the federal government.

Rouse would be the first Black woman to lead the Council of Economic Advisers, which advises the president on economic policy.

— Reuters



Firms seek emergency EU approval of vaccines

FRANKFURT: Moderna and Pfizer-BioNTech are in a tight race to launch their COVID-19 vaccines in Europe after both applied for emergency EU approval on Tuesday, though there was uncertainty over whether a rollout could begin this year.

The applications to the European Medicines Agency (EMA) came a day after Moderna sought emergency use for its shot in the United States and more than a week after Pfizer and BioNTech did the same.

US drugmaker Pfizer and

its German development partner BioNTech said their vaccine could be launched in the European Union as early as this month. "We can start to deliver within a few hours (of an approval)," said Sierk Poetting, head of operations and finance at BioNTech. "We have been stocking up. And everything that is there can really be distributed within a few hours."

The EMA clouded the timeline, however, when it said it would complete its review for that vaccine by December 29 at the latest, and for Moderna's shot by January 12. — AFP

UN: Two thirds of school-age kids without Internet access

GENEVA: Two thirds of school-age children worldwide have no Internet at home, a UN report found on Tuesday, even as pandemic-induced school closures have made online access vital to getting an education.

In all, an estimated 1.3 billion children between the ages of three and 17 do not have Internet connections in their homes, said the joint report from the United Nations Children's Fund (Unicef) and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU).

The report also found that a similar lack of access among youths and young adults, with 63 per cent of all 15 to 24-year-olds unconnected at home.

"That so many children and young people have no internet at home is more than a digital gap, it is a digital canyon," Unicef chief Henrietta Fore warned in a statement.

Lacking connectivity prevents young people from "competing in the modern economy. It isolates them from

the world," she said.

The report's findings are particularly worrying, she said, at a time when school closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic remain widespread, forcing hundreds of millions of students to rely on virtual learning.

"Put bluntly: Lack of Internet access is costing the next generation their futures."

The report cautioned that even before the pandemic struck, the digital divide was deepening inequalities, allowing children from the poorest households and from rural or low-income countries to fall ever further behind their peers with little chance to catch up. It found that fewer than one in 20 school-age children from low-income countries had access to the Internet at home, compared to nine out of 10 in wealthier nations.

Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia are the regions where children are least able to get online, with a full nine out of 10 children without Internet access at home. — AFP

Ethiopia war may turn into guerrilla insurgency

ADDIS ABABA/NAIROBI: Ethiopia's nearly month-long war against rebellious northern forces may be transforming into a guerrilla conflict, experts said on Tuesday, even though federal troops declared victory after capturing the Tigrayan regional capital at the weekend.

Fighting since November 4 is believed to have killed thousands of people, as well as forcing refugees into Sudan, dragging in Eritrea, and worsening hunger and suffering among Tigray's more than 5 million people.

Reports of clashes between Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's soldiers and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) were still coming out of the region, though communications remain largely cut and outside access blocked.

Abiy accuses the TPLF of treason, specifically for attacking an army base, while the Tigrayans say their ex-military comrade and partner in government wants to dominate their ethnic group for personal power. Both sides scoff at the other's accusations. Federal forces took Tigray's highland capital Mekelle in hours on Saturday.

TPLF leaders fled to the hills, saying they were resisting and taking prisoners. Asked about ongoing fighting, TPLF head



People sit in the shade of a tree next to beds and belongings at the Um Raquba camp in Sudan's eastern Gedaref province as land is being cleared to house more Ethiopian refugees fleeing fighting from Ethiopia's northern Tigray province. — AFP

Debretsion Gebremichael said in a text: "Yes. On three directions. Two around Mekelle. One 50km away." There was no immediate response from the government. Reuters has been unable to verify claims from both sides.

Two regionally-run Tigrayan TV stations, including the TPLF's 'Dimtsi Woyane' ('Voice of the Revolution'), were still on air, although it was unclear where they were broadcasting from. Government-affiliated media

have not yet broadcast any images from Mekelle.

A United Nations aid worker in touch with people in Tigray said large areas remained outside federal control and fighting was still taking place on several fronts.

There was still scant coordination with aid workers, the source added. "There are skirmishes continuing in many parts of Tigray and we are seeing the hallmarks of the beginning of an insurgency," Horn of Africa

expert Rashid Abdi told an online forum. "The terrain, geography and history suggest this will be a long, drawn-out insurgency." Both the federal army and the TPLF have long military experience — from toppling a Marxist dictator in 1991 to fighting neighbouring Eritrea from 1998-2000. Though outnumbered and expelled from their capital, the Tigrayans can exploit their mountainous terrain and long borders with Sudan and Eritrea. — Reuters

SHORT TAKES

GERMANY

2 killed by car in German town pedestrian zone

BERLIN: Two people were killed and up to 15 injured on Tuesday when they were hit by a car in a pedestrian area of the western German city of Trier, the city's mayor said, according to public broadcaster SWR.

Police said several people had been killed, having earlier put the death toll at two. "We have arrested one person, one vehicle has been secured. Two people have died, according to preliminary indications. Please continue to avoid the



downtown area," police said on Twitter.

A 51-year-old suspect from the Trier area was being questioned, police said. Mayor Wolfram Leibe had rushed to the scene. — Reuters

CROATIA

Croatian PM infected with coronavirus

BELGRADE: Croatian Prime Minister Andrej Plenkovic has tested positive for the coronavirus, his government said late on Monday. Plenkovic had already been in isolation after his wife tested positive at the weekend.

Plenkovic is not showing severe symptoms and continues to work from home. On Tuesday, he took part in a video conference with the governors of Croatian districts, Health Minister Vili Beros told reporters.

The country is struggling with



the epidemic, reporting a high number of daily infections, as well as a rising number of deaths related to COVID-19. There was another day-on-day rise on Tuesday, to 75 deaths. — dpa

AUSTRIA

Austrian mass testing starts with trial run

VIENNA: Austria started its country-wide screening for the novel coronavirus in the small town of Annaberg-Lungötz near Salzburg on Tuesday, in a trial run before proper mass testing gets under way at the end of the week.

The government has ordered 10 million rapid tests, aiming to screen a significant percentage of Austria's 9 million people in two waves.

The first wave will start on Friday in Vienna and in the provinces of Tirol and Vorarlberg.



Chancellor Sebastian Kurz has urged the population to take part in the voluntary programme, arguing that detecting many COVID-19 cases would help to ease current lockdown measures.

— dpa

Biden plan to end US fossil fuel subsidies faces big challenges

TIMOTHY GARDNER

President-elect Joe Biden’s promise to end US fossil fuel subsidies worth billions of dollars a year for drillers and miners could be hard to keep due to resistance from lawmakers in a narrowly divided Congress, including from within his own party.

The challenge reflects just one of the obstacles that Biden will need to overcome as he seeks to usher in sweeping measures to combat climate change and transform the nation’s economy to net-zero emissions within three decades.

Biden has said axing fossil fuel subsidies will generate money to help pay for his broader \$2 trillion climate plan. While Biden can take executive action to reverse President Donald Trump’s rollbacks of rules meant to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, reforming tax breaks that allow companies to produce oil, gas and coal more cheaply will require Congress

THE CHALLENGE REFLECTS JUST ONE OF THE OBSTACLES THAT BIDEN WILL NEED TO OVERCOME

to pass legislation. Doing so could be hard, even though Biden spent 36 years in the Senate where he is known as a dealmaker.

“It’s dead on arrival in the Senate”, said Gilbert Metcalf, a former deputy assistant secretary for environment and energy at the Treasury Department under former president Barack Obama, referring to any standalone legislation ditching the tax breaks if Republicans maintain control of the chamber.

Even if two of Biden’s fellow Democrats win runoff votes in Georgia on January 5, bringing the Senate to a 50-50 split with Vice President-elect Kamala Harris acting as tie breaker, chances of passing a tax package are slim, experts said. That is because moderate Democrats from fossil fuel producing states, like Senators Martin Heinrich of New Mexico and Joe Manchin of West Virginia, the top Democrat on the Senate Energy Committee, could stymie the effort.

“In states like New Mexico, where senators might be green enough to support a climate bill... a measure that merely strips tax provisions looks like a non-starter”, said Kevin Book, an analyst at ClearView Energy Partners. Neither Manchin’s office, nor Heinrich’s responded to requests for comment. Obama also wanted to ditch tax breaks for fossil fuels to send a signal to the world that the United States was serious about speeding a transition away from fossil fuels to tackle climate change. But even with a commanding Democratic majority in the Senate in Obama’s first six years in office, he was unable to kill the subsidies. The Biden transition team did not respond to a request for comment.

Doing away with tax breaks on producers of fuels that emit greenhouse gases would fit neatly with Biden’s pro-climate agenda, which marks a reversal from Trump’s efforts to roll back climate regulations while boosting fossil fuel output. — Reuters

VIRAL INTERFERENCE

Could Covid knock out flu this winter?

MATTHIAS BLAMONT

As Europeans brace for a grim winter with the threat of rising COVID-19 infections, minimal numbers of flu cases recorded so far point to a possible silver lining.

Data available for Europe since the beginning of October, when flu case numbers usually start to ramp up, mirror shallow figures seen in the Southern Hemisphere earlier this year. Some doctors say a combination of lockdowns, mask wearing and handwashing appear to have hampered transmission of the flu, while warning that the data should be treated with caution because the peak of the season is weeks or even months away.

According to Flu News Europe, a joint monitoring platform of the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control and the World Health Organization which collects samples in 54 European regions, only one person was diagnosed with flu out of 4,433 sentinel tests during September 28-November 22. This sentinel-source data — case figures collated by national health authorities based on samples taken by a range of community doctors — translates into a positivity rate of 0.02 per cent, well below a 10 per cent threshold that the WHO considers to be

“epidemic” when it comes to flu.

At the same time last year, this percentage stood at 15 per cent. While scientists caution that the coronavirus pandemic has constrained testing for flu, the low sentinel rate so far will provide some relief to governments and health authorities, which had feared a potentially lethal

“In any given typical year, we should be witnessing hundreds of influenza cases at this stage in Europe and beyond

BRUNO LINA
Senior virologist

“twindemic” of COVID-19 and flu that could overwhelm hospitals during the winter.

“In any given typical year, we should be witnessing hundreds of influenza cases at this stage in Europe and beyond”, Bruno Lina, a senior virologist with Hospices Civils de Lyon, which runs 13 hospitals in France’s third-largest city, said.

