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22°C/14°C

TEST CRICKET COMES TO OMAN
GO TO PAGE 12 SPORTS



NEWS BRIEFS

HM CONDOLES KING SALMAN OF KSA

Muscat - His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of condolences to King Salman bin Abdulaziz al Saud of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on the death of Prince Khalid bin Faisal bin Saad bin Abdulrahman al Saud. In the cable, His Majesty expressed his sincere condolences and sympathy, praying to Allah Almighty to rest the deceased's soul in peace in paradise and grant his family patience.

HM GREETED ON POLICE DAY

Muscat - His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik received a cable of greetings from Lt Gen Hassan bin Mohsin al Shraiqi, Inspector-General of Police and Customs, on the occasion of Royal Oman Police Day that falls on January 5. "Your Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, Supreme Commander, peace be upon you. I am honoured, and so are the ROP personnel, to express our heartfelt greetings to Your Majesty on this occasion and wish you good health and happiness, and the Omani people further progress and prosperity."

Sayyid Fahd to attend 41st GCC Summit

Muscat - On behalf of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmoud al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers, will leave on Tuesday for Saudi Arabia to lead the sultanate's delegation in the 41st Gulf Cooperation Council Summit that is being held in the city of Alula on January 5.

The sultanate spares no efforts to support the GCC march, as well as all endeavours aiming at serving Arab and Islamic issues and enhancing ties of cooperation and understanding with friendly countries.

Sayyid Fahd will be accompanied by an official delegation comprising Sayyid Badr Hamad al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, Dr Abdullah Mohammed al Sa'eedi, Minister of Justice and Legal Affairs, and other officials.

Dr Nayef Falah al Hajraf, Secretary General of GCC, said on Sunday, "The council is steadily moving towards the fifth decade of the blessed cooperation process with the grace of God and with the wisdom of the leaders of the GCC states."

He said that the session is being held in Alula despite the exceptional circumstances currently in the world. "It confirms



the keenness of the leaders of the GCC states in preserving the co-operation council as a cohesive system capable of overcoming difficulties and challenges, and strengthening its complementary path in all fields."

The 41st Summit marks the beginning of a new chapter for the

GCC as it enters its fifth decade with economic integration and cooperation being a key objective since the council's formation in 1981, a media release from GCC Secretariat General stated.

Tucked away in the shadows of the Hijaz Mountains, Alula was once a bustling city with influence

across the Arabian Peninsula and beyond.

The summit will be held at Maraya Concert Hall, a cube-shaped structure covered by more than 9,500sqm of mirrors reflecting the striking surrounding landscape.

Inaugurated in 2019 and dubbed the 'Mirrored Wonder', the hall is located in Wadi Ashaar near the volcanic freeway, where it is surrounded by mountainous terrain. It can seat up to 500 guests and has hosted a number of cultural events since its opening.

Beginning in 1983, member states gradually began implementing unified GCC policies to facilitate intra-GCC businesses, such as tariff waivers for intra-GCC trade, and culminated in the creation of a GCC Customs Union in 2003, and the introduction of a unified customs tariff on intra-GCC imports.

These two landmark policies set the foundation for the establishment of the GCC Common Market in January 2008, and for the introduction of policies that granted Gulf citizens equal treatment across member states in business licensing and business activities.

Agencies

Parts of Oman to freeze this week

Our Correspondent
Muscat

With the Directorate General of Meteorology forecasting a marked dip in temperatures for most of the sultanate this week, the mercury is set to drop to zero in Jebel Shams.

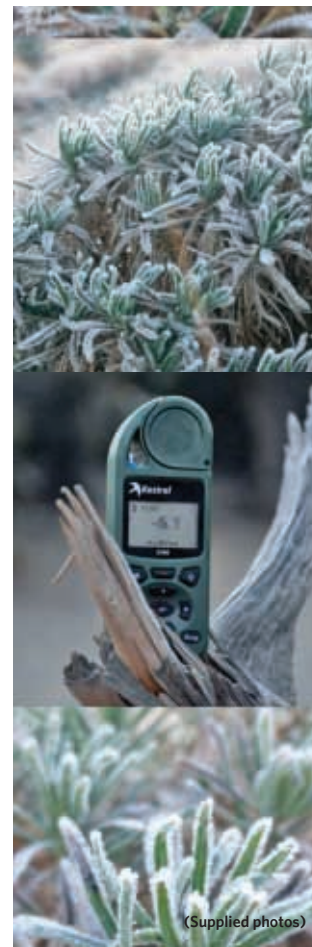
Some social media users claimed Al Sarah Mountain in Ibbi witnessed -5°C temperature on Monday morning. Many shared pictures showing water freezing on the mountain.

Saiq recorded the lowest temperature (2.7°C) on Monday, followed by Yanqul (9.3°C), Sininah (9.7°C), Maqshin (10.2°C) and Marmul (11.2°C). The Met department has forecast chilly weather for Tuesday morning as well.

According to the Met office, the mercury will fall to 0°C in Jebel Shams, 2°C in the Saiq area of Jebel Akhdar, 10°C in Yanqul and Samail, and 11°C in Rustaq, Nizwa and Haima. In Muscat, Amerat is expected to be the coldest with a minimum temperature of 12°C.

On January 2, the Met department cautioned over the falling temperatures in the next few days.

"The lowest temperatures can reach 11-16°C on the coasts of the Sea of Oman, range between 6-12°C in the interiors and desert



areas, and reach 0°C on the mountain tops," it stated.

For Tuesday, the Met department forecast mainly clear skies over most of the sultanate with chances of early morning low level clouds or fog patches over parts of Al Wusta and Dhofar governorates.



Ali bin Ahmed al Shihri receives the Order of Merit, First Class, conferred on him by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik from Sayyid Khalid bin Hilal bin Saud al Busaidi, Minister of the Diwan of Royal Court (ONA)

Omani researcher works to preserve ancient language

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Ali bin Ahmed al Shihri, a language researcher who has written several books on the Shehri - or Jibbali (mountain) - language of Dhofar, was conferred the Order of Merit, First Class, from His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik recently.

Shihri has documented Shehri, and its origins, and old Omani industrial crafts in detail. He has also organised several exhibitions to raise awareness on the importance of the language and ancient archaeological inscriptions discovered in Dhofar.

Speaking to *Muscat Daily*, Shihri said, "I am very happy that His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik honoured me with this award. Jibbali is a language spoken in the southernmost tip of the Arabian Peninsula which long pre-dates modern Arabic. Although it does not have a written form, Shehri is a comprehensive language complete

with grammar."

He said there are many in Dhofar who are native Shehri speakers. A number of them are older generation speakers of the language, particularly those who live in the mountains.

The language is rich and needs to be studied as a part of the Omani cultural diversity, he noted.

He said that the use of Shehri among the new generation is declining owing to a lack of interest.

"I have travelled to several countries, including the UK and USA, to publish research on Shehri. I lectured at Oxford University on the invitation of scholars and researchers there."

Shihri hopes to find support to publish the books he is currently working on to preserve Shehri.

"Dhofar is rich with ancient historical and cultural heritage, including an ancient language and inscriptions that exist in many sites in the governorate. Studies should be conducted to uncover and decipher these."

EERIE SILENCE HAUNTS WADI KABIR FRIDAY MARKET

Though most COVID-19 pandemic restrictions have been lifted in the country, the iconic Wadi Kabir Souq al Juma still bears a deserted look. Nearby coffee shops, which did brisk business on market days that attracted sizeable crowds, now barely survive. "Our location is such that we see few customers on weekdays. Our main business comes from the juma market. Since the souq is closed, we hardly manage our day-to-day expenses," said an attendant in a coffee shop near the market

(Photo & Text by Syed Fasiuddin)



Amnesty extension welcomed by expats, embassies

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Embassies and expat communities in the sultanate have welcomed the extension granted by the Ministry of Labour to expatriates to leave Oman without paying fines from the earlier deadline of December 31, 2020, to March 31, 2021.

Several embassies in Muscat appreciated the move as it gives expats time to make arrangements for their departure. H E Omar L Ameer Ajwad, Ambassador of Sri Lanka to Oman, said, "It is a helpful announcement, especially in view of the travel re-

strictions due to the pandemic."

H E Sarmila P Dhakal, Ambassador of Nepal to Oman, added that though there aren't a large number of Nepali expats who need to renew visas, the Ministry of Labour's move is commendable and that it'll help the expatriate population as a whole.

Following the initial announcement of the December 31 deadline, there was a rush of applications, which prompted the ministry to decide on the extension to facilitate the exit process of expats stuck in the country without jobs and steady income.

Mohammad Y Chowdhary, a Bangladeshi community social

It has come as a big relief for many individuals who will now have sufficient time to plan their exit

A H RAJA

worker, said, "Over the last few months, the Embassy in collaboration with the Bangladesh Social Club, assisted in handling applications of over 60,000 people. This extension will surely help."

At the Pakistan Social Club, senior official A H Raja, too, was grateful for the extension. "It has come as a big relief for many individuals who will now have sufficient time to plan their exit"

Roy L Haththotuwa, president of Sri Lankan Community Social Club, said, "Even though the amnesty decision had come in early December, people faced difficulties. Also, not all Sanad centres knew the procedures. This created a rush. This extension will facilitate the expatriate communities immensely."

Haththotuwa cited two reasons for the challenges expatriates faced in exiting the country

- lack of flights to desired destinations and financial difficulties. "This extension will relieve them and allow time for preparation."

Besides the extension of the amnesty, a decision to allow business owners to renew resident cards of expatriate employees, who were away from the sultanate during the lockdown period, was also welcomed.

"The latest decisions by the Ministry of Labour will help expatriates, whose labour cards expired during the lockdown period and were not able to return back to Oman, rejoin work," said Anuj Swarup, Second Secretary at the Indian Embassy in Oman.



Oman REIT FUND (Under Formation)

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

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

INVESTMENT OBJECTIVES

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

Dividend Policy

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

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

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

Fund Management

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

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

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

Conditions and procedures for subscription

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

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

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

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

All such Applications will be rejected without contacting the Applicant.

Offer on Behalf of Minors

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

Applicant's Number with the MCD

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

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

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

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

Offer Subscription Period

The Offer Subscription Period shall commence on:

Offer Opens on: 17 January 2021

Offer Closes on: 31 January 2021

Allocation Basis

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

Minimum and Maximum Limit for Category I of Public Offer

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

Minimum and Maximum Limit for Category II of Public Offer

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

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

Terms of Payment

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

Particulars of the Bank Account of the Applicant

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

Documentation Required

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

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

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

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

Mode of E-Application

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

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

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

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

Collecting Banks and Agents Receiving the Applications

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

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

Payment into Escrow Account and Refunds

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

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

Acceptance of Applications

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

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

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

Investor Undertakings

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

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

Refusal of Applications

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

Enquiry and Complaints

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

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

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

Mode of Application

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

1. Application through Collection Banks

I. E-IPO channel by the Collection Banks:

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

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

II. E-IPO Platform:

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

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

2. Application through Collection Agents

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

Allocation Letters and Refund of Money

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

Listing and Trading of the Units

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

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

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

For further information, contact:

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

Investment Manager



Issue Manager



Collecting Banks/Agents



Bank Muscat



National Bank of Oman



Ubhar Capital



Omani students' startup creates app to support SMEs

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Two young Omanis are using technology to find solutions to the problem of unemployment in the sultanate.

A startup of Omar Abdullah al Maskari, a student at University of Technology and Applied Sciences, Ibra, and Nibras Hamdan Salem al Shukaili, a student at Sultan Qaboos University (College of Science) is in the process of developing an app called Kayan. It supports owners of small and medium-sized enterprises to find skilled professionals while providing a platform for jobseekers to look for prospective employers.

The app, still in its elementary stage, recently won the third place in a competition hosted by Sharqiyah University.

Speaking to *Muscat Daily*, Maskari said, "Our app got third place in the Masar Competition conducted by the Sharqiyah Uni-



The idea came after we noticed that the number of jobseekers has increased and entrepreneurs were facing many problems after the pandemic

OMAR AL MASKARI

versity. We competed against 23 teams from various colleges and universities in the sultanate."

According to Maskari, the idea came after they noticed the number of jobseekers has increased and entrepreneurs were facing many problems, especially after the coronavirus pandemic outbreak.

"The app gathers entrepreneurs and people with skills in one place, and also provides them with training workshops. In addition to that, it sends notifica-

tions to those registered in the app about any available job opportunities," he added.

"My partner Nibras and I believe in the importance of technology in solving economic problems."

In individual achievements, Nibras won a bronze medal for her project called Green Gold, which uses Omani plants and recycled cooking oil to produce biodiesel, at the Korea International Youth Olympiad 2020 recently. Maskari has designed smart

gloves for use by outdoor workers.

H H Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham bin Tarik al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, presented Maskari the Youth Proficiency Award in the field of science on the occasion of Omani Youth Day celebrated recently.