“Steps adopted to prevent transmission of COVID-19 are very efficient against influenza and other respiratory viruses.” He and two other experts also cited the possible impact of “viral interference”, also known as superinfection resistance — a mechanism by which being exposed to a virus triggers an immune response that is deadly to other pathogens.

“In this instance, this means the coronavirus is currently filling a space that makes it very difficult, if not impossible, for other respiratory viruses such as influenza to coexist with it”, he said.

Seasonal flu viruses cause between 4 and 50 million infections each year and up to 70,000 Europeans die annually of causes linked to flu, particularly among older adults and at-risk groups. Deaths in Europe attributed to COVID-19 have exceeded 370,000 so far this year.

Several scientists cautioned that any success in curbing Covid contamination could also reduce the viral interference that is keeping flu at bay. Flu infections usually peak in the first weeks of the year in the Northern Hemisphere.

This year in Europe it was in February. As many governments ease restrictions to allow festive gatherings for Christmas and the new year, health authorities fear tackling the pandemic could be made more difficult. — Reuters

I’M NO PARTY BOY

One Nobel winner won’t miss the pomp at low-key awards

SIMON JOHNSON

Spare a thought for this year’s Nobel Prize winners. Gone are the ball gowns, white tie and tails, concerts, banquets and adulation that come with arguably the world’s most coveted awards.

With the coronavirus pandemic tearing through Europe, celebrations this year will be modest and remote. Instead of wining and dining in Stockholm and Oslo later this month, in many cases winners will receive their award in their home country at an agreed venue from a Swedish diplomat.

The number of guests will depend on local restrictions, and plans are still subject to change given the unpredictability of the virus.

“We... will make sure that the laureates receive their medals and diplomas in one way or the other, if the situation changes”, said Rebecka Oxelstrom, spokeswoman for the Nobel Foundation, which overseas the prizes.

The low-key celebrations will matter to some laureates more than others. Reinhard Genzel, the German astrophysicist who shared the physics prize this year with Britain’s Roger Penrose and American Andrea Ghez for discoveries about black holes, was not losing too much sleep.

“I’m not a party boy, anyhow”, he said. “Of course I would have preferred to have this highest point of my research career to be celebrated in Stockholm, mainly also to celebrate with my family and my core science team,” he added. “Yet, given the global situation, the Nobel Committee did exactly the right thing.”

Sweden’s Nobel Foundation, which handles Nobel Prizes apart from the peace award which is administered by the Norwegian Nobel Institute in Oslo, has been working out the logistics of



German astrophysicist Reinhard Genzel, Director of the Max Planck Institute for Extraterrestrial Physics, in Garching. — Reuters

THE NUMBER OF GUESTS WILL DEPEND ON LOCAL RESTRICTIONS, AND PLANS ARE STILL SUBJECT TO CHANGE

how to honour winners around the world. This year’s ceremonies will be short, with medals and diplomas laid out on a table. They take place on December 7 and 8.

“Gloves will be used when unpacking the medal and diploma”, Oxelstrom said. Venues will vary. Genzel, for example, said he will receive his medal in the Bavarian State Chancellery in Munich, while others will be handed out at Swedish diplomatic residences or scientific institutes.

Literature winner Louise Glück and medicine laureate Michael Houghton

will receive their diplomas and medals in their homes. The traditional lectures will be streamed next week on the Nobel organisation’s website, as will a concert from the Stockholm Concert Hall, without an audience, on December 8, two days before the main event.

On Thursday, December 10, the Swedish king gives a digital welcome as part of the main prize giving, which will include footage of the individuals receiving their awards. It will be beamed from Stockholm City Hall to Nobel Prize digital channels. — Reuters

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OMAN U-16 TEAM TO BEGIN EXTERNAL CAMP IN BAHRAIN ON SUNDAY

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, DEC 1

Oman national U-16 football team will travel to Bahrain on Sunday to begin the first overseas camp as part of the team's preparation for the AFC U-16 Championship.

The scheduled external camp is the first for the team after restarting the sporting activities since August due to COVID-19 pandemic.

The team, coached by Hilal al Aufi, will have two preparatory matches in the camp against Bahrain U-16 football team.

The Sultanate team is currently undergoing their third domestic camp in Muscat and that will be followed by the abroad camp. The external camp in Manama city will shape more players technically and examine the current readiness status and support the coaching staff to have the initial kick off list.

The friendly matches with Bahrain team are crucial as they are the hosts of the Asian event

and the team had commenced the restarting of training programme since more than four months.

Definitely, both matches will identify a lot for the coaching staff and allow the head coach to test many new faces and implement different tactical scenarios.

The technical director at the Oman Football Association (OFA) Slobodan Pavkovic, will join the team in the external camp in Bahrain. Presence of Serbian coach Pavkovic will definitely support the coaching staff and the team to implement the training sessions on better format and under high technical training standards.

The Asian event is the top assignment for the national junior team and the Sultanate team is under intensive programme to show the best during the championship.

The top Asian junior event is moved to 2021 and the exact dates of the championship will be announced later by the Asian Football Confederation (AFC).

According to the AFC,



the rules for the AFC U-16 Championship in Bahrain will allow players born on or after January 1, 2004 to play in the tournament.

Oman will play against Tajikistan, Yemen and the United Arab Emirates teams in Group B at the AFC U-16 Championship. The top two teams in the group will advance to the quarterfinal. The top four teams in the AFC U-16 finals will represent Asia at the Fifa U-17 World Cup in 2021

in Peru.

The existing list of the under way internal camp featured some new faces from Al Mudhaibi, Al Rustaq, Al Nasr and Ahli Sidab. The coaching staff of the national team believe in giving equal chances for all the players and the selection focuses on the top and potential members to represent the team at AFC U-16 Championship in Bahrain in 2021.

During the previous internal

The Sultanate team is currently undergoing their third domestic camp in Muscat and that will be followed by the abroad camp.

The external camp in Manama city will shape more players technically and examine the current readiness status and support the coaching staff to have the initial kick off list

camps in the past few months, the head coach of national U-16 football team had understood on the physical and fitness situation of the players and noted down the strong and weak points on the technical status for each player.

The U-16 team's squad: Salim al Abdali, Jawad al Ezzi, Hamza al Eisari, Abdulrahman al Jabri, Murshid al Hamhami, Abdul Aziz al Ruzaiqi, Ammar al Saadi, Mishari al Hasani, Muhannad al Saadi (Suwaiqi), Fahd al Mukhaini, Mamoun al Oraimi, (Al Oruba), Turki Abdullah, (Al Ettihad), AbdulMajid al Balushi, Ali al Balushi, Al Mundher al Hasani (Oman), Ayham al Raqqadi, Abdulaleem al Rawahi (Fanja), Mansoor al Amri (Al Salam), Mohammed al Muqbali (Sohar), Al Motasim al Sameen (Dhofar) and Khalid al Hashemi (Al Nahda), Ibrahim al Habsi (Al Mudhaibi), Mohammed Sameer al Balushi (Ahli Sidab), Mohammed Abdulhakeem (Al Nasr) and Ahmed al Hilali (Al Rustaq).



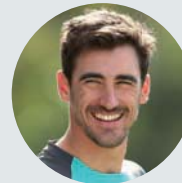
Bumrah gives India's bowling woes

India's bowling shortcomings have been laid bare in the first two one-day internationals against Australia and pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah has to his rhythm quickly.



Labuschagne ready to open

Marnus Labuschagne is ready to step up in David Warner's absence and open the batting for Australia in the remaining white-ball matches against India.



Finch backs Starc to rebound

Australia captain Aaron Finch has backed under-fire paceman Mitchell Starc to rebound after the left-arm was feasted upon by India's batsmen in the first two matches of the series.

Lazio ace Immobile tackles past demons on Dortmund return

Dortmund were Italy forward Immobile's first club outside of his home country and that disappointing time in the Bundesliga was followed by a similarly unsuccessful six months at Sevilla, before returning to Serie A

MILAN: **Ciro Immobile** returns to the scene of one of his unhappiest spells as a player when Lazio take on the goal ace's former club Borussia Dortmund in the Champions League on Wednesday.

Dortmund were Italy forward Immobile's first club outside of his home country and that disappointing time in the Bundesliga was followed by a similarly unsuccessful six months at Sevilla, before returning to Serie A.

Lazio are just one point behind their German hosts who lead Group F with two games to play, and four ahead of third-placed Club Brugge.

The Italians are well-positioned to advance to the last 16 in their return to the Champions League after a 13-year absence.

Last season's European 'Golden Shoe' winner thanks to his 36 league goals in Italy, Immobile's strikes powered Lazio to a fourth-place finish in Serie A.

This campaign he has scored three Champions League goals in two games — one in a 3-1



Zenit Saint Petersburg's Wilmar Barrios in action with Lazio's **Ciro Immobile**. — Reuters

win over Dortmund in Rome and twice against Zenit with the same scoreline last time out in the Stadio Olimpico.

In between, Immobile missed two games, both 1-1 draws, against Club Brugge and away at Zenit, because of positive coronavirus tests.

"He is important for our football," said coach Simone Inzaghi.

"He'll make the fortunes of Lazio, and also those of Italy."

In total, Immobile has seven Champions League goals from 12 appearances between Lazio, Dortmund, Sevilla and Juventus. He was also top scorer in the Europa League in 2017-2018.

But despite his record performances with Lazio, the player known as 'King **Ciro**' to fans, has been criticised for his failure to perform well outside of Italy.

An 18 million euro (\$22 million) move to Jurgen Klopp's Dortmund in 2014 reaped just three goals in 24 appearances, before a transfer after just one season to Sevilla, who loaned him to Torino.

"I arrived at Dortmund at the wrong time, during a generational change," said Immobile.

"There were some difficulties, but I don't want to say anything about this. I know when I deserve praise or criticism."

'EXTRA STIMULUS'

He returned to Lazio in 2016 for less than 10 million euros, the same year former 'Biancocelesti' forward Inzaghi took over as coach. And the 30-year-old has flourished in a system tailor-made to his strengths, alongside Luis Alberto and Joaquin Correa, and midfielders Sergej Milinkovic-Savic and Marco Parolo.

Immobile extended his contract with Lazio by two years through 2025, after last season matching Gonzalo Higuain's single-season Italian league record of 36 goals.

Immobile also led the Serie A scorers in 2013-14 with 22 goals for Torino and with Lazio in 2017-18 with 29. — AFP

Shuaib powers Maniz Azad to massive win

MUSCAT: Star Omani all-rounder Shuaib Ismail powered Maniz Azad International to a massive 175-run victory against Jumbo Electronics in a C Division T20 League game at Muscat Municipality ground 2 in Amerat on Friday.

Shuaib slammed a whirlwind 116 not out off only 51 balls, helping his team to a huge 243 for 4 in 20 overs. Asgher Usman was the other notable scorer with an unbeaten 30 off 13.

Shuaib was also the pick of Maniz Azad bowlers, taking an impressive 3 for 20 as Jumbo Electronics was dismissed for a meagre 68 in 12.2 overs. Ai Tahir, Asgher Usman and Zaheer Abbas all took two wickets each.

Brief Scores (C Division): Maniz Azad International 243 for 4 in 20 overs (Shuaib Ismail 116 – 12x4, 3x6, Rana Tanveer 2-41) beat Jumbo Electronics 68 all out in 12.2 overs (Anwar Siddique Anil 15 – 2x4, 1x6, Shuaib Ismail 3-20, Ali Tahir 2-9, Asgher Usman 2-23, Zaheer Abbas 2-12) by 175 runs.

Shahrukh stars in Ideal win In another C Division match, opener Shahrukh Mohamed struck a scintillating 50 off only 17 balls to help Ideal International to a thumping 10-wicket win over OCT Amerat at Muscat Municipality ground 1.

Chasing only 83 to win, Ideal opens Shahrukh and Niyaz Mateen (29 off 11) overhauled the small total in less than five overs to complete a memorable victory.

Brief Scores (C Division): Oct Amerat 82 for 7 in 20 overs (Ahmed Khudadat 28 – 3x4, Varsani Nikhil 3-11) lost to Ideal

International 83 for no loss in 4.4 overs (Shahrukh Mohamed 50 – 6x4, 3x6, Niyaz Mateen 29 – 5x4, 1x6) by 10 wickets.

Sooraj, Sundar lift Ideal Tech Sooraj Raj's 3 for 21 and Sundar Biji's unbeaten 44 off 24 were the highlights of Ideal Technology's easy 7-wicket victory against Pitspot in a D Division game at Muscat Municipality ground 3.

Pitspot posted a fighting 153 for 7 on the board thanks to Wajid Ali's fluent 75 off 56. Apart from Sooraj's superb spell, Harish Mohandas claimed 2 for 27.

Sundar's strokeful 44 was instrumental in Seeing Ideal Technology reach 154 for 3 in only 17 overs. Noman Mohammed was the other main scorer with 36 off 34.

Brief Scores (D Division): Pitspot 153 for 7 in 20 overs (Wajid Ali 75 – 7x4, Sooraj Raj 3-21, Mohandas Harish 2-27) lost to Ideal Technology 154 for 3 in 17 overs (Sundar Biji 44 – 5x4, 1x6, Muhammed Noman 36 – 3x4) by 7 wickets.

Khatib, Anwar shine in Safara win

A magnificent 5 for 17 by Mushir Khatib and a hurricane 75 by Adeel Anwar helped Safara International to a comfortable 6-wicket win over Vanderlande in another D Division match at Muscat Municipality ground 4.

Khatib's wonderful bowling was the main reason Vanderlande could not score big, collecting only 144 runs from the 20 overs it faced. Rahul Chadha (48) and Mohiuddin Bijli (41) were its main contributors with the bat.

Anwar's outstanding knock made sure Safara reached the target comfortably.

Oman club to replace Fanja in the top-tier league next season

ADIL AL BALUSHI

MUSCAT, DEC 1

The Oman Football Association (OFA) announced on Tuesday that Oman club will replace Fanja team in the 2020/2021 season of Omantel League.

The decision taken during the eighth OFA board meeting on Sunday after Fanja's resolution on withdrawal at the 2020/2021 season of top-tier league.

OFA stated in an official announcement that the above subject was put across to the legal department and to Asian Football Confederation (AFC) to hear their feedback.

The response was OFA board has the full authority on the decision. According to the internal statue of OFA, the decision was to promote Oman club to Omantel league instead of Fanja as the former team was positioned in the 12th place of 2019/2020 Omantel League table order.

Also, the league rules and regulations stated that the top three teams in the table order of first division league to promote to the Omantel League while the lowest three teams in the order to relegated into first division league.

Moreover, OFA referred to a similar scenario had occurred in 2012 as the OFA board decided on returning the relegation teams to the top-tier league. Furthermore, Al Shabab club committed violation in the OFA internal policy as they referred to the arbitration to solve the sporting issue.

In recognition of its efforts to globally enhance cybersecurity

GSMA chooses Omantel to represent GSMA at the ITU Forum International Telecommunication Union Forum for Cyber Security and Combating Electronic Piracy

Muscat, December 1st, 2020 - The Global Mobile Communication Association announced the selection of Omantel - the leading provider of integrated telecommunications services in the Sultanate – as a case study at the International Telecommunication Union (ITU)'s Forum on cybersecurity and combatting electronic piracy. During its participation, Omantel highlighted GSMA's contribution to enhancing the security of mobile communications networks. The selection comes in recognition of Omantel's commitment to establishing partnerships that enhance sharing knowledge.

In the ITU's latest contribution entitled "Lessons Learned from the COVID-19 Pandemic" which was presented at the recently held regional conference for the Arab Region as part of the "Global Cyber Drill - 2020" event held on September 22, 2020, GSMA chose Muhammad Moqet ur Rab Senior Manager of Security Architecture and Operations at Omantel to represent the "GSMA Fraud & Security Group" at this event along with two senior officials from GSMA Mr. Jon France Head Industry Security & Amr Hashem Technology Director, MENA

Commenting on this selection, Eng. Abdullah Hamoud Al Barwani, GM Information Security at Omantel said: "At Omantel, we have the expertise, resources and talents that assist us in addressing cyber threats, and as part of our international partnerships and cooperation, we have previously worked closely with the GSMA and our other partners on many initiatives to confront the cyber-attacks that have multiplied during COVID 19 pandemic".



"At Omantel we are working in implementing the best international information security standards, policies and practices. We are proud that we were among the first companies in the world to implement the ISO 27701 standard to protect privacy and data. Omantel constantly endeavors to protect its systems, which in turn enhances the protection of the subscribers' interests", he added.

International organizations such as the ITU and GSMA have played a pivotal role in coordinating efforts, sharing information and promoting guidelines, standards and advice for dealing with emergencies such as epidemics.

Omantel is an active member of many international federations and associations such as the ITU and GSMA, the conference organized by the association, the fraud and security groups, the Internet of Things and the Fraud and Security Advisory Panel (FSAP). Omantel's team has been involved in drafting many international standards and guidelines.

During the event, Muhammad Moqet ur Rab, Omantel's Senior Manager Security Architecture & Operation, represented Fraud and Security Working Group (FASG) of GSMA presented initiatives taken by FASG group to effectively coordinate with various MNOs through awareness sessions, guidelines, closed discussions etc. to deal with increasing security threats such as malware, spam and other phishing methods, especially since the outbreak of Covid 19. He also noted that the Middle East region and North Africa have seen an increase in malware and SPAM attacks over the past months.

He pointed out that the threats were not limited to cybersecurity only, but also included telecom facilities. Such an increase in the attacks coincided with international campaigns that alleged that 5G is one of the causes of the spread of Covid 19. The operators have responded to these threats by enhancing their security capabilities and enabling work from home as well as ensuring easy access to vital assets and

services. The presentation also highlighted Omantel's contribution to enhancing the cybersecurity within GSMA group and the steps it has taken to enhance cybersecurity in general.

It should be noted that Omantel recently announced the operation of a 24/7 cyber-defense center, with a remarkable improvement in the level of performance, which has increased significantly within a period of no more than two years according to the capability maturity model integration (CMMI) using artificial intelligence to respond to security incidents. In 2019, the Sultanate of Oman achieved advanced positions - regionally and internationally - within the Cyber Security Index issued by the ITU due to its commitment to the Information Security Regulations issued by the Union. Omantel strives to enhance its ranking and believes in sustainable work in order to achieve its long-term goals in enhancing cybersecurity and implementing the practices and regulations issued GSMA. Omantel also strives to implement global security directives for the Internet of Things. Omantel is among the first companies to implement the GSMA directives regarding leveraging business opportunities in this field. As a result, ITU awarded Omantel the "Internet of Things Security" award in recognition of its contribution to achieving ITU's vision of mobile networks.

Omantel is the Sultanate's first and leading integrated telecommunications services provider, enabling the digital society to flourish, allowing new ways of doing business and delivering a world of information, news and entertainment.



Mercedes' Lewis Hamilton celebrates on the podium after winning the race. – Reuters

THE SPORT'S MOST
SUCCESSFUL DRIVER OF
ALL TIME, WITH A RECORD
95 WINS AND 98 POLE
POSITIONS, SAID ON SOCIAL
MEDIA THAT HE HAD TESTED
NEGATIVE THREE TIMES IN
THE PAST WEEK BUT WOKE
UP ON MONDAY WITH
MILD SYMPTOMS



In this file photo taken on November 29, 2020 Mercedes' driver Lewis Hamilton is pictured in his car after winning the Bahrain Grand Prix. – AFP

HAMILTON 'GUTTED' AFTER POSITIVE COVID-19 TEST



MANAMA: Seven-times Formula One world champion Lewis Hamilton said he was devastated after testing positive for COVID-19 and being ruled out of Sunday's penultimate race of the season in Bahrain.

It will be the first time the 35-year-old Mercedes driver has missed a race in an F1 career that started with McLaren in 2007.

The sport's most successful driver of all time, with a record 95 wins and 98 pole positions, said on social media that he had tested negative three times in the past week but woke up on Monday with mild symptoms.

The Briton said he then requested another test which came back positive and he immediately started a 10-day self-isolation, ruling out the Sakhir Grand Prix and raising doubts about the Abu Dhabi finale on the following weekend.

"I'm gutted not to be able to race this weekend but my priority is to follow the protocols and advice to protect others," he said. "I'm really lucky that I feel OK with only mild symptoms and will do my best to stay fit and healthy."

Hamilton said he and his team had taken all possible precautions and followed all regulations to stay safe since the season started. Mercedes said he tested negative at the circuit on Sunday afternoon but he had been informed on Monday that "a contact prior to arrival in Bahrain had subsequently tested positive."

The Briton wrapped up his record-equalling seventh

title in Turkey last month and picked up his 11th win of the season in Bahrain on Sunday. Mercedes have already won the constructors' title for an unprecedented seventh year in a row. Hamilton will not now be able to match the record for the most wins in a single season.

Michael Schumacher and Sebastian Vettel share that mark with 13. Hamilton was also on a record run of 48 successive points finishes and has started 265 races in a row.