"We hope to find support to complete our app. It will help jobseekers; hopefully, their numbers will go down and entrepreneurs will not face difficulties," Maskari said.



(File photo)

ROP marks Annual Day today

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Royal Oman Police (ROP) will celebrate on Tuesday its Annual Day, which falls on January 5 every year.

ROP has been striving to keep pace with the developments taking place in the sultanate in all fields to provide a security umbrella, and protect the rights and liberties of citizens and residents.

In the last few years, ROP made huge strides, applying sci-

entific strategies to keep pace with the changes. This has enabled ROP to handle all forms of crime and protect members of the public.

With praise from the United Nations, ROP contributed to the sultanate to be ranked 50th in the world and fifth in the Arab world in the electronic transformation of governments. ROP has achieved success in providing quality and integrated electronic services to citizens, residents and visitors alike, using the latest

technologies to provide service through its website and its applications on smart phones and self-service devices.

During the past year, the General Administration for Combating Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances implemented operations against a number of smuggling and drug trafficking networks. The sultanate achieved 'zero terrorism' for the eighth consecutive year, according to the Global Terrorism Index in the World 2020.

180 COVID-19 cases; 8,826 vaccinated

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Health (MoH) on Monday announced 180 new cases of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), taking the total to 129,548. There was one death reported during the same time.

As of Monday, as many as 8,826 had been vaccinated against the virus.

The number of those who have recovered also increased by 106. 'The number of recoveries has increased to 122,372, while

CASES FROM DEC 30 TO JAN 04	
Dec 30	86
Dec 31	148
Jan 1 to 3	537
(Average of 179)	
Jan 4	180

the number of deaths has reached 1,502,' an MoH statement said, adding the rate of re-

covery is now 94.4 per cent.

As of Monday, a total of 67 patients were admitted in health institutions with 29 patients in ICUs.

Muscat governorate recorded the highest number of people who were vaccinated (3,028), followed by North Batinah - 1,825, South Batinah - 904, South Sharqiyah - 477, and Buraimi - 333. Dakhliyah recorded the vaccination of 688 people, Dhahirah - 325, North Sharqiyah - 568, Dhofar - 462, Musandam - 125, and Al Wusta - 91.

Land fees can be paid till Jan 31

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning announced that the deadline for paying land fees has been extended till January 31.

The ministry said, 'Citizens who were previously allotted land for various uses in governorates of the sultanate and did not complete the procedures or didn't pay the financial fees, for such customers the ministry is extending the deadline to Sunday, January 31.'

The ministry stated that it will cancel the requests in the event of non-payment within the specified period.



REGIONAL WEATHER		
	Max	Min
Abu Dhabi	24	12
Doha	23	15
Kuwait City	21	11
Manama	23	16
Riyadh	22	10

Tender Announcement

Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Company SAOG invites Bidders to submit their proposal for the below detailed tenders:

Tender No.	Description	Tender Fee (Nonrefundable)	Tender Purchase deadline	Clarification deadline	Tender Submission Date
PDMC/2021/01/001	Supply, Installation, Testing & Commissioning of Fuel Pipeline	50.000	13.01.2021	17.01.2021	24.01.2021

Bank Name & Account Number Bank Muscat (0319005687760012)

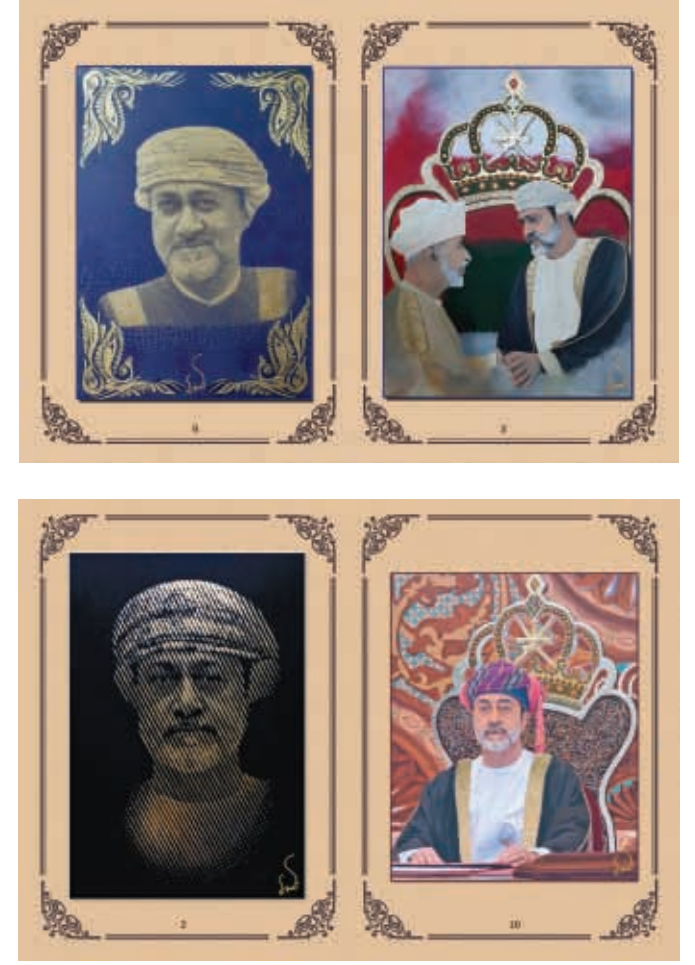
The Conditions:

- Collection of Tenders:** Interested, specialized companies and establishments registered under grade 3 and above (in C.R) with minimum of 3 years' experience in the same field. Bidders can collect the tender document from the procurement department by sending a copy of the payment slip to procurement@almaha.com.om. The tender may be collected on any working days between 08:00 AM – 03:00 PM.
- Bank Guarantee:** The bidder should enclose a bank guarantee issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman for an amount equivalent to (1%) of the tender value, with a validity of (90) Days from the last date of submission and addressed to Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Company SAOG.
- Offer Submission:** Tender bids should be submitted in two separate sealed envelopes (Financial and Technical), addressed to the **Chairman of Tender Committee**, Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing SAOG marked with tender number and subject. Other marks or any reference must not be printed outside the envelope. The exterior of the envelopes containing the tender document must not reveal the identity of the bidder.
- Submission Location:** The bid should be deposited in the tender box at Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing SAOG head office located in Ghala before 02:00 PM on the submission date.
- Any bid received after the specified date or if it does not meet the conditions will not be considered.
- Each bid shall be signed and stamped with the signature of the authorized person.
- Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Co SAOG reserves the right to accept, reject or cancel the tender with out giving any reasons.
- Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Co SAOG reserves the right to add or cancel some of the works metioned in the tender if necessary.
- Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Co SAOG is not bound to accept the lowest bid or any other bid without giving any reasons.
- For any enquiry email us at (procurement@almaha.com.om) or by calling 24610289/24610282/24610355



Art, inspiration, admiration...

His Majesty Sultan Haitham's personality inspires Iranian artist Nakisa Samadi



Our Correspondent
Muscat

Inspired by the personality of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, Iranian artist Nakisa Samadi has created a collection of graphic artworks some of which she exhibited in an exhibition last weekend.

Her first exhibition in Oman, it

was opened by chief guest Sayyida Hujaija al Said.

The two-day show at Mysk by Shaza in Al Mouj Muscat also aimed at shedding light on the diplomatic ties between Oman and Iran. "The two countries have enjoyed good neighbourly relations since many decades," Nakisa said.

She said Oman's efforts in

Oman's efforts in promoting peace and harmony are recognised internationally. Hence, my attention as an artist directed me to who is leading this country

NAKISA SAMADI

promoting peace and harmony are recognised internationally.

"Hence, my attention as an artist directed me to who is lead-

ing this country - His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq."

Following a thorough study of the art and culture of Oman, the lives of both the Late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said and His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, and their interest in cultural matters, Nakisa conceptualised the exhibition to express her admiration and devotion to

the two towering personalities.

"At the exhibition, what struck me immediately was Omanis' interest in art and culture, and their unified love and loyalty for their leader His Majesty Sultan Haitham. Their attention to art technique and style surprised me," Nakisa said.

"I would like to thank all Omani people for their lovely re-

action to my artworks."

Nakisa employs specialised graphic techniques and hyperrealism in her pursuit of art. For this particular exhibition, she used acrylics, patina and golden leaf - among other media - over graphic images to create the collection on His Majesty Sultan Haitham to mark the 50th National Day of the sultanate.



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Omani film wins at Iranian festival



Our Correspondent
Muscat

For filmmaker Hussein Yousef al Balushi, 2020 went out with a bang. On December 31, his film *Al Nairooz al Omani* was adjudged winner in the best short documentary film category of the International Moving Film Festival held in Iran.

The International Moving Film Festival is an annual event for independent filmmakers. Established by the International Moving Film School (IMOFIS), the mobile festival is open to talent from all over the world.

The festival includes several categories, including feature films, short films, student short films and video art, besides best short documentary.

Speaking to *Muscat Daily*, Balushi said, "*Al Nairooz al Omani* was produced by RTC Company. It is a 12-minute documentary on



the traditional sport of bullfighting that was popular in Batinah. The film was made with the objective of preserving the traditional sports in Oman."

Balushi has entered *Al Nairooz al Omani* in film festivals in ten countries, including Italy and Brazil. A member of the Oman Film and Theatre Society, Balushi

has made several documentaries and won local and international awards.

While continuing to direct documentaries showcasing Omani heritage and traditional customs, Balushi hopes to screen his films in Arab and international festivals to promote Oman as a tourism destination.

PRAYER TIMINGS

Fajr	5.30am	Duhr	12.17pm	Maghrib	5.39pm
Sunrise	6.50am	Asr	3.19pm	Isha	6.54pm

MEDRC announces finalists of young water researchers award

Muscat - MEDRC Water Research has announced the names of 12 young Omani researchers shortlisted as finalists for the 'Omani Young Water Researchers Award 2020'.

As per a statement, the high-profile award celebrates the world-class water research being conducted by young Omani students at undergraduate and postgraduate level in universities both in Oman and abroad.

The 12 young students secured their place on the shortlist after being called upon to present their project and defend their research findings to a judging panel consisting of the foremost water experts in Oman.

"None of this would be possible without the ongoing support of the Embassy of the Kingdom

None of this would be possible without the support of the Embassy of the Netherlands, Omar Zawawi Establishment and Haya Water

CIARÁN Ó CUINN

of the Netherlands, Omar Zawawi Establishment and Haya Water. Year after year their commitment to supporting Oman's research talent has been truly impressive," said Ciarán Ó Cuinn, MEDRC centre director.

First launched by MEDRC

Water Research in 2017, the award aims to recognise the valuable contributions of young Omani researchers whose work has or has the potential to make a positive impact on the water sector in Oman.

The annual event is held under the auspices of the Public Authority for Water and focuses on water research conducted in the following specified areas:

- Water management
- Wastewater treatment and reuse
- Water treatment technologies
- Desalination and/or related environment research
- Non-revenue water

The winners will be presented a winner's medal, certificate of achievement and a prize.

The winners will be announced at an official ceremony which will be attended by dignitaries and officials from the public and private sector, added the statement.

The shortlisted students are:

Postgraduate category
Basim al Farsi, Ibtihal al Manthri, Rasheeda al Abri, Tahani Bait Suwailm

Undergraduate category
Hawaa al Abri & Faiza al Hatmi, Kawther al Ismaili, Matar al Maqbali

Wastewater research category
Manal al Hashmi, Aziza al Hinai & Halima Alhimali, Thuraya al Fahdi

40.9% rise in fish landings at the end of Oct 2020

Muscat - The total quantity of fish landed in the sultanate reached 607,978 tonnes at the end of October 2020 compared to 431,630 tonnes during the same period of 2019, a rise of 40.9 per cent, according to statistics released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

Traditional fishing practices in the sultanate contributed to 579,817 tonnes of fish at the end of October 2020, constituting a rise of 40.3 per cent over 413,263 tonnes in 2019. The total value of the fish stock was RO275.72mn in 2020, representing a growth of 16.1 per cent over RO237.59mn in 2019.

Coastal fishing and commercial fishing contributed to about 3,183 tonnes and 24,978 tonnes of total fish landings, respectively, at the end of October 2020.

The Governorate of Al Wusta had the highest fish landings at 219,193 tonnes, followed by South Sharqiyah at 175,182



tonnes, and North and South Batinah at 68,582 tonnes.

The quantity of fish landed in Dhofar was 63,669 tonnes, and the quantity in Musandam was 27,400 tonnes. The landed quantity in the Governorate of Muscat stood at 25,790 tonnes.

According to fish landings by species, the largest quantity of fish landed at the end of October 2020 comprised small pelagic fish at 336,033 tonnes, compared to 243,969 tonnes at the end of October 2019, a rise of 37.7 per cent. The quantity of large pelagic fish rose by 59.8 per cent to reach 134,571 tonnes at the end of October 2020 compared to 84,194 tonnes at the end of October 2019.

The quantity of demersal fish landed reached 85,237 tonnes, an increase of 31.2 per cent compared to October 2019 when it was 64,947 tonnes.

Meanwhile, there was a rise in the quantity of crustaceans and molluscs by 16.5 per cent, and sharks and rays by 6.7 per cent.

MoH undersecretary visits Al Wusta health institutions

Muscat - Within the field visits conducted by Ministry of Health (MoH) officials, its Undersecretary for Administrative, Financial & Planning Affairs H E Dr Fatima Mohammed al Ajmi recently visited a number of health institutions in Al Wusta governorate to follow up on the work progress.

H E Dr Fatima visited the Haima Hospital and Duqm Hospital, in addition to the Community Clinic in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm and the clinic of the customs department at the Port of Duqm. She met the administration and the workers of the health institutions and received their opinions on how to improve the quality of the services. She urged them to make every effort to provide the necessary health services.

H E Dr Fatima also presided over an administrative meeting held at the Haima Hospital with the presence of governorate's health services directors general,



directors and administrative supervisors. The meeting reviewed a number of topics related to the healthcare system in the governorate including plans, indicators and achievements. It further discussed the obstacles and challenges in the implementation and development of workflow in the governorate.

She also met H E Sheikh Ma'adhad al Yaqoubi, Governor of Al Wusta, and discussed enhancement of services.

The MoH undersecretary was accompanied by Dr Ibrahim al Mahrooqi, director general of Health Services - Al Wusta governorate, and a number of senior officials.

The ministry conducts regular similar visits with the purpose of reviewing the progress of work in the three healthcare levels of the health institutions (primary, secondary and tertiary), identifying their needs and requirements, and studying the development of the healthcare system infrastructure.

Latest issue of Scientific Insights published

Muscat - The Research and Innovation Sector of the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation has published the latest issue of *Scientific Insights* online, which includes various scientific topics, research reports, as well as a number of enriching research writings.

The main topic of the January issue of *Scientific Insights* examines agricultural technologies and their role in maximising agricultural profits. It highlights the role of technology in agriculture,

The main topic of the January issue of 'Scientific Insights' examines agricultural technologies and their role in maximising agricultural profits

demonstrating how farmers benefit from modern technology and from employing the techniques of the Fourth Industrial Revolution in increasing the yield of agricultural crops in the sultanate.

The journal also explores topics on how urbanisation poses a threat to plants in Dhofar, the production of environmentally friendly biological medicines using fish waste, high specification research device in the

GeneBank to preserve genetic resources, cerebral venous thrombosis in the sultanate, and other interesting topics.

Scientific Insights is a quarterly journal published by the Research and Innovation Sector of the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation online in both Arabic and English, consisting of 12 sections.

Those interested in accessing *Scientific Insights* can do so through the sector's various social media channels.

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SULTANATE OF OMAN

MINISTRY OF HEALTH

ANNOUNCEMENT

The Ministry of Health invites specialized companies to participate in the following Tenders:

Tender Ref.	Description	Last Date For Collection Of Tender Document	Closing Time/ Day/ Date	Eligibility	Tender Fee (Non-Refundable)
292/2020	Supply of Pharmaceuticals for the Royal Hospital	07/ January /2021	Before 08 am on Wednesday 27/January/2021	Specialized Companies registered with Tender Board	R.O 25,000 Per set
294/2020	Supply of Surgical Items (Covid 19)	06/ January /2021	Before 08 am on Wednesday 13/January/2021	Specialized Companies registered with Tender Board	R.O 25,000 Per set
295/2020	Supply & Installation of Computers for the Renal Dialysis Unit at Wilayat Al-Amerat in Muscat Governorate	07/ January /2021	Before 08 am on Wednesday 27/January/2021	Specialized Companies registered with Tender Board	R.O 25,000 Per set
296/2020	Provision of Operation and Maintenance of Equipment Services at Various Health Facilities at Directorate General of Health Services in Muscat Governorate	14/ January /2021	Before 08 am on Wednesday 10/February/2021	Specialized Companies registered with Tender Board in the Excellent Grade	R.O 274,500 Per set

- All Specialized and interested Companies registered with Tender Board on the above mentioned Grade may obtain Tender documents from the E. Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om> against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of document.
- Tenders should be submitted on line on the given website signed and sealed. The Tenderer should enclose scan copy of Bank Guarantee or a certified Cheque issued by a Local bank for not less than One percent (1%) for the Tender value validity for (90) days from the Tender Submission date, addressed to The Chairman of the Tender Committee before one day of date submission.
- The Original Bank Guarantee should be submitted to the office of Director of Purchase and Tenders one day before the submission date for all Tenders.
- Ministry is not bound to accept the lowest tender and reserves the right to accepts or reject any tender.

(<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>)

Any Clarification, you may contact via

Telephone: 24166670

Email id etenderhd@ita.gov.om

Occidental Oman lends its support to Adam camel race

As part of its larger initiative to support camel racing in the sultanate, Occidental Oman representatives recently attended the Adam Camel Race in Dakhliyah governorate, which was the second of four races organised by the Oman Camel Racing Federation, and sponsored by Occidental Oman.

The event was attended by federation and Occidental Oman representatives. Some 160 camels competed to win on the racetracks.

After eight rounds, four winners were declared. Occidental Oman awarded each of the winners with a pickup truck, in accordance with the sponsorship agreement previously signed between Occidental Oman and the Oman Camel Racing Federation.

Occidental Oman will also award 12 winners of the two following sponsored races with pickup trucks. Future sponsored races include the Ibri and Sohar Camel Races.

Occidental Oman has sup-



ported 21 camel races during the last six years, as the initiative engages with a sport historically tied to the culture of local communities. This sponsorship comes within the framework of Occidental Oman's long-term commitment to strengthen its social ties with the communities located in its concession areas and the wider Omani population.

Ooredoo app makes life easier

Ooredoo prepaid users can relax with a new update that allows customers to purchase add-on bundles through the Ooredoo app using a bank card. In the latest app update, users can save their bank card details to purchase bundles in a quick, secure and easy way to make transactions faster than ever. Now, customers who update to the latest version of the app can leave their wallets at home without fear of running low on credit or data.

Raed Mohammed Dawood, director of Branding, Communications and Corporate Affairs at Ooredoo, said, "The world is rapidly changing and we are increasingly opting for more convenience and ease when it comes to our purchases and transactions. Prepaid users can now purchase their desired data bundles from anywhere and at any time, enjoying added convenience and an enhanced service that continues to make digital lives easier."

The multi-award-winning app is regularly upgraded with fun and exciting features for customers to use and enjoy for



free, such as bill payments, requesting PUK codes, credit transfers, customising plans, recharging or ordering a SIM card for home delivery. Users can easily manage their accounts through the app with options to subscribe to add-ons, upgrade and change plans and view activation history.

The added services come as a part of Ooredoo's aim to drive an all-round superior digital experience and take care of subscribers.

Log-in or download the app from the Apple Store or Google Play, save bank card details and unleash a world of fun and innovative features.

OSN launches fastest content discovery platform 'Box of Wonders'

OSN, the region's leading entertainment hub announced the launch of an innovative new product, the 'Box of Wonders'. Set to transform the region's entertainment offering, the 'Box of Wonders' will offer MENA customers the region's fastest content discovery journey, promising easy content discovery in just 3 clicks.

Using AI technology and Machine Learning to optimise the user experience, the 'Box of Wonders' addresses the specific needs and wants of the MENA customer including safe viewing experiences for children, enhanced search functionality and rapid content discovery.

Having announced an exclusive strategic partnership to bring Disney+ Originals content to the region in April 2020, OSN's long-term strategy is firmly focused on providing MENA families with the content

they want to watch. The new 'Box of Wonders', will be offering the region's first dedicated children's page, promising a safe viewing experience where kids can browse without parental supervision.

The page offers a range of premium kids' content for ages 12 and below, giving parents total

reassurance they can leave the little ones in front of the TV. The dedicated kid's page was set up following extensive customer research, which identified safe viewing for kids as a top priority for customers.

"The new 'Box of Wonders' is the result of many months of careful planning and in-depth re-

search into the consumer mindset. Customer-centricity is at the heart of our business, and our team has been working closely with customers to prioritize key functionalities of the technology. Our research found that content discovery, family viewing and enhanced control were top of our customer's lists," said Devrim Melek, senior vice president, Strategy, OSN.

"The new user interface and new software has completely overhauled our previous offering, using Machine Learning and AI to provide customers with the best the region has to offer in entertainment technology. The new system is easy to use, for both kids and adults, with viewers able to land on their favourite show in just three clicks of a remote. No other regional offering provides this currently, demonstrating OSN's commitment to delivering the very best."



LULU EXCHANGE OPENS BRANCH



Lulu Exchange opened its latest branch at Ghubra Souq

Renault's 25-point safety check guarantees top performance

To ensure optimal performance and safety all year round, Renault Oman offers a 25-point safety check when customers bring their vehicle for service. As part of this initiative, Renault's expert technicians check the car's vital components and fluid levels to reassure customers that their vehicle is running smoothly and is safe to drive.

During the 25-point safety check, technicians will inspect a wide range of items including bodywork, windscreen, number plates, door mirrors, wiper blades, horn, wash/wipe, front lights, rear lights, door, boot, bonnet opening, air conditioning, coolant, brake fluid, engine oil level, screen wash level, power steering, battery, tyre pressures, front brake pads/discs, rear brake pads/discs, brake pipes/hoses/cables, handbrake travel/operation, shock absorbers, exhaust/catalyst and fluid leaks.

A spokesperson for Renault Oman, from the house of Suhail Bahwan Automobiles, said, "When customers bring in their cars for servicing, the vehicle goes through a 25-point safety



check. Renault's trained technicians check that the vehicle is as safe as it can be when you get back on the road. We are insis-

tent on Renault vehicles going through rigorous safety checks since safety is extremely important for us. It is really essential for

customers to make sure their Renault is serviced according to the manufacturers' service schedule. This will safeguard their vehicle's

performance and enhance the value of the vehicle."

He added, "Our goal is to deliver customer excellence by pro-

viding advanced levels of servicing to all our Renault customers. When customer entrust us with the servicing of their vehicle, they

will benefit from compliance of the maintenance program for the vehicle, safety, with a thorough 25-point health check and reliability through Renault electronic diagnosis."

A team of qualified and experienced technicians trained to carry out all the necessary work use the latest diagnostic equipment to ensure a high-quality standard of service is always maintained.

They always use genuine Renault parts so you can always rely on the repairs.

Regular maintenance of Renault ensures its performance and extends its life. To support customers throughout the life of their car, Renault Oman offers turnkey solutions.

At Renault, each service is clear and there are no surprises in store. To guarantee peace of mind to customers, Renault is committed to compliance with their vehicle's maintenance programme, safety with the performance of inspection, reliability. Thanks to the Renault electronic diagnosis and transparency of the Renault Service packages suited to the car.

Post-pandemic travel: A security perspective

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a huge impact on physical traveling, whether for business or private reasons like holidays. But switching to digital alternatives for meetings and communication still can't cover all of the needs of our modern world. Meetings where a physical presence is required still exist, meaning trips are still in demand. The same goes for vacations, which will drive a recovery of the travel industry over the next years, particularly in light of recent success with a vaccine. Travel just may take on a slightly different shape. The impact of COVID-19 will ultimately not only be seen on the physical aspects of travel, but also in the digital area, and there are new threats. Perhaps the biggest question moving forward will be one of privacy.

Transparent global citizen

With the need to follow infection spreading and monitor the pandemic, different methods of tracking people were introduced. Whether you have to register online to eat at a restaurant or write your name and address details on paper when entering a bar, you hand your personal data to unknown people. Even though



the only reason is for medical professionals to access such data and use it when infections are detected to fight further spreading, we've seen unauthorised access to such data by, say, police forces or staff of the location. Unavoidable tracking of physical location poses a huge threat to privacy, one that has not been solved. In fact, criminals may be able to access such data and use it to further attacks like phishing, spam or malware at-

tacks like ransomware.

What's more, some countries demand from travelers not only medical tests, but also that they share extensive amounts of private information, perhaps by forcing them to install Tracking Apps, which enable permanent, targeted surveillance. It is hard to foresee how long such policies are in place, but it may be here to stay in some countries.

Tracking apps can introduce a vast amount of functionalities;

they can acquire not only real-time location data, but also access to the local data on your smartphone. So far it's unpredictable for how long such apps will be used and how their future will look like even once the pandemic subsides. There may be other future demands for such kind of tracking, like criminals or new health crises.