REPLACEMENT DRIVER Mercedes said they would announce a replacement driver for Sakhir in due course.

Belgian Stoffel Vandoorne, who races for the Mercedes Formula E team and had been scheduled to fly to Bahrain even before Hamilton's positive result, and Mexican Esteban Gutierrez are the team's reserve drivers.

Briton George Russell, who races for Mercedes-powered Williams, is also on their books. Mercedes team boss Toto Wolff said in October that every precaution was being taken to shield Hamilton and team mate Valtteri Bottas from the pandemic, with internal debriefs and engineering meetings taking place via video call. Hamilton has stayed in his motorhome at most circuits, with races confined to Europe before the final Middle Eastern triple-header, and returning to Monaco afterwards where physio Angela Cullen forms part of his protective 'bubble'.

— Reuters

I'm gutted not to be able to race this weekend but my priority is to follow the protocols and advice to protect others

LEWIS HAMILTON
Seven-times Formula One world champion

business

MUSCAT STOCK MARKET

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Oman seeks to phase out energy inefficient light bulbs

ENERGY CONSERVATION: Move to formulate national policy to initiate the phase out of energy inefficient lamps, underpinned by regulations to either fully or partially restrict the manufacture, importation, or sale of inefficient light bulbs in the Sultanate

CONRAD PRABHU
@conradprabhu

Oman's Authority for Public Services Regulation (APSR) is spearheading efforts to gradually rid the Omani market of energy-wasting light bulbs and lamp systems — part of a wider bid to rationalise energy consumption, promote energy efficiency standards, and champion a transition towards greener energy resources.

As a first step in this initiative, the Authority – formerly known as the Authority for Electricity Regulation – has invited qualified consultants to bid for its contract to provide advisory services for the formulation of a national programme to phase out energy inefficient light bulbs in the Sultanate. On Monday, November 30, was the deadline



for the submission of proposals to this effect.

“The Authority recognised the need to consider a comprehensive approach to raising the efficiency of lamps in the Omani market and reached an agreement with the Ministry of Energy and Minerals to conduct a comprehensive study on phasing-out energy inefficient lamps in Oman in collaboration with the Ministry and the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and

Investment Promotion,” it said in an introduction to the initiative.

It noted in this regard its key role in the review of specifications and standards for energy efficient electrical appliances to be implemented in Oman. Efforts are also ongoing at the relevant department of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion to develop and implement standards regulation the import and use of

energy efficient LED lights in the Sultanate, it said.

Significantly, the selected consultant will be commissioned to carry out a comprehensive study to benchmark international and regional practices highlighting the different options implemented in phasing out of energy inefficient lamps.

“This should cover statutory and voluntary programmes; and the availability of viable and

Significantly, the selected consultant will be commissioned to carry out a comprehensive study to benchmark international and regional practices highlighting the different options implemented in phasing out of energy inefficient lamps

efficient alternatives for different categories of inefficient lamps, particularly incandescent lamps and taking into account any requirements for and the cost purchasing and installing new fittings when and if applicable,” the Authority said.

“The ultimate objective of this advisory is to assist the government in the formulation of a national policy to begin the phase out of energy inefficient lamps and provide the optimum programme for implementing the policy and setting up the necessary regulations that would either fully or partially restrict the manufacture, importation, or sale of inefficient light bulbs for general lighting in Oman,” the regulator stressed.

As part of its remit, the consultant will be required to

review regulatory and legislative measures adopted by a number of countries, notably Australia, United States, South Korea and Philippines and those of the European Union, in support of Minimum Energy Performance Standards (MEPS) for light bulbs. Incentives introduced by other countries, such as Thailand, to encourage consumers to switch to energy efficient light bulbs will be studied as well.

A detailed timeline for the phase-out of energy inefficient light bulbs, and the need for voluntary/mandatory schemes alongside supporting legislative actions, will be chalked out as well as part of the consultant's brief.

A number of countries have already restricted the use of inferior light bulbs, such as halogen or incandescent lamps, as they consume significantly more energy than LED (light emitting diode) or fluorescent based lamps. Energy inefficient light bulbs not only add to the electricity bills of households, but ultimately also increase the cost burden for the Omani government in subsidising the power sector.

At a macro-level, they also contribute to greenhouse gas emissions responsible for global warming and climate change.

Indian rupee hits 1½ month high



A cashier checks Indian rupee notes inside a room at a fuel station in Ahmedabad, India. — Reuters

MUMBAI: The Indian rupee strengthened on Tuesday to its highest level in 1½ months, boosted by foreign fund inflows to equities, though traders remain wary of central bank intervention to prevent a sharp rally in the currency.

The partially convertible rupee was trading at 73.50/51 per dollar at 07:55 GMT, after touching 73.45 earlier in the session — it highest since October 21.

“The absence of the central bank from the market has helped the rupee break the 73.75 barrier,” said a senior trader at a foreign bank.

“The 73.40 is the next level to watch out for now.” The BSE and the broader NSE share indexes were trading 0.9 per cent higher on Tuesday. The benchmark indexes ended November with gains of 11 per cent each, driven by record inflows and on promising news surrounding vaccine efficacy rates. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has been aggressively buying dollars from the spot market to prevent a sharp appreciation in the unit and ensure export competitiveness. — Reuters

Asian factories recover from crisis as China booms

TOKYO: Asian factories recovered further in November from the COVID-19 crisis, surveys showed on Tuesday, thanks to a boom in economic powerhouse China which has enabled the region to withstand the pandemic better than many of its peers.

China's factory activity accelerated at the fastest pace in a decade in November, a private sector survey showed, a sign the world's second-largest economy is rebounding to pre-pandemic levels.

But a global resurgence in coronavirus



A worker inspects newly made gloves at a glove factory in Selangor, Malaysia. — Reuters

infections has made the outlook highly uncertain, keeping governments and central banks under pressure to maintain or ramp up their massive stimulus programmes, analysts say.

PMI surveys for other regions due later on Tuesday are expected to show a continued recovery in factory activity in the euro zone, while the manufacturing activity in the United States is seen expanding but at a slower pace.

“There is little sign that large second

waves of the virus in the US and Europe have weighed on Asia's export-focussed industry, suggesting that external demand will continue to hold up,” Capital Economics said in a research note.

China's Caixin/Markit Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' index (PMI) rose to 54.9 from October's 53.6, marking the highest level since November 2010.

The gauge stayed well above the 50-level that separates growth from contraction for the seventh consecutive month. — Reuters

Madayn unveils one-stop investment centre

SINGLE WINDOW: Masar Service Centre officially inaugurated in Al Rusayl and Suhar

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, DEC 1

Masar Service Centre, an initiative of the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn), was officially inaugurated at Al Rusayl and Suhar Industrial Cities on Tuesday under the auspices of Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali al Harthy, Under-Secretary of the Foreign Ministry for Diplomatic Affairs.

The inauguration ceremony was also attended by Dr Saleh bin Said Masan, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion for Commerce and Industry and Chairman of Madayn's board of directors; Eng Ridha bin Juma



al Saleh, Chairman of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI); Mohammed bin Sulaiman al Kindi, Deputy Governor of Muscat; and Hilal bin Hamad al Hasani, Chief Executive Officer of Madayn.

Commenting on the significance of Masar Service

Centre, Shaikh Khalifa said: “I believe that the centre and its objectives will be welcomed by those who are interested in investing in the Sultanate.

As for the Foreign Ministry of Oman, we are ready through our embassies in the brotherly and friendly countries to serve the

Masar Service Centre is designed to offer integrated services provided by Madayn and other government bodies. Masar provides a flexible, easy and transparent interaction between the business community and the government, and provides a reliable and secure environment for the investors to conduct day-to-day transactions with the concerned bodies

purpose of Oman Vision 2040 and I hope all the efforts that are being undertaken by the various government bodies will contribute to attracting more investments to the Sultanate.”

Ibtisam al Farooji, Masar Service Centre project manager, explained that the facility presents

a unified system to facilitate investment procedures for the investors as they are now able to obtain necessary approvals, permits and licenses under one platform and within a specific period of time.

“Masar Service Centre comes along the efforts of Madayn to offer integrated services to the investors and subsequently boost an attractive and ideal investment and business environment in the Sultanate,” she pointed out.

Masar Service Centre is designed to offer integrated services provided by Madayn and other government bodies. Masar provides a flexible, easy and transparent interaction between the business community and the government, and provides a reliable and secure environment for the investors to conduct day-to-day transactions with the concerned bodies. **TO PAGE 14**



UK recovery stumbles as business growth slips

With services sector growth slowing considerably amid rising COVID-19 cases and new government measures, the UK economy's recovery slowed in October, according to a new survey. The IHS Markit/Cips preliminary purchasing managers' index (PMI), a gauge of the private sector's health, fell sharply to 52.9 in October from September's reading of 56.5.

A score above 50 indicates expansion. But the sharp slowdown in growth will worry policymakers given that more restrictions have been put in place since the survey of companies' purchasing managers was taken.

The UK has been battling a steep rise in coronavirus cases. In response to the surge, the government has put parts of the country under strict "Tier 3"

restrictions which limit mixing and force some hospitality businesses to shut.

In October, manufacturing production grew strongly. Survey respondents pointed to pent up demand, a frothy housing market and the restart of delayed work projects. But growth in the services sector was held back by renewed COVID restrictions, IHS Markit said.

It also said the hospitality and tourism sector remained weak. The survey indicated a "steep fall" in employment. There were deep job cuts in both manufacturing and services, as firms cut costs to adapt to the new climate.

"Not surprisingly the weakening is most pronounced in the hospitality and transport sectors, as firms reported falling demand due to renewed lockdown measures," said Chris Williamson, chief business economist at IHS Markit.



ANDY JALIL
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IN OCTOBER, MANUFACTURING PRODUCTION GREW STRONGLY. SURVEY RESPONDENTS POINTED TO PENT UP DEMAND, A FROTHY HOUSING MARKET AND THE RESTART OF DELAYED WORK PROJECTS

Williamson said the slowdown would have been "even more pronounced" if companies had not benefited from higher exports. "It's not looking good," said Paul Dales, chief UK economist at Capital Economics. He cautioned against "reading too much into" the rise in September retail figures.

"The renewed downward trend in the PMIs provides a better sense of what's happening to the overall economy."

Small firms located in London's financial district, have spent the summer in lockdown trying to survive and adapt to the government's coronavirus regulations.