Oddly enough, the pandemic and the subsequent restrictions put in place could actually in-

crease privacy in other respects. Last year we conducted a study on "visual and audible hacking" (aka "shoulder surfing"), a common problem while traveling. With enforced policies on distance between humans still active in many countries and different transportation methods used at the moment, several aspects of such information snooping will be harder and therefore may increase the level of physical security and privacy issues in

this specific area to a certain degree. Of course, if social distancing restrictions are relaxed, travelers will once again need to take precaution to avoid "shoulder surfing".

Here are some other important considerations to keep in mind when leaving your home:

Your place - not your home

You probably know the phrase "feels like home," which hotels and other accommodation providers commonly use. To be honest, you should realise that it's not your home! With the increase of smart technologies, you may be lost in all the technology you already have at home, but at places you don't own, you have no control over the IoT-devices around you at all.

Is there a smartTV with a camera in your room? What about smart air-controls, voice assistants, entertainment offerings and all the other small helpers integrated in modern accommodation rooms? All of them can be a threat to your privacy or cause a security problem if you connect your own devices to them. Even a power outlet with a USB port to charge your phone may be a risk either in terms of security or the

physical health of your device.

Home is where your phone automatically connects to WiFi

You may travel with several devices, such as smartphones, tablets, notebooks, ebook readers and the like. Isn't it comfortable to use local WiFi in hotels, restaurants or other locations?

You may get decent connection speed, and you don't have to worry about money even when outside of your local or roaming network. But did you ever think about who controls the network you are connected to? What type of data you share or which websites you are opening?

Self-service concierge

Not everyone likes digital tickets or sometimes a printed boarding pass is inevitable. Nowadays, hotels and locations offer publicly accessible self-service kiosks - usually tablets or a computer. The idea is simple: you log in to your email account or wherever you may have stored your ticket, you open it, and print. This process may take a few minutes - but didn't you forget anything? "Logout" and "Clear browsing data" may be forgotten due to stress while checking out.

Tech Mahindra committed to sustainability

Tech Mahindra, a leading provider of digital transformation, consulting and business re-engineering services and solutions, progressed several people and environment related causes in 2020. In June 2020, Tech Mahindra signed a joint declaration with UN Global Compact urging governments to align their COVID-19 recovery efforts with the latest climate science. By moving towards a zero-carbon resilient economy, Tech Mahindra aims to reduce carbon footprint, emissions and will conserve energy using new-age technologies like internet of things, artificial intelligence and blockchain.

CP Gurnani, MD & CEO, Tech Mahindra, said, "COVID-19 has allowed all of us to reconfigure our priorities and understand the importance of building a sustainable world - by focusing on healthcare and leveraging tech-

nology to enable new ways of working. At Tech Mahindra, we are committed towards building a sustainable business with responsibility and by creating value for our stakeholders, while also keeping in mind the long-term impacts on the environment. It's time to focus on and implement technology-led solutions that will help us reboot."

Other significant recognitions included two Stevie Awards for the company's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Tech Mahindra received a Gold Stevie for innovative use of HR Technology and a Bronze Stevie for being the most valuable employer across Asia Pacific. Tech Mahindra earned this recognition for its resilient and agile approach to the COVID-19 pandemic, which was centered around building safe, sustainable human experiences for our stakeholders.

How Ford turns data into vehicle on your driveway

With an ever-evolving list of expectations by customers, how does Ford keep a model line-up, like Ranger, up to date with the latest technology and safety features without compromising quality, safety and durability? Ford's investment in simulations and simulators around the world has been revolutionising the way they have been developing vehicles in recent years.

How are simulations made?

Ford's aspiration of being the car company that leverages its ability in big data collection to deliver increased benefits to customers has played into vehicle development's favour, especially in the field of simulation. Years of data which has been gathered through various vehicle testing programs create a solid foundation for Ford's simulations. Before this data is used in simulations it goes through numerous correlation tests, which analyses the accuracy of the simulated information in comparison to real-world data. Only when



the analytical capability is achieved, the building of simulations can start, and a simulator can be built.

From the first 3D designs, to physical prototypes and finally to production, every Ford needs to pass a strict inspection by key engineers, called a judgement gateway before being able to move through the vehicle development process. One of these

judgement gateways is called the Final Design Judgement Gateway (FDJ), where lead engineers sign off on the different improvements made on prototype vehicles. With the addition of simulation in the product development process, FDJ is also used for confirming the Computer Aided Engineering (CAE) modeling, ensuring that Ford is comfortable with the results the

simulation is producing for various scenario tests.

The Vehicle Dynamics team led by David Perks in Australia fully utilises simulations by using Computer Aided Engineering (CAE) as a mock-up of a real-world vehicle to better understand how it will behave in certain conditions. Perks' team is confident in the simulation models, since they have been proven

on the numerous vehicles that have been developed out of the Ford Australia Proving Ground.

Drive anywhere in the world

Simulators have the unique ability to give you the full driving experience, without risking your safety or the possibility of crashing an expensive prototype. The simulator recreates your driving environment, and provides you with vehicle dynamics, sound and in the future, Advanced Driver Assist Systems (ADAS) feedback in relation to the vehicle's behaviour. ADAS are electronic aids which uses cameras and radar on the vehicle to assist the driver in safely operating the vehicle. Ford's Co-Pilot360 offers the latest in ADAS technologies with Lane-Keeping System, Blind Spot Information System, Automatic Emergency Braking with Pedestrian Detecting and Adaptive Cruise Control. These are not fully autonomous systems, but assistants that adapt to the driving situation to enhance the vehicle's safety systems.

Renowned artists come together to produce 'Ya Salam Ya Dubai'

The Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing (Dubai Tourism) announced the global release of 'Ya Salam Ya Dubai', a new iconic song that celebrates what makes Dubai one of the best cities in the world.

Launched on New Year's Day as part of the 26th Dubai Shopping Festival (DSF), organised by Dubai Festivals and Retail Establishment (DFRE), Ya Salam Ya Dubai was released as joint project between Dubai Tourism and MBC Group.

The new song fuses the talents of two famed artists including Arabic music icon Rashed al Majed and Moroccan-Swedish singer, songwriter and Multi Grammy award-winning music producer RedOne, who has worked with Lady Gaga, Jennifer Lopez, Enrique Iglesias and Nicki Minaj among other successful artists.

Ya Salam Ya Dubai is a musical tribute to the ever evolving, ever captivating city of Dubai. Featured on Visit Dubai and MBC Group's official YouTube



channels, the remake merges the two hit singles by Rashed al Majed - Dubai Kawkab Aakhar (Lyricist: Anwar al Meshiri, Composer: Ahmad al Harmi), launched during the 25th edition of DSF, and Dubai Danat al Donia (Lyricist: Aref al Khaja, Composer: Khaled Nasser) which was released for the very first edition of DSF in 1996 - but has been brought to the present, and the latest edition of DSF, cour-

tesy of the mixing artistry of RedOne.

The song lyrics reflect the rich history of Dubai and its transformation over the years to become a leading global tourist destination, welcoming people from all over the world with its tempting hospitality and culture. A must-visit destination for its sun, sea, sand and shopping, Dubai is the epitome of cosmopolitan living and today is home to more than

200 nationalities, uniting cultures, beliefs, and values, and serving as a beacon for tolerance and diversity.

In celebration of the all-encompassing nature of this exceptional city, Ya Salam Ya Dubai (English verse written by RedOne and Pat Devine), was created to appeal to all ages, backgrounds and ethnicities and will strike a chord with an international audience thanks to Re-



dOne's association with the song.

The new music video that brings the song to life is also a magnificent representation of the diversity of the city. Directed by David Zannie, it highlights Dubai's leading position as a major tourism and entertainment hub in the region, showcasing cameos from a range of celebrities, dancers and actors.

It also shines a spotlight on various landmark locations across Dubai that continue to attract tourists from around the world, such as Jumeirah al Naseem, Madinat Jumeirah, the



Historical District, Dubai Water Canal, Coca-Cola Arena, Miracle Garden, Museum of Digital Art, La Mer, Ce La Vie restaurant, Jadaf Waterfront, Brass Monkey on Bluewaters Island, The Beach by Meraas and Dubai Creek Harbour.

Issam Kazim, CEO, Dubai Corporation for Tourism and Commerce Marketing (DCTCM), said, "With Ya Salam Ya Dubai, we can truly celebrate how far Dubai has come to be a leading international destination recognised around the world. In a relatively short time period, the city has innovated and adapted

to changing tourism trends and the evolving global travel industry, achieving countless milestones, launching world-class landmarks and hosting successful events that continue to attract global attention and visitation.

"Dubai continues to defy expectations and we are very fortunate to have had a decisive leadership who leveraged a swift response to COVID-19 that allows the city to continue welcoming visitors from around the world safely into the new year."

Commenting on the song, Rashed al Majed said, "I am honoured to be part of the Dubai Shopping Festival's (DSF) story since its inception 26 years ago and today, I am back to celebrate Dubai, a magnificent city, which has become a regional hub for tourists from around the world. Collaborating with RedOne on this project has been exciting, as we bring to life two great tracks I presented to Dubai over the years, and we are pleased to launch it during the 26th edition of DSF."

DAILY CROSSWORD

	1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8	9		10	11	12	13	14		15	16	17	18	
19						20						21						22				
23						24						25						26				
27					28					29	30				31			32				
				33					34				35		36							
37	38	39						40						41		42			43	44	45	
46							47						48		49		50					
51						52						53				54		55				
56						57						58					59		60			
61					62				63		64				65			66				
				67				68		69				70		71						
72	73	74						75		76					77		78			79	80	81
82						83				84				85		86			87			
88						89		90					91						92			
93					94			95				96						97				
98						99		100		101							102					
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107	108	109							110		111					112				113	114	115
116						117				118			119	120					121			
122						123							124						125			
126						127							128						129			

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ACROSS
1 Resolute
5 Wicked Biblical city
10 "Call Me ____"
15 "The ____ Happy Fella"
19 Biblical word of contempt
20 Nest-building fish
21 Love, in Roma
22 East Asia nanny
23 Like ____ of bricks
24 Child, to Robert Burns
25 Nostril
26 Son of Loki
27 Large African baboon
29 Click in Morse code
31 High-ranking Chinese official
33 Columnist Barrett
34 Father, to Caesar
36 Understands fully
37 Waxy ointment
40 Figures of speech
42 Talked impudently
46 Call forth
47 Not for real
48 Anatomical duct
50 Optional test answer
51 Descartes
52 Tapers off
53 Dissolves
55 Yemen's capital
56 Ultimate goal
57 Ship's freight
58 Spanish dances
60 Star starter?
61 Horizontal above

ground shoot
63 Slammin' Sam, of golf
65 ____ Destiny
67 Jason's ship
69 Direct or guide
71 Virginia of history
72 Mayanmars city
76 City on the Rhone
78 Wobble
82 Special savings acct.
83 Wounds or other injuries
85 Victim of Charlotte Corday
87 Before before
88 Weaving machine
90 Biological partitions
91 Heavy spiked clubs
92 Lion's pride
93 Flaubert's ____ Bovary, et. al.
95 Select group
96 Lengths of coiled yarn
97 Florist's supply
98 ____ Maria Rilke
100 Assistants at a duel
102 Most delicate
103 Cloth or kick starter
105 Deteriorates through disuse
106 Isinglass
107 Armed naval vessel
111 Golf gadget
112 Beauty salon service
116 Of one's

grandparents
117 Choose
119 Auctioneer's word
121 It's before pencil or glass
122 Puccini heroine
123 A binding contract
124 Friendly
Scandinavian spirit
125 Fitzgerald of song
126 First orchard?
127 Island near Leyte
128 Do a tailor's job
129 Appear to be
DOWN
1 Ending for mail or candy
2 Pro ____; L.
3 Computer-screen image
4 Magician of comics
5 TX to LA river
6 Florida city
7 ____ Eireann: part of the Irish legislature
8 Bobby of hockey
9 Legal writ, commanding: L.
10 Fireplace shelf
11 Doctors' org.
12 It might be coed
13 Opera features
14 Feudal lords
15 Civil War battles site
16 Bridge star Sharif
17 Calcutta garb
18 Not now
28 Medieval stringed instrument
30 Elevator man

32 Anagram of fade
34 Dupes for con men
35 Boisterous festivity
37 Roman goddess of agriculture
38 Happening
39 Movement of 54 Down
40 Tin Pan Alley products
41 West Coast capital city
43 List of candidates
44 Anglo-Saxon laborers
45 Distributed cards
47 "Cheers" setting
49 Fabulous fiddle, for short
52 Manipulates adroitly
53 Archetype
54 Musical compositions
57 ____ Gables, FL
58 Max and Buddy
59 River to the Danube
62 "A Shropshire ____"
64 Babylonian hero
66 Word with parking or rental
68 Sahara stopping places
70 Returns to custody
72 Racehorse sometimes
73 Bakery byproduct
74 Ruth's mother-in-law
75 Exclamations of dismay

77 Drops from the payroll: sl.
79 Pull one's leg
80 White-tailed sea eagles
81 Preserve meat: Scots
84 Playful swimmer
86 Legal matter: L.
89 Pear-shaped stringed instrument
91 "Criminal Minds" actor Joe
92 Hand shackles
94 Feudal servant
96 Flexible pipe or tube
97 "Veni, vidi, ____": Caesar
99 Wheels on spurs
101 Armed sailing vessel
102 Nail or print starter
104 Membranous bract
106 Minister's home
107 Role for Lansbury
108 Greedily eager
109 Parent-to-be's choice
110 Quantity of paper
112 Fine spray
113 River in Africa
114 Chest rattle
115 Yellow Dutch cheese
118 Civil War initials
120 Salad dressing base

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

A state of equilibrium returns with Tuesday's skies. The moon departs from Virgo and leaps forward into lover Libra, turning your attention towards the important one-on-one relationships in your world. Elsewhere, Luna's supportive connection to Saturn and Jupiter offers the opportunity to create well-constructed plans and secure a vision worth pursuing alongside others.



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

You're likely to be on the move. A swarm of incoming messages and a desire for a fresh perspective arrives, as the moon meanders into socially smooth Libra. Your voice is likely to break any relationship silences today, as the moon forms a supportive link with stability-seeking Saturn and growth-giving Jupiter on her path. It's an ideal day to build big plans with long-term visions.



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

Your community is calling out to you and requesting your input. The moon roams into peaceable Libra, turning your attention towards the special bonds you've formed within your social network. You need to feel a part of something larger than yourself and simultaneously find a way to share your story. The moon's strong link to Jupiter should help pave the way!



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

You've got the drive to make it all happen today. The moon leaps into balance-seeking Libra this morning, tipping the scales from pleasure to productivity. The moon's harmonious link to long-term Saturn and big-thinking Jupiter makes it an ideal day to sign onto big picture projects, set up a job interview, or make new commitments on the career front.



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

All systems are set. Luna's forward movement from your sign into balance-seeking Libra helps you objectively tune into your underutilised talents and abilities, helping you sync back up with the parts of your craft you're wishing to hone. The moon's fortuitous connection with secure Saturn and dream-big Jupiter promises a productive, goal-accomplishing day all around.



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

Tuesday's skies work to set you on the right course with your career path. The moon meanders forward into balance-seeking Libra, helping you sink your teeth into any projects concerning your brand or image at large. Luna's link to Saturn and Jupiter make it easy to hit the ground running, so don't be shy about setting up new opportunities to improve your work life.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

Having diversity in your creative endeavours is your lifeblood. Tuesday's skies encourage you to break out onto the scene and share your passions openly with the world, as the moon bounces into artistic Libra. You'll find it easy to stay optimistic and strategic towards achieving your goals today, as the moon pairs off with faith-instilling Jupiter and commitment-hungry Saturn.



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

It's no secret that a lot of your energy gets sent towards the important relationships in your life. Tuesday's cosmic landscape works to re-acquaint you with your own needs, as the moon bounces into your sign. Luna's presence ramps up your need for self-expression and her well-supported link to Saturn and optimistic Jupiter helps you tackle big creative goals with ease.



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

You frequently need to refresh your environment. Think of it like opening a window to let a revitalising breeze into a stagnant room. That sentiment is likely to feel especially strong today, as the arrival of the peace-seeking Libra moon signals a need to shake things up. Fortunately, Luna's supportive link to stable Saturn and growth-giving Jupiter guide the way.



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

Home is where the heart is. Staying close to your sanctuary is key to your comfort today, as the moon migrates from busybody Virgo to peace-seeking Libra. You've got plenty to chew on relationship-wise after yesterday's revelations, and Tuesday's skies are here to quietly assist you in that therapeutic process, as the moon links up with secure Saturn and growth-giving Jupiter.



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

Time alone is key to your wellbeing. You value your privacy and instinctively know when you need to retreat. Tuesday's skies nudge you into this solitary-seeking mindset, as the moon wanders into Libra. Prioritising restorative activities that recenter and reconnect you to your foundations is encouraged, as the moon forms a supportive connection with Jupiter.



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

You need some extra room to think things over. The moon roams into Libra, turning your attention towards the stirrings taking place on the intimacy front. Fortunately, today's skies are well-supported and offer room for growth and long-term action for any joint efforts, as Luna aligns with Saturn and Jupiter. Be gentle with yourself and be willing to explore subconscious stirrings.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. The last Hindu king who party succeeded in establishing 'Hindu Swaraj' was

a. Chhatrapati Shivaji

b. Akbar, the Great

c. Chandragupta Maurya

d. Bahadurshah Zafar Khan

2. The king of Macedonia, who conquered most of Asia Minor and defeated Porus (India) in 327 B.C was

a. Adolf Hitler

b. Alexander the Great

c. Chandragupta Maurya

d. Christopher Columbus

3. The largest lake in India is

a. Luni lake

b. Sambhar lake

c. Wular lake

d. None of the above

Answers: 1: a 2: b 3: c

KIDS COLOURING



DO YOU SUDOKU?

LEVEL EASY: Fill in the grid so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9 and only one instance of each number

	7	4			5		6	
3		8			9			5
				3			9	4
7	3		5		1			
			1			5		
				2		3		8
4	6				2			
8			3				4	1
	5		4			6	7	

BOGGLER

E	T	R	N
J	O	A	S
K	E	R	E
S	C	R	S

Each game will present you with a matrix filled with letters. The objective is to form words by linking adjacent letters - to the left, right, on top, bottom, or diagonal to each other. The Boggles Classic game uses a 4 x 4 matrix. Words are valued at one point for each letter in excess of two letters. A three letter word is worth one point, a four letter word is worth two points, and so on. Valid words must be at least three letters long.

Solution 20-25 words: Excellent, 15-20 words: Very good, 10-15 words: Good, 5-10 words: Average

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

8	7	9	8	6	7	2	9	1
1	2	7	9	5	8	7	6	8
8	9	6	7	2	1	8	9	7
7	8	1	8	9	2	6	7	5
9	8	5	7	7	6	1	8	2
6	7	2	1	8	9	5	7	4
7	6	8	2	8	7	9	1	9
9	1	7	6	7	9	8	2	8
2	9	8	9	1	8	7	7	6

ARUNA	TRIAN	GALE	BALE
ROBATE	MULE	LEON	QUELA
ROSTON	POPP	ROHOD	TRADE
STAIR	GADE	LENE	PRESET
GOAR	UNTER	FORERO	
ST	HESTON	RESE	
THE	WIND	OF	MAIRANO
GOLEDO	LADE	ABIS	WALL
ESTERO	EDD	ABIS	SODICAL
REG	HER	ALL	OPPING
NON	STAD	DELTING	
ANALIS	TIPO	PARABERE	
BEADSE	WIND	OM	UANIATA
ELITE	DEH	ROITE	LUNEAR
ST	CH	CH	CH
AVIO	CHEESE	SH	
ANALIS	TIPO	PARABERE	
BEADSE	WIND	OM	UANIATA
ELITE	DEH	ROITE	LUNEAR
ST	CH	CH	CH
AVIO	CHEESE	SH	

WORD BUILDER

You have three minutes to find all the words contained in this word.

Rules: Words should be at least four letters long, proper nouns and duplicates don't count



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Cook helper: Experience in Oman. Speaks English or Arabic. Knows how to cook. With NOC if in Oman. Salary details to be discussed upon interview. For further information and or to apply kindly contact 00968-96666685 or send your CV to Mazzan.alfarsi@gmail.com

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FOOTBALL ROUND-UP

Lampard under pressure after latest Chelsea loss

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE

London, UK - Frank Lampard knows the demands of being a Chelsea manager under Roman Abramovich more than most having played for nine different coaches during his playing career at Stamford Bridge.

Now Lampard is the man in the firing line after Sunday's 1-3 defeat to Manchester City at Stamford Bridge capped a run of one win in six games that looks to have extinguished any hope of a English Premier League title challenge.

Much more was expected of the Blues after a US\$300mn spending spree in the transfer market at a time when most of European football's major powers were scaling back due to the economic effects of the coronavirus pandemic.

After bankrolling the purchases of Kai Havertz, Timo Werner, Hakim Ziyech, Ben Chilwell and Edouard Mendy, Abramovich will have expected more than Chelsea's position of eighth in the table nearly halfway through the season.

Patience has not been a virtue of the Russian's 18-year reign as Chelsea owner and even a club legend like Lampard, who is the club's all-time top goal-scorer, is unlikely to be afforded much more time to turn the situation around.

The *Athletic* reported on Sunday that Chelsea are already lining up suitable candidates should the 42 year old be sacked.

"The expectations are different this year because everyone looks and says 'you spent



Chelsea's manager Frank Lampard reacts to his team's defeat to Manchester City on the pitch at Stamford Bridge in London on Sunday (AFP)

this amount of money'," Lampard said after a fourth defeat in six games.

"The reality is a lot of the players that have come in are new, young, have been injured, or not played together. There are a lot of expectations that are not real."

The former England international's relationship with his players has also been questioned since his public rebuke of their

attitude and commitment in a 1-3 defeat to Arsenal last weekend has not summoned the response he hoped for.

Instead there were more examples of lethargy as Ziyech watched on, while Kevin De Bruyne surged past him to score City's third goal inside 35 minutes.

The visitors, who were without a number of first-team players following an outbreak of

coronavirus at the club, stunned Chelsea with three goals in 16 first-half minutes.

Ilkay Gundogan's crisp low finish broke the deadlock in the 18th minute and Phil Foden doubled City's lead three minutes later, tucking a superb first-time strike beyond Edouard Mendy after fine work from Kevin de Bruyne.

De Bruyne deservedly got his name on the scoresheet with a

close-range finish after Raheem Sterling's curling strike had rebounded off the woodwork.

Callum Hudson-Odoi scored in second-half stoppage time for Chelsea, firing Havertz's cross beyond Premier League debutant Zack Steffen.

The result lifted City up to fifth in the table, four points off Liverpool and Manchester United with a game in hand on both.

AFP



Juventus' Cristiano Ronaldo celebrates after opening the scoring against Udinese at the Juventus stadium in Turin, Italy, on Sunday (AFP)

Ronaldo double lifts Juventus as Milan stay top

ITALIAN LEAGUE

Milan, Italy - Cristiano Ronaldo scored twice as champions

Juventus bounced back from their first Serie A defeat of the season by beating Udinese 4-1 on Sunday to move up to fifth place. The Milan clubs are top of the Italian league with Juventus ten points adrift of the summit having played a game less.

Leaders AC Milan stayed one point ahead of Inter with a 2-0 win over midtable Benevento despite playing an hour a man down. City rivals Inter crushed lowly Crotone 6-2.

But Milan restored their advantage thanks to a Franck Kessie penalty on 15 minutes and Rafael Leao's terrific curling strike from a tight angle shortly after half-time.

Sandro Tonali's sending off after 33 minutes for a high tackle on Artur Ionita did not hold back Stefano Pioli's side.

Gianluigi Donnarumma was solid in the Milan goal while

Gianluca Caprari dragged a penalty wide on the hour.

"We don't let ourselves be put under pressure by the results of the opponents," said Pioli whose side are unbeaten in 27 league games going back to March.

"We're ambitious, we're not hiding it and we aim to win the next match as well against

Juventus (on Wednesday)."

Ronaldo once again proved decisive for Juventus scoring a goal in each half to bring his league-leading tally to 14 this campaign and teeing up Federico Chiesa after the break.

Paulo Dybala added the fourth deep into injury time as Andrea Pirlo's side moved on from their shock 3-0 loss to Fiorentina last time out.

"It wasn't the best Juventus because we were coming off a bad defeat, we were a bit fearful at the beginning," said Pirlo.

"Slowly we grew and in the second half we did better. It's a delicate moment but we have to have confidence in what we can achieve and the determination to get there."

AFP

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Bayern Munich's Robert Lewandowski (left) and Leroy Sane celebrate the 5-2 win against Mainz in Munich, Germany, on Sunday (AFP)

Bayern thrash Mainz to go top of Bundesliga

GERMAN LEAGUE

Berlin, Germany - Robert Lewandowski netted twice as Bayern Munich roared back from two goals down to earn a 5-2 home win over Mainz on Sunday which put the European champs back at the top of the Bundesliga. Mainz's 2-0 half-time lead was wiped out within ten minutes of the restart as Bayern netted five unanswered second-half goals at the Allianz Arena.

The result leaves Bayern two points clear of second-placed RB Leipzig, who had gone top

after their 1-0 win at Stuttgart. Joshua Kimmich marked his return from a knee injury by bagging Bayern's first, with Leroy Sane and Niklas Sule scoring before Lewandowski added two more goals to increase his league tally to 19.