Restaurants, bars, hairdressers, dry cleaners, shoe repairs and cafes have battled to survive the initial forced closure during lockdown, followed by a sharp decline in the district's footfall as most office workers remained

at home. While the streets in the area are far from full, some workers had tentatively begun returning to the office and signs of life had started to return. But with London now in a Tier 2 lockdown – which prohibits different households from mixings – and workers resuming their remote-working routines, many small firms located in the financial district are now worrying how they will survive this second wave of restrictions – and the threat of an even harsher clamp down.

Matt Grece Smith, co-chief executive of Competitive Socialising, says he is "frustrated" that the government is targeting hospitality after firms have spent the summer implementing COVID-19 safety measures.

His firm, which relies on groups of friends and corporate events for its main income, has already faced a

"barrage" of cancellations since the government announced London's move into Tier 2 restrictions.

The firm occupies a prominent site in the area as well as one in the normally bustling West End, has already made 75 people redundant from the previous lockdown.

When asked whether more job cuts were inevitable following the clampdown on socialising, Smith admits: "We don't know yet, we have to wait and see. We're already fielding a barrage of people wanting to cancel their bookings, because they were groups of different households."

It is really frustrating," He added: "We were kind of getting to a place where it was sustainable, and once again we have had the rug pulled out from under our feet". *(The writer is our foreign correspondent based in the UK)*

Ministry of Defence, Bank Muscat sign pact for provision of digital services and facilities

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Defence has signed an agreement with Bank Muscat, the leading financial institution in the Sultanate, to enhance the partnership between the two sides and provide advanced digital banking services to the ministry.

The signing of the agreement comes during the celebrations of Oman's Glorious 50th National Day. The agreement serves to confirm Public-Private Partnership in light of the goal of enhanced integration between the two sectors and serving the best interests of the nation and its people.

It was signed by His Excellency Mohammed bin Nasser al Rasbi, Secretary-General of the Ministry of Defence and by Tariq Atiq, Deputy General Manager, Transaction and Public Sector Banking, Bank Muscat. The agreement will facilitate online payments by the ministry to its vendors and partners in real-time thanks to bank's digital platforms. Under the agreement, the Ministry of Defence will benefit from the bank's cutting-edge Business-to-Business (B2B) platform to facilitate better performance by ministry employees and contribute to enhancing their efficiency as well as the speed and efficiency of transactional activities. In particular, it will save time and effort for ministry employees as they do not have to visit bank branches any more to conduct banking operations.

This agreement will also greatly strengthen the mutual relations between the two institutions and enhance communications to achieve common goals and further develop business. The bank thanked the Ministry of Defence for its strong partnership and confidence in its digital banking services and facilities.

Renaissance Chairman named 'Iconic Business Leader'

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, DEC 1

Samir J Fancy, Chairman - Renaissance Services, was recognised with the Iconic Business Leader of the Year Award at the Alam Al Iktisaad Awards 2020. Qais bin Mohammed al Yousuf, Minister of Commerce, Industry & Investment Promotion, presented the award to Fancy at a recent ceremony.

The award acknowledged the leadership at Renaissance Services during these unprecedented times and highlighted several initiatives that the company implemented under the umbrella of 'In Service



to the Nation', emphatically supporting the country's efforts during the pandemic.

Since the arrival of the pandemic, Renaissance has inspired a spirit of collective purpose within the industry, advocating the need to build on strengths, demonstrating resilience and having a positive attitude on the road to recovery.

Fancy has continuously emphasised the need to protect lives and livelihoods, to take cognisance of the long term in decision making, and to embrace change to sustain progress.

Accepting the recognition, Fancy said, "I am pleased to accept

this recognition on behalf of the management and employees of the company, especially on the occasion of Oman's 50th year of the renaissance.

Renaissance proudly shares its name with the country's march of progress, and we pledge to continue to contribute to the further progress and economic growth of the nation.

While we have done significant work together as a community to fight this pandemic, it is important to remember that the crisis is not over. Each of us has the responsibility of protecting ourselves and others, and continue to support our frontline workers."

PRESS RELEASE

MAISARAH PROVIDES WIDE RANGE OF INNOVATIVE FINANCE PRODUCTS

Maisarah Islamic Banking Services, one of the leading Islamic Banking windows in the Sultanate, is providing a wide range of innovative Sharia compliant finance products that are growing in popularity, and are well regarded among customers in Oman.

The diverse mix of finance products aimed at meeting growing needs of its customers includes: Auto Finance, Home Finance, Education Finance, Property Finance, Goods Finance, Commercial, Personal and Travel Finances

Kamal Hassan al Maraza (pictured), Chief Maisarah Islamic Banking Officer said, "We are on a mission to transform our Bank and enhance our customer experience. All the finance products offered by Maisarah are Sharia compliant. We are building on our past achievements and strengths in the Islamic banking sector by delivering finance products that will help our customers to achieve their financial needs and goals."



SOHAR INTERNATIONAL TO HOST MAYSA JALBOUT IN VIEWPOINTS

The 4th virtual session and 9th edition of Viewpoints – Sohar International Chairman's forum, is all set to take place on Tuesday, December 15, 2020 starting at 7:30 pm. Continuing to bring global learning and perspective to locally relevant topics, the upcoming session of Viewpoints will host Maysa Jalbout, Visiting Scholar and Special Advisor, Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Arizona State University, who will tread into the changing dynamics of education across executive and general programmes across the world.

Announcing the latest edition, Mohammed Mahfoudh al Ardhi (pictured), Chairman of the Board of Directors at Sohar International, said, "Sohar International's Viewpoints has rightfully earned its position as a world-class thought leadership forum, with a host of credible international guest speakers, offering their opinions and thoughts on internationally pertinent subjects."



NEW 2021 JEEP WRANGLER RUBICON 392 THE MOST CAPABLE WRANGLER YET

Following the introduction of the V-8-powered 2021 Jeep Wrangler Rubicon 392 by Jeep, for customers in the North American market, Dhofar Automotive, the official distributor of Jeep vehicles in the Sultanate has announced the arrival of the vehicle to the Sultanate, set to be available soon.

Enthusiasts who crave soul-stirring, legendary off-road performance and a new level of on-road performance can expect the new Jeep to arrive in the Sultanate and the region's markets at a later date.

The most-capable, quickest, most-powerful Wrangler carries the 6.4-litre V-8, rated at 470 horsepower and 470 lb.-ft (637 Nm) of torque.

Mated to the crisp-shifting TorqueFlite eight-speed automatic transmission and Selec-Trac full-time active transfer case, the powertrain rockets the Jeep Wrangler Rubicon 392 from 0-60 mph (0-96 km/h) in 4.5 seconds and the quarter-mile in 13.0 seconds.



Madayn unveils one stop investment centre

FROM PAGE 13

Al Farooji informed that several bodies are providing services at Masar Service Centre, which include Madayn and its Oman Investment and Development Holding Company (Mubadrah), Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, Ministry of Labour, Foreign Ministry, Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), and Sanad Service Centre.

The services offered by Madayn and Mubadrah at Masar include granting licenses, permits and approvals issued on behalf on any government body, approving main contracts and subcontracts (third-party), exercising inspection and supervision activities in the industrial cities, leasing lands and facilities in the industrial cities, in addition to other services.

The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion offers several services including obtaining new or renewal of commercial registration, obtaining industrial license, adding activities to the license, and attesting the certificate of

origin.

Moreover, the Ministry of Labour provides services related to employment licenses (permits), renewing labour cards, approving investor requests, lifting ban on investors, getting acquainted with Omanisation percentage, employee statement, responding to enquiries and complaints, among other services.

The Foreign Ministry delivers a variety of services related to attestation of commercial contracts, invoices and certificates, services regarding marriage certificate, divorce certificate, study certificate, request of a lost document, in addition to other services.

Additionally, Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) provides several services through Masar such as chamber membership registration; attestation of commercial invoices; issuance and documentation of certificate of origin for the Omani, re-exported and foreign origin products; and attestation of various documents including salary certificate, experience certificate, and translated documents.

World economy back to pre-pandemic level in 2021

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development now sees world output dropping by 4.2 per cent this year thanks to the months-long lockdowns that slowed the spread of the coronavirus but threw a wrench into the global economy

PARIS: The global economy may get back to pre-pandemic levels by the end of next year as vaccines help propel recovery, but growth is likely to be uneven, the OECD said on Tuesday.

Signs that vaccines could now be weeks away from distribution have injected cautious optimism as the year limps to a close with COVID-19 having claimed some 1.4 million lives.

“For the first time since the pandemic began, there is now hope for a brighter future”, OECD Chief Economist Laurence Boone wrote in her introduction to the organisation’s latest review of the global economic outlook.



A construction site is seen behind an image of an imagined new skyline, in Beijing. — Reuters

“Progress with vaccines and treatment have lifted expectations and uncertainty has receded”, she said, acknowledging that virus containment measures would likely be necessary for some

months to come.

“The road ahead is brighter but challenging”, Boone added. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development now sees world output dropping

by 4.2 per cent this year thanks to the months-long lockdowns that slowed the spread of the coronavirus but threw a wrench into the global economy.

But it forecasts the world

economy to snap back with 4.2 per cent growth in 2021. The forecasts for the contraction and the recovery are both more modest than those its September update, despite many countries imposing new restrictions to slow the spread of the coronavirus.

The OECD, which advises its 37 member nations on stimulating economic progress and world trade, credited the quick recovery to “unprecedented” action by governments and central banks.

“Without massive policy support, the economic and social situation would have been calamitous”, Boone said. She said that support “will pay off handsomely” in the coming months.

“The rebound will be stronger and faster as more and more activities re-open, limiting the aggregate income loss from the crisis”, Boone said. But that rebound is likely to be uneven and may lead to lasting changes in the world economy, the OECD warned. China is likely to be the only major economy to escape a contraction this year,

with its economy growing by 1.8 per cent and then surging by 8.0 per cent in 2021.

On the other hand, the US economy will contract by 3.7 per cent this year but is only likely to manage 3.2 per cent growth in 2021.

The euro zone will make up even less lost ground. After a 7.5 per cent contraction in 2020, it is expected to grow just 3.6 per cent in 2021. Japan is expected to fare similarly, with a 5.3 per cent contraction in 2020 followed by a 2.3 per cent rise in 2021.

Even other major emerging nations are also expected to only slowly recover. Brazil’s 6.0 per cent drop this year is likely to be followed by only 2.6 per cent growth in 2021. India is seen as doing better, with its 9.9 per cent drop this year to be followed by a 7.9 per cent rebound.