Earlier, England winger Jadon Sancho scored his first Bundesliga goal this season to seal a 2-0 win for Borussia Dortmund at home against Wolfsburg. Dortmund moved up to fourth, eight points behind Bayern.

AFP

Messi returns to set up Barca winner

SPANISH LEAGUE

Madrid, Spain - Barcelona won 1-0 at bottom side Huesca on Sunday as Lionel Messi became the first foreigner to make 500 appearances in Spain's La Liga.

Messi returned for Barca after missing the final game of 2020 with an ankle knock and swung in a cross for Frenkie de Jong to divert home for the only goal on 27 minutes.

Although Ronald Koeman's side began a potentially season-defining run of four consecutive away matches with a comfortable win, they remain a distant ten points behind Atletico in fifth having played a game more.

"In general, aside from the last 20 minutes we played well," said Koeman. "We created a lot of danger, which isn't easy against a team that shuts up at the back. We got a great goal and we had two or three more chances to pull away."

Barca dominated possession and created a number of chances but Huesca goalkeeper Alvaro Fernandez produced several fine saves to keep the hosts in touch.

After De Jong's opener Messi



Barcelona's Lionel Messi (right) runs with the ball past Huesca's Sergio Gomez and Jorge Pulido (left) during the Spanish League match on Sunday

was denied a second just before half-time when Fernandez superbly clawed away his free-kick heading towards the top corner.

The Argentine was again thwarted by the legs of Fernandez in the second half after combining well with Pedri, moments after Marc-Andre ter Stegen reacted sharply to keep out Rafa Mir's inventive back-heel.

That was a rare threat from Huesca who have now won just once in 17 tries this season but had taken points off most visitors

to their Estadio El Alcoraz so far, including Atletico in September.

"We came out strong and very concentrated. It's the main base we need. If we have that, we improve a lot with the ball and if we get better in front of goal then we can have a very good start to the year," added Koeman.

OTHER RESULTS:

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Williamson, Nicholls help New Zealand dominate

NEW ZEALAND VS PAKISTAN
SECOND TEST: DAY TWO
Christchurch, New Zealand - Kane Williamson now has a century in every Test he has played this summer. This includes scores of 251, 129, and the 112 not out on Monday. These mean the prospect of a golden home summer and New Zealand's No 1 Test ranking look bright.

New Zealand have nearly wiped out the deficit with seven wickets still remaining, with the unbroken partnership between Williamson and Henry Nicholls worth 215, the best fourth-wicket stand for New Zealand against Pakistan, shading the previous record held by Stephen Fleming and Craig McMillan.

Only Virat Kohli and Ajinkya Rahane have more century stands (five) than Williamson-Nicholls (four) since 2018.

They came together with Pakistan on the ascendancy, having removed both openers and Ross Taylor in quick succession, the scorecard reading 71 for three shortly after lunch. This should have been 74 for four, but for Shaheen Afridi's front-foot no-ball to reprieve a tentative Nicholls, who nicked to Mohammad Rizwan. On three then, Nicholls made them pay.

From there on, New Zealand were authoritative. Once they overcame Mohammad Abbas' early burst after lunch, runs that seemed to be at a premium prior to the break became available in plenty. Williamson's 24th Test century was a knock built on the old-school virtues of patience and hard grind. It wasn't until he got to his half-century did Williamson break free.

He was on ten off 48 at one



New Zealand's Henry Nicholls (right) and captain Kane Williamson during day two of the second Test against Pakistan in Christchurch on Monday (AFP)

stage in the second session when Pakistan were putting ungodly pressure on either side of lunch. With that iron-clad technique and the keenness to play with his bat close to the body, he absorbed it all. Then, as the sting went out of the attack, he didn't let the early approach dictate his batting tempo for the rest of the afternoon. His next 93 runs came off just 92 deliveries.

As he strolled into the 80s, Williamson's full range came to the fore particularly. One over off Naseem Shah prior to tea went for a four: a peerless cut, a nonchalant whip from middle, an on-drive and a nick through the cordon. The edge flew between Shan Masood and Haris Sohail, who earlier in the day pouched

an excellent reflex-action catch at first slip to remove Tom Latham after Masood appeared to have nearly grassed it.

On 86 then, Williamson brought up his century soon after before once again settling down to shelve some of the flamboyance perhaps mindful of stumps looming.

As New Zealand looked to shut off, Pakistan were caught snoozing too, as chances went abegging. Williamson was let off on 107 again with Masood fluffing a third chance moving to his right at gully off Faheem Ashraf. Then in the dying moments, Nicholls was let off when captain Rizwan fluffed a straightforward offering off Shaheen Afridi.

Earlier, it took Pakistan 11 overs to get the batsmen to play at deliveries, something Ashraf took cue from to get rewarded with the first breakthrough when he had Tom Blundell lbw with an inducker. Initially not given, Pakistan overturned it on review to break a threatening opening stand of 52.

In the next over, Afridi made Latham play the ball, which jagged away just about enough to induce the edge. Masood made a mess of the catch at second slip, but was thankful to Sohail and his freakishly good reflexes as he grabbed the rebound at first slip. Suddenly, it was two in two. Taylor's wicket soon after lunch put the cat among the pigeons. The match

SCOREBOARD		
Pakistan 1 st Innings 297		
NEW ZEALAND 1 st INNINGS		
T Latham	c Sohail b Afridi	33
T Blundell	lbw b Ashraf	16
K Williamson	not out	112
R Taylor	c Masood b Abbas	12
H Nicholls	not out	89
Extras	(b 2, lb 6, nb 9, w 7)	24
TOTAL: 286 for three in 85 overs		
Fall of wickets: 1-52, 2-52, 3-71		
Bowling: S Afridi 19-5-45-1, M Abbas 20-7-37-1, N Shah 14-1-72-0, F Ashraf 18-4-55-1, S Masood 2-0-17-0, Z Gohar 11-0-50-0, H Sohail 1-0-2-0		

was on an even keel. Pakistan knew a wicket there and they would have he upper hand. They grassed the chance and saw not just the afternoon but even perhaps the Test slip away from their grasp.
Cricinfo



Moeen Ali is seen in the team bus on arrival in Sri Lanka on Sunday

England's Moeen Ali tests positive for COVID-19 in Sri Lanka

ENGLAND'S TOUR OF SRI LANKA

Colombo, Sri Lanka - Moeen Ali has tested positive for COVID-19 on arrival in Sri Lanka. England's touring party landed in Sri Lanka on Sunday, January 3 ahead of their two-Test series and were tested on arrival. Although the ECB initially reported that all results were negative, they have now revealed that Moeen's was positive. While the ECB have confirmed the result is not a false positive he is understood to be asymptomatic at this stage

He will be required to undergo a 10-day period of self-isolation, in line with the Sri Lankan government's quarantine protocols. England are currently staying in Hambantota, but are due to move to Galle on January 10 ahead of the first Test. Moeen will be driven to new accommodation, a private hotel not in use by the rest of the team, in Galle on Tuesday.

An ECB spokesperson said that it was 'too early to confirm' whether Ali could play in the first Test, which starts on January 14, but with his self-isolation ending the day before, it appears certain that he will miss it. Chris Woakes has also entered self-isolation after being deemed a close contact.

England had been due to start training on Tuesday afternoon after another round of tests in the morning, but are now due to train for the first time on Wednesday instead. Further testing will take place on Tuesday and Thursday.

Moeen was, alongside Dom Bess and Leach, one of three front line spinners in the main Test squad. There are, however, three more (Mason Crane, Matt Parkinson and Amar Virdi) among the players on standby. England included three spinners in the team that won in 2018.
Cricinfo



A file photo of India and Australia players at the end of second Test

India, Australia players and staff all test negative

INDIA'S TOUR OF AUSTRALIA

Sydney, Australia - Both the teams, their support staff and the match officials for the ongoing Test series between India and Australia have tested negative for COVID-19. The tests were administered on Sunday and the results received on Monday, the day the teams are scheduled to travel from Melbourne to Sydney for the third Test of the series that stands level at 1-1 after the Boxing Day Test.

The SCG Test will be played in front of 25% capacity crowds after a COVID-19 outbreak which began in the northern beaches region of Sydney and has since spread to other parts of the city almost forced Cricket Australia to take the New Year's fixture out of its traditional home. This will involve a hectic process

of refunding and reticketing with only three days to go to the Test.

The teams' negative tests were also significant given the possible biosecurity bubble breach by five India players, which is still being investigated. The five players - Rishabh Pant, new vice-captain Rohit Sharma, Shubman Gill, Navdeep Saini and Prithvi Shaw - were placed in isolation, away from the rest of the contingent, pending further investigation.

The final Test of the series is scheduled to be played in Brisbane from January 15, but even that depends on required exemptions to travel from New South Wales to Queensland being given to the players, support staff, match officials and a small group of broadcast and technical staff.
Cricinfo

Karunaratne rallies Sri Lanka after Vishwa's five-for

SOUTH AFRICA VS SRI LANKA
SECOND TEST: DAY TWO

Johannesburg, South Africa - Sri Lanka captain Dimuth Karunaratne ensured his team would avoid an innings defeat but the tourists were in a precarious position at the end of the second day of the second and final Test against South Africa at the Wanderers Stadium on Monday. The tourists were 150 for four at the close in Johannesburg, a lead of five runs with six wickets remaining.

Karunaratne, one of five left-handers in the Sri Lankan top six, made 91 not out off 116 balls with 17 fours. But there was only one partnership of note, 85 for the second wicket with Lahiru Thirimanne, who scored 31. They came together after Kusal Perera had been bowled with only one run scored.

Fast bowler Lungi Ngidi took the first three wickets to finish the day with three for 26, having

Thirimanne and Kusal Mendis caught down the leg side by wicketkeeper Quinton de Kock off successive deliveries. It was the third successive nought by Mendis.

Karunaratne's innings continued a fightback which started with the team's bowlers, who restricted South Africa's first innings lead to 145.

Vishwa Fernando took five for 101, his first five-wicket haul in Tests, as South Africa were bowled out for 302, losing their last nine wickets for 84 runs.

South Africa's collapse seemed unlikely when Dean Elgar (127) and Rassie van der Dussen (67) scored 68 runs off 14 overs in the first hour of the day. Their second-wicket stand was worth 184 before the mid-morning drinks break brought a change in fortunes, with both batsmen dismissed in the first two overs after drinks.

Elgar, who made 95 in South



Sri Lanka's Dimuth Karunaratne plays a shot during his unbeaten knock of 91

Africa's innings win in the first Test at Centurion, completed his 13th Test century after starting the day on 92. He hit 22 fours in a 163-ball innings. Perera, who made 64 and 60 in his previous two innings, was bowled for one by a ball from Ngidi which swung in from around the wicket. But

Karunaratne and Thirimanne both batted with assurance before Ngidi struck again.

Debutant Minod Bhanuka played a rash pull against the pace of Anrich Nortje and was out for one, with Keshav Maharaj taking a superb catch at mid-wicket, running several metres

SCOREBOARD		
Sri Lanka 1 st Innings 157		
SOUTH AFRICA 1 st INNINGS		
D Elgar	c Thirimanne b Chameera	127
A Markram	c Mendis b Asitha	5
R van der Dussen	c Dickwella b Shanaka	67
F du Plessis	c Dickwella b Shanaka	8
Q de Kock	c Mendis b Vishwa	10
T Bavuma	lbw b Vishwa	19
W Mulder	lbw b Vishwa	7
K Maharaj	c Dickwella b Asitha	2
A Nortje	c Mendis b Vishwa	13
L Sipamla	c Shanaka b Vishwa	5
L Ngidi	not out	14
Extras	(b 4, lb 14, w 3)	25
TOTAL: 302 all out in 75.4 overs		
Fall of wickets: 1-34, 2-218, 3-218, 4-235, 5-241, 6-257, 7-262, 8-276, 9-283, 10-302		
Bowling: Vishwa Fernando 23.4-0-101-5, Asitha Fernando 19-5-61-2, D Chameera 14-1-53-1, D Shanaka 15-3-42-2, Wanindu Hasaranga 4-0-23-0		
SRI LANKA 2 nd INNINGS		
D Karunaratne	not out	91
K Perera	b Ngidi	1
L Thirimanne	c de Kock b Ngidi	31
K Mendis	c de Kock b Ngidi	0
M Bhanuka	c Maharaj b Nortje	1
N Dickwella	not out	18
Extras	(b 4, lb 2, nb 1, w 1)	8
TOTAL: 150 for four in 39 overs		
Fall of wickets: 1-1, 2-86, 3-92, 4-109		
Bowling: L Ngidi 9-3-26-3, A Nortje 11-1-41-1, W Mulder 11-2-43-0, L Sipamla 8-1-34-0		

Sri Lanka 1 st Innings 157		
SOUTH AFRICA 1 st INNINGS		
D Elgar	c Thirimanne b Chameera	127
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F du Plessis	c Dickwella b Shanaka	8
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W Mulder	lbw b Vishwa	7
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before diving full length. Niroshan Dickwella made 18 not out to survive with Karunaratne until the close.
AFP

Bangladesh drop Mortaza, pick Shakib for West Indies series

Dhaka, Bangladesh - Bangladesh's selectors picked a 24-man preliminary squad for the ODI series against West Indies later this month, and the one player they didn't pick has become the main talking point: Mashrafe Mortaza, the country's highest wicket-taker in ODIs and longest-serving captain.