Overall, China is expected to account for one-third of global growth next year, while Europe and North America are expected to contribute less than their weight in the global economy. — AFP

Brexit talks still stuck because EU is asking too much, UK says



The EU are at the moment reserving the right, if there is any sort of dispute, not quite to rip everything up but to impose some really penal and tough restrictions on us, and we don’t think that’s fair

MICHAEL GOVE

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster

LONDON: Brexit trade talks are stuck on fishing, governance rules and dispute resolution because the European Union is asking too much of Britain, a senior member of the British government said on Tuesday. Just 30 days before Britain leaves the EU’s orbit following a transition period since it formally quit the bloc, the sides are trying to agree a trade deal to avoid a turbulent rupture that could snarl almost \$1 trillion in annual trade.

With each side urging the other to compromise, a French official said Britain must clarify its positions and “really negotiate”, and cautioned that the EU would not accept a “substandard deal”.

Even if a trade accord is secured, it is likely to be just a narrow deal on goods, and some disruption is almost certain as border controls are erected between the world’s biggest trading block and Britain.

Talks have snagged on fishing in Britain’s rich waters, on what EU rules London will accept and on how any dispute might be resolved. “The EU still wants to take the lion’s share of the fishing in our waters — which is just not fair given that we are leaving the EU”, Michael Gove, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and a senior ally of Prime Minister Boris Johnson, told Sky.

“The EU still want us to be tied to their way of doing things”, Gove said. “The EU are at the moment reserving the right, if there is any sort of dispute, not quite to rip everything up but to impose some really penal and tough restrictions on us, and we don’t think that’s fair.”

A trade deal would not only safeguard trade but also buttress peace in British-ruled Northern Ireland, though some disruption is almost certain at the busiest EU-UK border points. — Reuters

SHORT TAKES

NUREMBURG

Unemployment declines in Germany in November

Unemployment in Germany stood at 5.9 per cent in November, down by 0.1 percentage points compared to the previous month, the Federal Employment Agency announced on Tuesday.

The number of people out of work last month stood at 2.699 million, according to the agency. This was 61,000 fewer than in October, but 519,000 more than in November 2019.

The monthly decline nonetheless offered a glimmer of optimism after Germany reinstated sweeping business



closures and strict contact restrictions in early November in a bid to break a sustained second wave of coronavirus infections. — dpa

TOKYO

Japan to keep funding domestic tourism campaign

The Japanese government plans to keep setting aside money to promote domestic tourism and dining out in its next stimulus package, according to a draft of the upcoming package, even as rising COVID-19 infections have prompted concern about the campaigns.

The draft stimulus package also included a plan to set up a fund to encourage investment in green technology. The outline underscores Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga’s (pictured)



resolve to keep businesses and establishments open, even as Japan faces a resurgence in coronavirus infections that are quickly filling up hospital beds quickly. — Reuters

Arabian Gulf Automobiles and Equipment introduces premium automotive brand Changan in Oman

MUSCAT: Arabian Gulf Automobiles and Equipment LLC (AGAE) which is part of Bahwan International Group has announced a partnership with leading international automotive group Changan Automobile Co Ltd to bring its range of passenger vehicles to Oman. One of the ‘big four’ Chinese automakers of the world and a top selling brand, Changan Automobile boasts of with a comprehensive portfolio of products which includes Sedans, Crossovers and SUVs.

Welcoming the partnership, Irven Li, Vice President of Changan Group said, “We are extremely happy to partner with AGAE, part of Bahwan International Group, a well-established name in Oman. Changan has made a successful presence in key markets in GCC and now we are keen to introduce the brand in Oman. As part of our international network expansion we consider Oman a key market.”

With an inspiring history of 158 years Changan Automobile Group traces its corporate origins way back to the 1862 with 62 years of automobile making and 36 years’ experience of manufacturing Changan vehicles. It has 16 production bases in eight countries and 35 vehicle and engine plants globally. With 6,000 sales and



service facilities in more than 60 countries, and more than 150,000 professional team members globally, the company believes in excellence in customer service.

Registering a new milestone for the company, in 2019 Changan-branded vehicle users exceeded 18 million.

Welcoming Changan Automobile to Oman, Shaikh Ahmed Suhail Bahwan al Mukhaini, Chairman of Bahwan International Group said, “Oman is emerging as a priority market for global automotive companies and we are delighted

to bring Changan, a leading global brand to our country.

Changan offers a captivating combination of the brand’s impressive design, elegant interiors and advanced safety features.

The automaker has also invested heavily in the research and development of new energy vehicles, focusing on technology development for conventional and hybrid vehicles. We are sure that it is deemed to be a best seller in Oman, setting the benchmark for functionality, technology and comfort.”

About Changan Automobile and its R&D capability

With world-class R&D facilities, Changan develops products which are Advanced, High-Tech, Innovative, fashionable, Safe and deliver a Strong Performance. Each year Changan invests 5 per cent of the annual sales revenue for product R&D and with continuous efforts has built a global collaborative R&D network with various priorities.

Changan has been ranked No 1 in R&D capability in China’s automotive industry for the past ten years.

It has 3 R&D centres in China’s Chongqing, Shanghai and Beijing and 4 overseas facility in Turin of Italy, Yokohama of Japan, Nottingham of UK and Detroit USA.

Supported by intelligent driving, intelligent interconnection and intelligent interaction technologies, it is building intelligent vehicle platform in stages. Changan has been vigorously developing new energy and intelligent vehicles. Changan uses Bluecore Powertrain technology based on the principles of power, clean and quiet to provide customers with a product which is highly efficient and energy saving.

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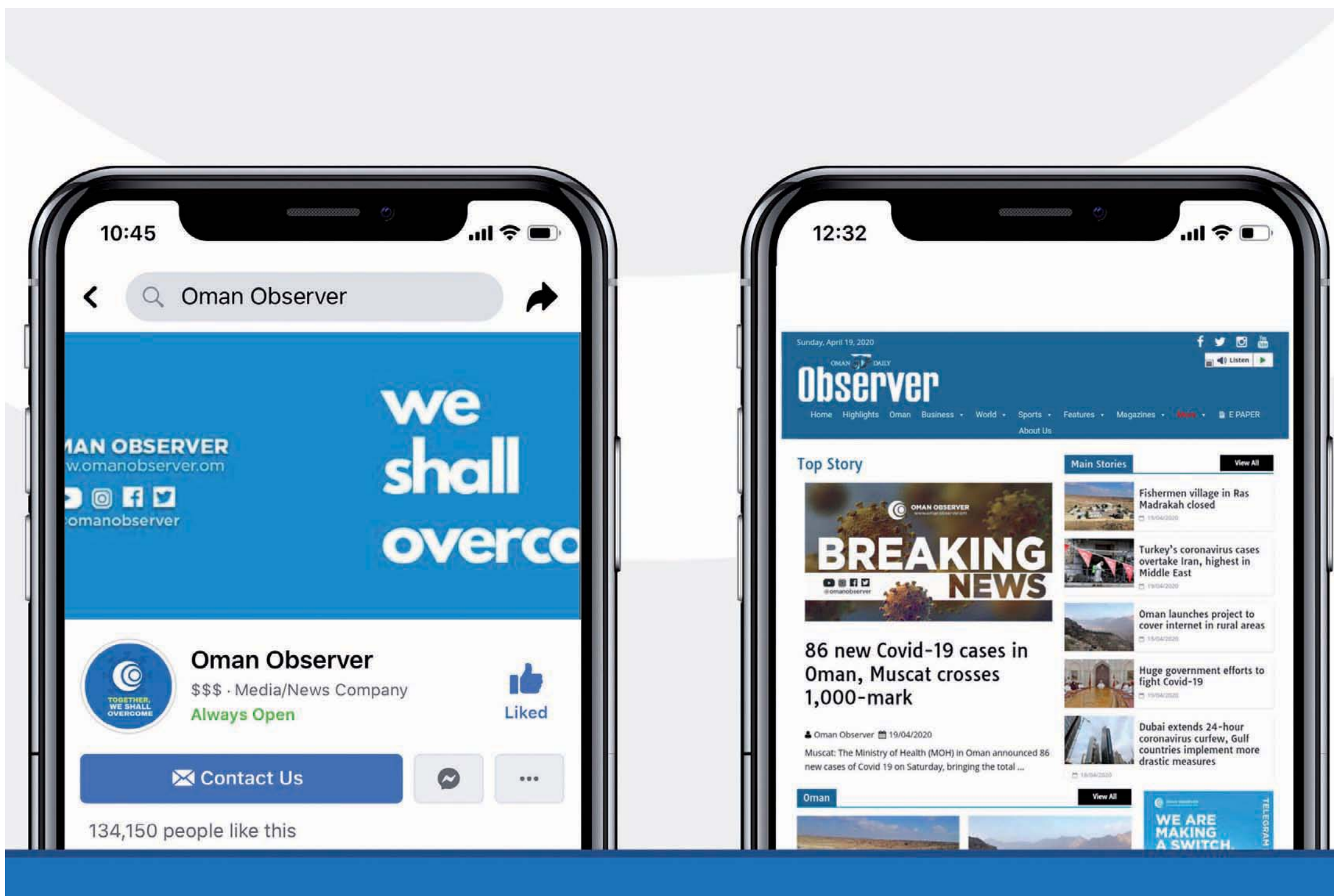
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features

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Unique Omani experience for healthy food

Unhealthy eating is a growing issue in Oman and has been deeply embedded in the culture and has even etched its way towards traditional food. So, what can be done to make this problem easier to solve? This Omani entrepreneur established Healthy Kitchen to help.. **P18**

INSIDE STORIES

OMAN UPCLOSE



THE ASTOUNDING SULTAN QABOOS GRAND MOSQUE IN MUSCAT AND SUHAR

Whenever I went to mosques in Oman for prayers, I never really appreciated their elegance. When I left the Sultanate to pursue my studies in India, it was only upon my return three years later that I began to fully appreciate their beauty... **Story on Page P20**

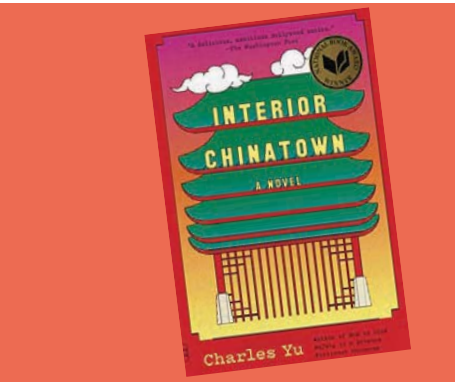
COLUMN



HOW DO YOU MOVE ON FROM A COVID-19 NIGHTMARE?

Parks and beaches are finally opened. Access to cinemas, health clubs and for a country like Oman, the visas, whether the family joining one or for tourists, which had been long-awaited are now allowed... **Story on Page 20**

READ



INTERIOR CHINATOWN BY CHARLES YU

The winner of the 2020 National Book Award for fiction. Willis Wu discovers his family's legacy as he uncovers the secret history of where he resides.

COOK LIKE A CHEF



BEEF TENDERLOIN TERIYAKI

Teriyaki is a technique of Japanese cooking where soy sauce, mirin and sugar (sometimes with other additives) are mixed together to create a sauce that is used to marinate or coat the meat. In today's recipe, Chef Rajesh is sharing the best way to prepare your tenderloin meat... **Story on Page 19**

DISCOVERY



DINOSAUR-ERA BIRD WITH SCYTHE-LIKE BEAK SHEDS LIGHT ON AVIAN DIVERSITY

A delicate but exquisitely preserved skull of a crow-sized bird with a scythe-like beak that inhabited Madagascar 68 million years ago is showing scientists that they have a lot to learn about avian diversity during the age of dinosaurs...**Story on Page 19**



Unique Omani experience for healthy food

BY MOUJ HIJAZI

Unhealthy eating in Oman is a growing issue. A quarter of all hospital deaths are caused by heart disease and circulatory problems, according to the Ministry of Health.

Lifestyle choices, fatty foods and lack of exercise have all contributed to the increasing number of residents reported by doctors coming in to see them with heart issues.

Unhealthy eating habits are established in our culture and traditional food. So, what can be done to make this problem easier to solve?

With only a handful of restaurants centred around for healthy food in the whole city of Muscat, the Healthy Kitchen has opened doors for people to lead healthier lifestyles and consume fewer fats, without the need to sacrifice delicious meals.

Its menu consists of wraps, burgers, steaks, sandwiches, pasta and much more, made only with organic ingredients.

Mohammed al Zadjali, Omani personal trainer and owner of the Healthy Kitchen, described where the inspiration for the restaurant came from:

"We've created this restaurant to help people who have problems with obesity (and related diseases), and we want to help the citizens of Oman to become healthier, and so the inspiration came from a passion that I have for bodybuilding."

"I visited some countries and took some ideas about healthy food and diet, and came back and implemented them."

"I've created something in



Oman which is related to the concept of health, yet at the same time, it is healthy food. Most of the restaurants when you go to them and eat healthy food you get bored, after a week or so", said Mohammed.

"It is healthy food but it tastes like normal food; this is what differentiates my concept from any other concept, and it's quite unique."

The COVID-19 pandemic has in a way helped the Healthy Kitchen grow as healthy food intake has been thriving, with more people giving thought to eat healthy to reduce illness and obesity.

However, just like any other business, the restaurant has also suffered and been hit with a decrease in revenue.

"It affected a lot of people critically, and there's nothing we can actually do to adapt to it but we have to sustain and stabilise ourselves, try and

survive for the time being and we will see what we can do later on with time", said Mohammed.

"But we have to stay patient because this situation critically hit everybody, not just restaurants or business — it's worldwide."

In terms of future plans, Mohammed explained that they are put on hold for the time being due to the crisis.

"We would like to expand for sure, to smaller branches, but as you spoke about the COVID-19 situation, it's not something to be taken lightly, so we are trying to sustain ourselves and that's the plan for now."

The Healthy Kitchen also provides catering services as



well as a monthly subscription plan.

"We do catering for birthday parties, institutions, ministries and more. This is something we do on a regular basis and it's quite good business as well from this section."

For more information, you can visit their website at <http://healthy-kitchen.net>, direct message them on Instagram or contact them at +968 9466 5555 or info@healthy-kitchen.net.

DIGITAL TRENDS

South Koreans, Chinese clash on social media over Chinese-style Kimchi winning international certificate



SEOUL: China's efforts to win an international certification for Pao Cai, a pickled vegetable dish from Sichuan, is turning into a social media showdown between Chinese and South Korean netizens over the origin of Kimchi, a staple Korean cuisine made of cabbage.

Beijing recently won a certification from the International Organization

worried that they might steal Hanbok and other cultural contents, not just Kimchi", said Kim Seol-Ha, a 28-year-old in Seoul.

Some South Korean media even described the episode as China's "bid for world domination", while some social media comments flagged concerns that Beijing was exercising "economic coercion."



for Standardization (ISO) for Pao Cai, an achievement the state-run *Global Times* reported as "an international standard for the Kimchi industry led by China."

South Korean media was fast to dispute such a claim and accuse the bigger neighbour of trying to make Kimchi a type of China-made Pao Cai.

The episode triggered anger on South Korean social media.

"Its total nonsense, what a thief stealing our culture!" a South Korean netizen wrote on Naver.com, a widely popular web portal.

"I read a media story that China now says Kimchi is theirs, and that they are making international standard for it, It's absurd. I'm

On China's Twitter-like Weibo, Chinese netizens were claiming Kimchi as their country's own traditional dish, as most of Kimchi consumed in South Korea is made in China.

"Well, if you don't meet the standard, then you're not kimchi", one wrote on Weibo.

"Even the pronunciation of kimchi originated from Chinese, what else is there to say," wrote another.

South Korea's agriculture ministry on Sunday released a statement saying mainly that the ISO approved standard does not apply to Kimchi.

"It is inappropriate to report (about Pao Cai winning the ISO) without differentiating Kimchi from Pao Cai of China's Sichuan", the statement said. — **Reuters**



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BEEF TENDERLOIN TERIYAKI



THE BEST OF JAPANESE KITCHEN

Takara is located inside the Intercontinental Hotel Muscat and is one of the country's best Japanese restaurants offering some of the most delicious and authentic Japanese flavours to the Sultanate. The restaurant currently has different promotions from Hana Nights that allows ladies to spoil their appetite every Tuesdays to Unlimited Ala Carte Weekend Lunch.
Teriyaki is a technique of Japanese cooking where soy sauce, mirin and sugar (sometimes with other additives) are mixed together to create a sauce that is used to marinate or coat the meat. In today's recipe, Chef Rajesh is sharing the best way to prepare your tenderloin meat.

PREPARATION METHOD

TERIYAKI SAUCE
Grill the beef or chicken bone either in an oven or thick hot pan until golden brown.
Grill or sauté all the vegetables (carrot, ginger, white onion and garlic) together until you get its natural aroma.
Take a large stockpot with a thick base, mix soy sauce, mirin, sugar and water. Heat the pot on fire with a high flame, stir continuously until it boils. Put those sautéed vegetables and grilled bones in it and reduce the fire. Simmer continuously at the temperature of 800C to 850C for 2hrs, do not cover while simmering.
Reduce the sauce by 30% by simmering heat. (do not high the flame, it will burn your sauce and taste will be bitter)
Once sauce ready, strain carefully. Keep the liquid and discard impurities.
Take one bowl, mix katakuriko with water just to dilute. Reheat the strained sauce until it boiled, pour diluted katakuriko slowly and stir it continuously. Switch off the fire.
Teriyaki sauce is ready. Cooldown and store in the freezer.

TENDERLOIN PREPARATION
Marinate tenderloin meat with salt, pepper and olive oil.
Heat the pan and put tenderloin meat. Cook all side of the meat until you want to reach your doneness (I prefer medium). In the same pan sauté asparagus and cherry tomato for garnish.
Take the meat out from the pan, slice it 1cm thick and arrange on the plate.
Heat teriyaki sauce about 80ml then pour on to the tenderloin. Garnish with asparagus, cherry tomato and spring onions.

ABOUT THE CHEF
CHEF RAJESH THAPA

Executive Chef
Head Chef
TAKARA Japanese Restaurant

Born in Nepal, Chef Rajesh Thapa, at a very young age has been inspired by the local chefs of Kathmandu. It is from these chefs that he first learned his culinary experience.
After years of mastering many of the Nepalese styles of cooking, he moved to Dubai in 2008 and began venturing into multi-cuisine speciality and working with some of the best 5-star hotels in the country. Working in different restaurants, he eventually gravitated towards Japanese culinary. He would spend the next 10 years working with Jumeirah Group where he pre-opened several of their world-renowned restaurants. As the head chef of Takara, he has dedicated his time into making sure that he prepares not only the freshest ingredients but the best that Japanese dishes have to offer. One of his missions is to train other chefs to become better especially at the Japanese style and art of cooking and inspiring the next generations of Head Chefs.



INGREDIENTS:

TERIYAKI SAUCE [Yield: 1900ml]
500ml Kikkoman soy sauce
65ml Japanese sweet cooking sauce Mirin
375gm White sugar
1900ml Water
65gm Carrot
25gm Ginger
65gm white onion
65gm Leeks
25gm Garlic
250gm Bone of chicken/beef or offcuts part of beef meat
50gm Katakuriko (Potato starch) or Cornflour