This is the first time Mortaza has been dropped from the ODI

squad since making his debut in November 2001, though he has missed a lot of cricket over the years because of injuries.

One high-profile name that did make it, into both the preliminary Test and ODI squads announced on Monday, was Shakib al Hasan, back in the national reckoning after his one-year ban for not reporting a corrupt approach.

Shakib was Bangladesh's Test and T20I captain before his ban, but now returns as an ordinary member of the side.

Those selected will, from next week, take part in a training camp and play two practice matches on January 14 and 16, before the squad is trimmed closer to the ODI series that begins on January 20.

This is going to be

Bangladesh's first international series since the COVID-19 pandemic stopped cricket in the country in mid-March.

The decision on 37 year old Mortaza has come at a significant time as the Bangladesh team builds towards the 2023 ODI World Cup. Chief selector Minhajul Abedin said the decision on Mortaza was a collective one, taken by the selectors

and the team management.

Abedin also said that the decision on whether to retire or play on lay with Mortaza. "Whether he continues playing or not, is entirely up to him. We cannot really say anything about what his performance is going to be."

BANGLADESH'S PRELIMINARY SQUADS: ODIs: Tamim Iqbal (captain),

Momimul Haque, Taskin Ahmed, Khaled Ahmed, Shakib al Hasan, Hasan Mahmud, Najmul Hossain Shanto, Mustafizur Rahman, Mushfiquur Rahim, Mehidy Hassan Miraz, Mohammad Mithun, Taijul Islam, Liton Das, Nurul Hasan, Yasir Ali, Shadman Islam, Saif Hassan, Nayeem Hasan, Abu Jayed, Ebadot Hossain.

Tests: Momimul Haque, Taskin Ahmed, Tamim Iqbal, Khaled Ahmed, Shakib al Hasan, Hasan Mahmud, Najmul Hossain Shanto, Mustafizur Rahman, Mushfiquur Rahim, Mehidy Hassan Miraz, Mohammad Mithun, Taijul Islam, Liton Das, Nurul Hasan, Yasir Ali, Shadman Islam, Saif Hassan, Nayeem Hasan, Abu Jayed, Ebadot Hossain.
Cricinfo

TEST CRICKET COMES TO OMAN

- Afghanistan Cricket Board picks Oman to host their forthcoming home series against Ireland, Zimbabwe
- Al Amerat's ground receives nod to host Test, ODIs and T20Is between two ICC Full Members

Ashok Purohit
Muscat

The new year definitely has begun on the front foot for Oman Cricket. The long-cherished dream of hosting a Test match in Oman is set to come true after Oman Cricket (OC) announced that Afghanistan Cricket Board (ACB) has opted to host their forthcoming home series against Ireland and Zimbabwe in Muscat.

The three nations - Afghanistan, Ireland and Zimbabwe are among the 12 Full Members of the ICC and it will be the first time that Oman will be playing host to matches between two ICC Full Members.

Speaking to *Muscat Daily* on Monday, Duleep Mendis, Oman Cricket's chief development officer, said, "Following the approval from the ICC, the world governing body, the main ground (Ground No 1) of the Oman Cricket Academy (OCA) at Al Amerat has been given the nod to host Test matches, ODIs and T20Is between two Full Members for the first time. Earlier, the venue had hosted ODIs and T20Is but those matches featured only one Full Member and an Associate Member or matches between Associate Members."

Mendis, who is also the national team head coach, added, "We are delighted that ACB has picked Oman to host their upcoming home series against Ireland and Zimbabwe following the ICC accreditation of our main ground."

While Afghanistan will play a three-match ODI series against Ireland from January 26-31, the Test and T20I series against Zimbabwe will be in February.

With the COVID-19 pandemic yet to be contained, Mendis confirmed that the teams will be in a bio-secure bubble on their arrival in Oman. "The teams will be directly going to the hotels and only commute between the ground and the hotels during their stay as part of the standard



A file photo of a match at the main OCA ground at Al Amerat



Madhu Jesrani

health protocols during a bio-secure bubble."

The OC official said that the matches will be open for fans but the area for spectators would be cordoned off. The ODIs between Afghanistan and Ireland will form part of the 2020-23 ICC Cricket World Cup Super League.

The series was initially planned to be hosted in UAE. The three matches will be held on

We are delighted that ACB has picked Oman to host their upcoming home series against Ireland and Zimbabwe

DULEEP MENDIS

January 26, 29 and 31.

However, it is the Test series between Afghanistan and Zimbabwe that will put Oman among a select club of Associate Member nations that have hosted a Test match. UAE is the only other Associate nation to have hosted a Test series.

The Afghanistan-Zimbabwe Test series was initially scheduled to be held in India.

Welcoming the ACB decision to host their home series in Oman, Madhu Jesrani, OC secretary said, "This is big news for Oman Cricket. We are only the second nation among the ICC Associate Members to receive the ICC nod to host Tests, ODIs and T20Is between two Full Members. It is a proud moment for all of us.

Mendis said, "All credit to

Oman Cricket board under the chairmanship of Kanak Khimji for leading us to such great heights. It was his vision to host the best format - Test cricket - that is set to be realised soon. The role of our senior OC board member Pankaj Khimji in facilitating the approval has been vital after our facilities ticked all necessary boxes desired by the ICC."

@ashokmuscat

Zimbabwe Cricket suspends all cricket activities

Muscat - Zimbabwe Cricket (ZC) on Monday has temporarily brought all cricket activities in the country to a standstill, in the wake of new lockdown restrictions announced by the government due to a rise in COVID-19 cases, according to an ESPNcricinfo report.

In fact, all sporting activity in Zimbabwe has been temporarily

suspended, according to a statement from the sports and recreation commission.

The Zimbabwe cricket team toured Pakistan in November 2020 for a six-match limited-overs series, but they haven't played an international at home since the pandemic hit.

They were scheduled to host Afghanistan in August last year,

but that series was called off. India, too, were scheduled to visit Zimbabwe in August for three ODIs, but that series was eventually cancelled as well.

With the latest development of all cricket activities being suspended in Zimbabwe, it remains to be seen whether the move will impact the T20I and Test series against

Afghanistan in Oman in February.

Muscat Daily contacted Oman Cricket following the news but officials said that the decision to host the home series has been made by Afghanistan. "We will wait for further updates from the Afghanistan Cricket Board on this matter," the official said.

'Finest moment for OC chairman'

Our Correspondent
Muscat

For decades, he longed for hosting a Test match in Oman. On Monday when Afghanistan decided to host their Test series against Zimbabwe in Muscat in February, it was a dream come true for Oman Cricket (OC) chairman Kanak Khimji.

In his remarks to media, Pankaj Khimji, the eldest son of the OC chief, said, "For Oman to become a Test cen-

father, who is our [Oman Cricket] inspiration. For him, there can't be anything big than the news of Test cricket coming to Oman."

Pankaj said, "Becoming a Test venue is going to be a game-changer for cricket in the sultanate." He appreciated the support of all the stakeholders to make Oman a Test venue.

"I must thank H H Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, H E Rashad al



Kanak Khimji



Pankaj Khimji

Becoming a Test venue is going to be a game-changer for cricket in the sultanate

PANKAJ KHIJJI

tre is a real gift of 2021. The news is a mood-enhancing vaccine for cricket fraternity in the country. This is a phenomenal time for us. We have received our maiden Test accreditation for ground No 1 (main ground) at Al Amerat.

"To see Test cricket being played here in February between Afghanistan and Zimbabwe will probably be the finest moment for my father, whose dream was always to bring Test cricket to Oman. When we see the first ball of a Test match being bowled, that will be probably the greatest moment for *Kanakbhai* and a tribute to my

Hinai, the undersecretary at the Sports Ministry, for ensuring all the permissions are in place.

"We also pay our tributes to the Late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said for his contribution and magnanimity in making us realise our dreams and putting Oman on the real map of Test cricket now. I would like to thank His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik al Said, Oman Cricket's patron-in-chief for his invaluable contribution over the past 25 years that has made Oman one of the most renowned Associate nations in the world."

Ahmad hopes for good show at Asian Le Mans

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The news of Asian Le Mans Series (ALMS) coming to neighbouring Yas Marina Circuit in UAE from Thailand has been welcomed by Oman Racing's Ahmad al Harthy, who has recorded quite a few memorable results at the Abu Dhabi tracks.

All the four rounds of the Asian Le Mans Series, which begins on February 5, will be staged at the famed circuit.

The switch of the series, which was originally scheduled to be held in Thailand and Malaysia has been done due to ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Automobile Club de l'Ouest - the organising body behind the ALMS - made the decision during the latter part of 2020 to switch to Abu Dhabi due to travel restrictions in South East Asia.

For his maiden ALMS campaign, Ahmad will team up with Aston Martin factory driver Jonny Adam and AMR Driver Academy racer Tom Canning.



A file photo of Ahmad al Harthy competing in the Blancpain Endurance Cup series

Ahmad has an encouraging record over the past ten years at the Yas Marina circuit.

Be it the lights-to-flag victory in the Porsche GT3 Cup Challenge Middle East F1 support race in 2011, or the pole position and a podium finish in the Gulf 12 Hours in 2015 with Adam and Darren Turner or a podium in the same race in 2017 with Tom Jackson and Euan McKay, Ahmad has relished the time spent at the venue. In 2018, the Omani driver narrowly missed

I can't wait for the championship to begin at Yas Marina Circuit. Obviously, it's the closest track we have to Oman

AHMAD AL HARTHY

the podium as he came fourth.

The double Blancpain Endurance Cup Pro-Am champion said, "I can't wait for the championship to begin at Yas Marina Circuit. Obviously, it's the closest track we have to Oman, so it is going to be fantastic for all

of us at Oman Racing. I have great memories there with some great results.

"We have a very strong line-up with Jonny [Adam] and Tom [Canning] and with the TF Sport guys preparing an amazing car for us, our confidence is very

high. The competition is going to be incredibly strong, but we are determined to have a very successful championship."

Having been on the racing sidelines for the bulk of 2020 due to the travel restrictions imposed because of COVID-19, Ahmad and Canning only made their first competitive appearance together at Spa-Francorchamps in Belgium in October.

The duo starred in the No 97 Aston Martin Vantage GT3 by winning the Pro-Am class on their debut in the International GT Open.

The four-race ALMS, which features four-hour races has been packed into a busy 17-day period. Following round one, the second four-hour race will be contested on February 6, with round three on February 19 and final round on February 20.

To provide as much variety as possible for drivers and teams, the races will be run on two different track configurations at Yas Marina and the quartet of encounters will combine day, twilight and night racing.



Nasser al Attiyah in action during the second stage of Dakar Rally

'Flat-out' Attiyah wins Dakar second stage

Wadi ad-Dawasir, Saudi Arabia - Qatari driver Nasser al Attiyah won the second stage of the Dakar Rally in Saudi Arabia on Monday ahead of rivals Stephane Peterhansel and Carlos Sainz. The three-time winner of the Dakar sped through the 457km stage from Bisha to Wadi ad-Dawasir in 4hr 03min 14sec to take the victory after reigning champion Sainz won Sunday's opening stage.

"It was a good day," said Attiyah. "We went flat out today and everything is working very, very well. The tyres were amazing and the car too, the pace from start to finish, no mistakes at all... there's still a long way, but it's a good start."

Peterhansel, a 13-time winner of the race, leads the overall standings with Spaniard Sainz 6min 37sec behind and Attiyah just over nine minutes back.

Spain's Joan Barreda took the second stage in the motorbike category, finishing ahead of American rider and title holder Ricky Brabec, who is also on a Honda. Brabec has a lot of time to claw back after trailing in almost 20 minutes behind Australian Toby Price in Sunday's first stage.

Tuesday's third stage sees competitors racing a loop around Wadi ad-Dawasir, the gateway to the Empty Quarter.

AFP



HYUNDAI, KIA SALES TO JUMP
South Korea's Hyundai Motor Co and affiliate Kia Motors Corp forecast combined global vehicle sales will jump 11.5 per cent in 2021 after sliding for two consecutive years

BUSINESS

TUESDAY, JANUARY 05, 2021 | MUSCAT DAILY | 13

MARKET WATCH

MSM30	3,695.16
BSE Sensex	48,176.80

FOREX RATES

(ROI equals)	
Indian Rs	189.97
Pakistani Rs	416.50
Bangladeshi Taka	220.40
Philippine Peso	124.97
Sri Lankan Rs	486.35

*Rates as on January 04
Source: xe.com

BRIEFS

Sri Lanka tightens foreign exchange

Sri Lanka on Monday ordered tight foreign exchange controls after announcing a 3.9 per cent contraction in the economy that accentuated concerns over its ability to repay foreign debt.