250gm Beef tenderloin meat
1pinch Salt and pepper
10 ml Olive oil

GARNISH
1 pc Cherry Tomato
2-3 pc Asparagus
10gm Spring onion - Julienne cut

Dinosaur-era bird with scythe-like beak sheds light on avian diversity



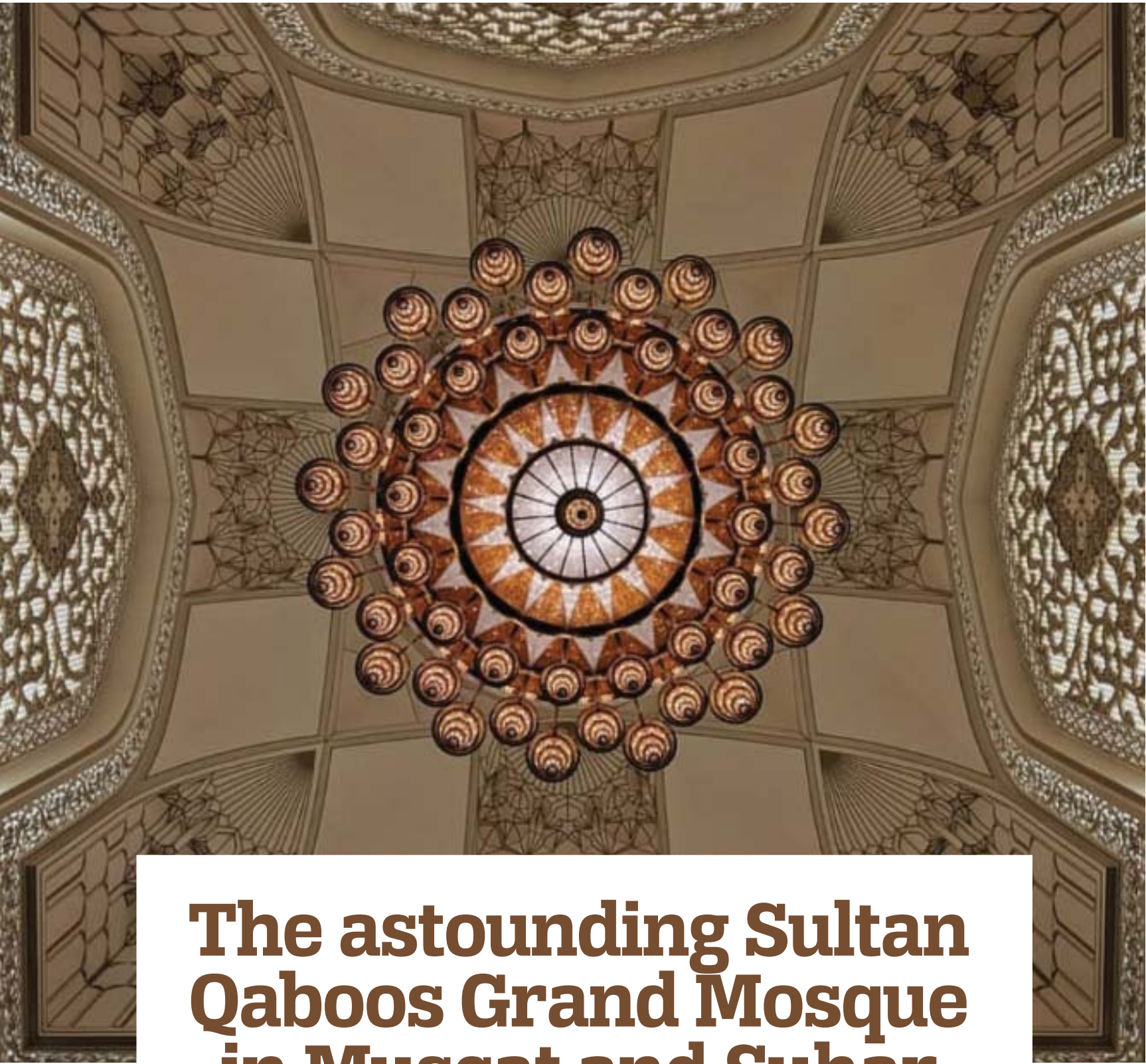
A DELICATE BUT exquisitely preserved skull of a crow-sized bird with a scythe-like beak that inhabited Madagascar 68 million years ago is showing scientists that they have a lot to learn about avian diversity during the age of dinosaurs.
Scientists on Wednesday said the bird, called Falcatakely forsterae, possessed a face unlike any other known bird from the age of dinosaurs - the Mesozoic Era - not only because of the beak shape but because of its underlying anatomy. Its beak looked superficially like that of a small

Hollow bones aren't great at surviving the fossilization process," added palaeontologist and study co-author Alan Turner of Stony Brook University in New York.
"Because of this, we need to be aware that we are probably under-sampling the Mesozoic diversity of birds. A newly discovered species like Falcatakely provides a taste of the tantalising possibility of a greater diversity of form waiting to be discovered," Turner said. Birds evolved from small feathered dinosaurs about 150 million years ago. Early birds retained many ancestral fea-



toucan though the two species are not closely related.
While modern birds exhibit a great variety of beak shapes - from the sword-billed hummingbird to the rhinoceros hornbill - little such diversity had been discovered among Mesozoic birds. Falcatakely's 3.5-inch (9-cm) skull remains partially embedded in rock because the scientists did not want to risk harming it.
Instead, they analysed it using sophisticated scanning and digital reconstruction. Only its skull was found. "Amazing, small, delicate, fragile, challenging to study - all at the same time," said Ohio University anatomy professor Patrick O'Connor, lead author of the research published in the journal Nature.
"Bird fossils are particularly rare in part because they have such delicate skeletons.

tures including teeth.
The Falcatakely fossil has a single conical tooth in the front part of the upper jaw. Falcatakely probably had a small number of teeth in life. It belonged to an avian group, enantiornithines, that did not survive the mass extinction event 66 million years ago, ending the Cretaceous Period.
"Unlike the earliest birds such as Archaeopteryx, which in many ways still looked dinosaurian with their long tails and unspecialised snouts, enantiornithines like Falcatakely would have looked relatively modern," Turner said. It was in the underlying skeletal structure where its differences were more apparent, O'Connor added, with more similarities to dinosaurs like Velociraptor than modern birds. — Reuters

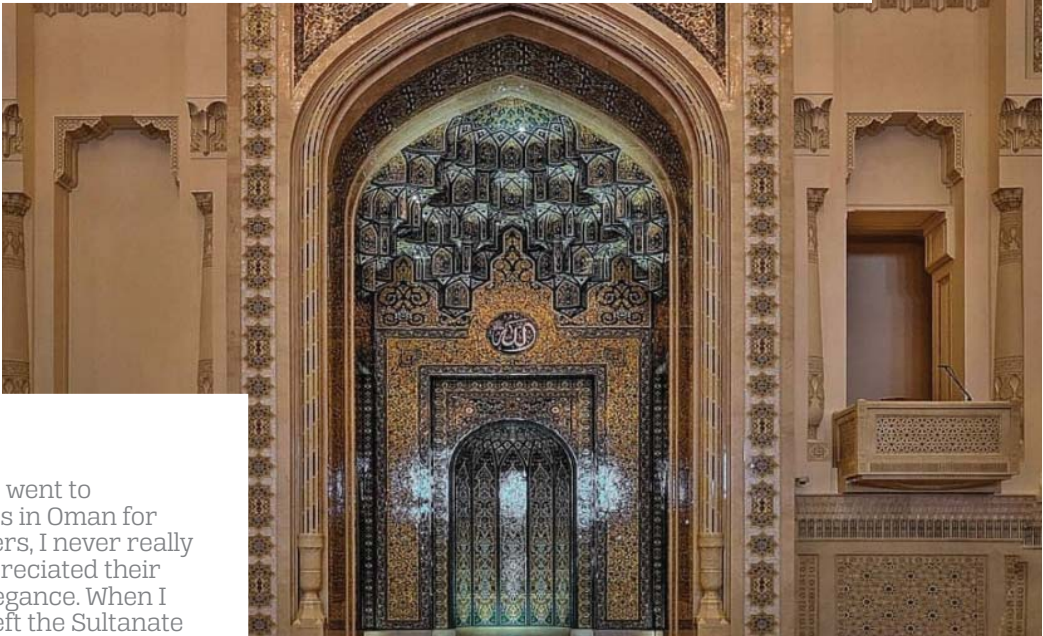


The astounding Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque in Muscat and Suhar

Photos by Sanad Nazer



Whenever I went to mosques in Oman for prayers, I never really appreciated their elegance. When I left the Sultanate to pursue my studies in India, it was only upon my return three years later that I began to fully appreciate their beauty. Having learnt photography for three years and becoming the head of a Photographer's Club in Chennai in my final year, I returned with fresher eyes. Revisiting the mosques felt like I was going there for the first time. I was amazed by the architecture, the engineering, and the amount of work that had been put into building them. The harmony and peace that I felt in the mosques were unlike any experience. As an engineer, it is now my dream to build a mosque or at least be a part of building a place just as beautiful as those found in Oman



METHOD TO THE MADNESS

BY YERU EBUEN
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How do you move on from a COVID-19 nightmare?

The news announced as of this writing went viral as most of the announcements from the Supreme Committee always do.

Parks and beaches are finally opened. Access to cinemas, health clubs and for a country like Oman, the visas, whether the family joining one or for tourists, which had been long-awaited are now allowed.

It felt like a glimmer of hope, like a sign that Oman is finally moving past the prison that COVID-19 has created towards a future that is a little bit optimistic.

Nobody comes out of the COVID-19 era unscathed. Whether it's losing a family member or a friend or losing a job, what everyone has gone through was traumatic and taxing, financially, emotionally and physically. It's easy to understand why some fall into despair and it could take years to get back what we've lost.

While the majority found the latest SC update as a source of joy, others have their reservations. Some misconstrued the new re-openings as an announcement that COVID-19 has finally been defeated but it wasn't. Discussions online sometimes turn vicious. Understandably, those who had been badly afflicted constantly remind others that while all movement and activities are finally nearly allowed, COVID-19 still lingers — like a dangerous snake just waiting to pounce. With many of them commenting from a place of pain, it's easy to see how disagreements escalate quickly.

While there is hope in the vaccine, things still have high chances of getting worst. If people throw caution to the wind and act with nonchalance, the Sultanate can still face a second wave that is more devastating than the first just like how the United Kingdom declared a lockdown several weeks back because the numbers kept growing.

While it's easier for others to move about freely with not a care in the world, there are still those struggling with the idea of how to move on post-COVID-19. The world of social media is still clearly divided between those who are rearing to go and move on and those who are still adamant because of the threat. One notable comment I read online says that while Oman has opened up nearly all of its activities, it opened the door as well for the re-ignition of the malady that is the corona. The negative weighs just as heavily as the positive. The good news always trailed by a 'potential' bad news which made me wonder: Will people ever move on from COVID-19 or has it made a terrible mark that from now on, those who have lived and experienced it will live constantly under its threat and shadow? How do you move on from a nightmare like COVID-19?

I don't have the steps or answer to that. People take different paths toward healing. Some who have seen the abyss will remain in the abyss while the most resilient of us will help restore our faith to human's ability to carry on regardless of some traumatic experiences.

I didn't write any column pieces since COVID-19 erupted. There was too much garbage floating around and the world was already scared enough to add more into that fear. I cannot write with my writing riddled with pessimism. Today's news re-ignited a fire. I let the nightmare win for as long as COVID-19 has kept everyone in prison and in isolation. I had a wake-up call that the world wasn't ending. And I have to content myself with the thought that life is still meant to be lived because there are still more possibilities of good things happening. I look forward to visiting loved ones. December was always about family gathering for us but while we will miss that chance this year, I am looking forward to the next. I look forward to seeing the outdoors, to breath, to camp under starry nights. I look forward to having coffee with friends. I look forward to doing the things I missed doing — from watching movies to visiting museums, to properly dining in restaurants — all seemed petty but all allow for human interaction.

While we will be free and out and about, many of us will look at each other with suspicion. We will all cringe when somebody sneezes in a distance. We will all worry about what foreign particles we bring home at the end of the day. We will be this way for a while and that's okay. If there is something we should learn from this nightmare, it's that our ultimate weapon of choice is our caution.

We can't wake up from a nightmare and not learn anything. What did you learn?