Central Bank of Sri Lanka governor W D Lakshman said the coronavirus pandemic caused a record fall in the tourism and trade-dependent economy last year as he announced the figure.

He said the central bank will keep lending rates below 10 per cent to help revive the battered economy but there will be tighter controls on imports.

A ban on non-essential imports imposed in March has already been extended through 2021 and Lakshman suggested there could be more controls.

"For the sustainability of the low interest rate structure, it is essential that foreign exchange leakages for non-essential imports and outward investment are minimised," he said without giving details.

Oman govt expects economy to grow by 2.3% in 2021

Our Correspondent
Muscat

After sharp contraction in economic activities in 2020 due to the coronavirus pandemic and lower oil prices, the sultanate's government now expects a rebound to economic growth this year.

Oman's economy, as per the Ministry of Economy data, is estimated to shrink by 4.3 per cent in 2020. However, the Ministry of Economy predicts the sultanate's real GDP to grow by 2.3 per cent in 2021, according to the 2021 budget statement released by the Ministry of Finance.

As per the statement, the Ministry of Economy expects the country's oil GDP to grow by 1.1 per cent in 2021, while non-oil GDP is likely to expand by 2.9 per cent growth rate.

The World Bank recently projected that Oman's GDP is expected to shrink by 4 per cent in 2020, but will grow by 2 per cent in 2021, the highest percentage over the last five years. During the past three years, Oman has recorded the GDP growth rates of 0.3 per cent, 1.8 per cent and 0.5 per cent in 2017, 2018 and 2019, respectively.

On the other hand, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in October projected that Oman's



(Muscat Daily)

The Ministry of Economy estimates the sultanate's GDP at current prices to stand at RO24.7bn for the year 2020

real GDP will sharply drop by 10 per cent in 2020, and it is projected to decline again by 0.5 per cent in 2021.

'However, the Ministry of Economy predicts the GDP to rise by 2.3 per cent in 2021. The variation in the projections is attributed to different assumptions about the oil GDP,' the sultanate's 2021 budget statement

said. It said the world's economic activity is anticipated to recover gradually in 2021, leading to improved global oil demand and better oil prices.

Oil prices experienced sharp declines in 2020 due to lower oil demand as a result of lockdowns and health measures taken worldwide to control the spread of the coronavirus.

The COVID-19 pandemic, in a low-oil price environment, triggered tremendous challenges for Oman's national economy, which prompted the government to undertake various precautionary measures to contain the spread of the virus.

'Such measures have reflected negatively on the economic activity and public finance. By the end of the second quarter of 2020, the country's GDP experienced a decline of 13.4 per cent at current prices. This decline is driven by a reduction in the value added of oil activities

by 20 per cent, registering RO4.1bn by the end of second quarter of 2020. The decline in the value added of non-oil activities was at 9.9 per cent, recording RO8.7bn,' the budget statement said.

The Ministry of Economy estimates the GDP at current prices to stand at RO24.7bn by the end of 2020. According to the Ministry of Economy's forecasts, the inflation rate in Oman is anticipated to decline by 0.8 per cent in 2020, but it is expected to surge by 3.8 per cent in 2021.

'Stable outlook for corporates in GCC'

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Global ratings agency Fitch Ratings said its stable outlook for the GCC corporate sector in 2021 reflects the likely stability of oil prices throughout 2021 and improved GDP compared to 2020.

Fitch, in a new report, said the expected re-opening of travel and tourism - sectors that contributed nearly 8-9 per cent of regional GDP in 2019 - is likely to result in some economic recovery in the GCC countries, although short of 2019 levels.

'We expect the post-pandemic recovery to be relatively slow among some GCC economies in light of increasing fiscal deficits. Most GCC corporates have reduced their capex budgets for 2020, before a gradual increase in 2021,' the ratings agency said.

It added that dividends, however, will be subject to further reductions as companies increasingly focus on discretionary free cash flow.

'We expect most sectors in the GCC to experience a gradual increase in demand in 2021, partially supported by selective government spending,' Fitch said.

COMMENTARY

Oman's chance to rethink energy efficiency for our future homes

We've all read the news last week that the country will begin phasing out water and electricity subsidies starting from January 2021. This decision won't have been an easy one to make, but it's a necessary one. Electricity residential tariffs have not changed since 1987. Subsidy costs have grown significantly, from RO650mn in 2016 to RO750mn this year. Electricity subsidies account for 5 per cent of the state budget. This isn't sustainable, and the government has had to take action as part of a wider initiative to be more financially prudent.

I see this change as a positive one. It'll cost us all more initially in electricity and water, but I hope this decision spurs us all to rethink how we both build and live more sustainably in our homes, to save our own expenditure as well as the climate. Let's begin with how we construct the places where we live.

The construction industry has been slow at adopting sustainable technologies, but this is now changing. Globally, buildings are responsible for 40 per cent of energy consumption and carbon emissions. But it doesn't need to be like this. We can build homes that are energy efficient and are zero carbon. The homes of the future won't just be carbon-free, they'll cost nothing when it comes to energy. Yes, our future homes will use renewable energy to produce their own power as we transition to clean energy.

There are three simple steps that construction firms [and

owners] can take to make their buildings more energy sustainable:

Accelerate electrification

We're using more electricity than ever, and this will accelerate into the future. Today we use electrical power mainly for air conditioning, lighting and running home appliances. Electric vehicles are going to become commonplace on our roads in the next decade, and we'll be using electricity from our homes to power these new vehicles.

There are two ways to look at electrification. The first is to bet

portation costs will drop drastically as you use the power of the sun to fuel both your home and your electric car.

The benefits for both builders and home dwellers are obvious. Many homebuyers are often willing to pay more for sustainable features such as solar panning; they see the long-term benefits of lower electricity bills and higher asset values compared to traditional buildings.

Digitise energy management

How we manage energy is changing, and that's thanks to digitisation. Homebuilders will

money over the medium to long term.

Retrofit existing buildings

Let's talk about our existing homes. We're going to be using them for decades to come. Based on an International Energy Agency's report, half of the world's current buildings will still be in use in 2050. The good news is that current wireless technology can provide a basis for homeowners to make their buildings much more energy efficient without making major building modifications.

Others are going further. The European Union has not only introduced new targets on energy efficiency for 2030, with stated goals of at least 32.5 per cent improvement in energy efficiency and 40 per cent cuts in greenhouse gas emissions, but they're also providing funds for building owners to retrofit their housing with more efficient technologies. The short-term costs of this will be far outweighed by the medium to long-term savings for both governments and homeowners. This is one concept we may soon see in the Gulf region.

Let's see this shift in subsidies as an opportunity to think differently about how we build and live in our homes. Now is the time to create and implement initiatives that reduce our energy costs and lower our carbon emissions.

The views and opinions expressed in this column are solely those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of Muscat Daily or Apex Media Publication



SRIVIDHAR SHARMA

The writer is the general manager - Oman, Schneider Electric

ter seal a building and use better energy-efficient materials or systems, such as smart air conditioning and more energy-efficient appliances. The second big electrification trend globally for homes is the installation of photovoltaic (PV) systems, which is ideal for our region given the abundance of sunshine.

In short, this means putting solar panels on the roof. It's unusual to see this, but with national initiatives like 'Sahim', I expect that PV-covered housing will become commonplace. Not only will your home be net-zero and you'll pay little to nothing in electricity costs, but your trans-

need to think about implementing active energy management systems that residents can use to better understand and control their energy usage.

Connected home technologies such as WISER will give home-users a view into their energy usage and provide recommendations on how they can reduce their consumption. Algorithms can communicate with your lighting, air conditioning, heating - pretty much any electrical device - and help residents reduce energy usage automatically. Home energy management systems put the power in the hands of residents, saving them

US EXIM Bank's president visits Oman

Muscat - H E Sayyid Badr Hamad al Busaidi, Oman's Foreign Minister, on Monday received Kimberly Reed, president and chairman of the Export-Import (EXIM) Bank of the US.

The meeting reviewed friendship and cooperation relations between the sultanate and the US. The meeting also explored means of promoting financial and banking cooperation and enhancing trade and investment partnership between the two friendly countries, within the framework of Oman-US Free



Trade Agreement (FTA), as well as the existing strategic relations.

The two sides reiterated keenness to support areas of sci-

ence and technology transfer and entrepreneurship as per the agreement signed on this regard. ONA

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MSM rises 0.43% on improved activity

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The benchmark index of the Muscat Securities Market (MSM) rose by 0.43 per cent to close at 3,695.16 points on Monday.

Trading activity improved from the previous session as turnover jumped by 103.11 per cent to RO1.47mn and volumes increased 65.73 per cent to 12.13mn shares.

The gains in the main index were supported by all the subindices. Financial Index rose 0.56 per cent, Industrial Index climbed 0.52 per cent and Services Index rose 0.02 per cent. The MSM Shariah Index closed down by 0.43 per cent at 524.78 points.

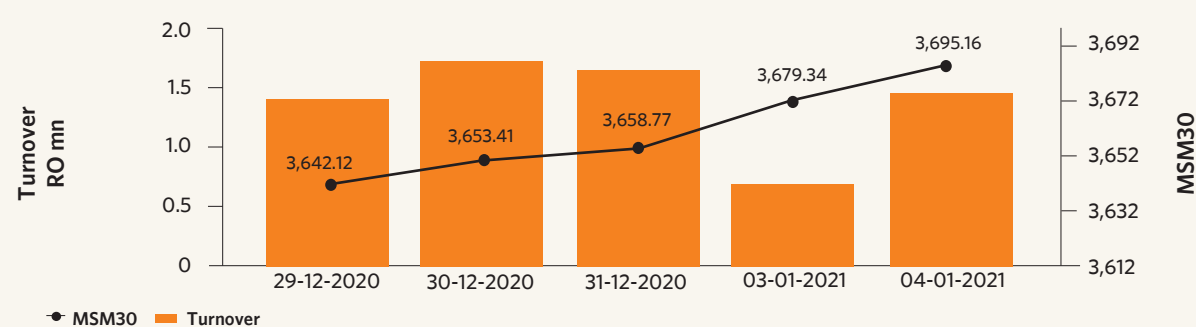
Market breadth remained positive as 16 companies closed up, while five companies closed down. The rest 19 traded stocks closed flat for the day.



Top gainers were Muscat Thread Mills (9.72 per cent), Muscat Finance (8.11 per cent), Al Anwar Holding (4.69 per cent) and Galfar Engineering & Contracting (4.44 per cent).

Top losers were Dhofar Cattle Feed (-4.21 per cent), Renaissance Services (-2.29 per cent), Sembcorp Salalah (-1.0 per cent) and Al Maha Petroleum Products (-0.59 per cent).

MSM INDEX AND TURNOVER OF FIVE TRADING DAYS



Sharjah announces production start-up of Mahani gas field

Sharjah, UAE - Sharjah National Oil Corporation (SNOC) and its partner Eni, have announced the start-up of Mahani-1 gas well, marking the commencement of gas production from the Mahani field, in Sharjah Area B.

The announcement comes within only one year of the discovery of gas in the field, labelled as the first new onshore discovery in Sharjah for 37 years.

Despite COVID-19-related challenges, which included the difficulty of importing raw materials during lockdown, and the laying of a 23,000m pipeline in hostile desert conditions during the summer, the well was completed in a record eight months. It is now connected to the existing pipeline, ready to safely produce gas and liquids for processing at the Sajaa gas processing plant, owned and operated by SNOC.

"The commencement of the first gas production from Mahani, less than a year after discovery, is a tremendous achievement for Sharjah, meeting our commitment to contribute to the efforts of making reliable gas supplies widely available for the local energy needs of Sharjah and the UAE," said Sheikh Sultan bin Ahmed al Qasimi, president of SNOC.



Mahani-1 was drilled to a total measured depth of 14,597 feet and tested gas at flow rates of up to 50 MMSCF per day with associated condensate from the Thamama formation. The well-established Sharjah infrastructure, the abundant capacity of the Sajaa gas processing complex, the available efficient pipeline network, the well-planned project activities and its project management capabilities have all enabled SNOC to make such an achievement in record time.

"Bringing on production of the first onshore discovery in Sharjah in almost four decades marks the beginning of an exciting time for SNOC and for Sharjah's energy sector. This new production follows just two years after completion of the first Sharjah licence

round, and we look forward to license additional areas of Sharjah in line with the Emirate's strategic plans in the coming years," said Hatem al Mosa, CEO of SNOC.

The related field development plan provided for the required surface facilities as well as extended well testing as part of a long-term programme to further evaluate the size and potential of the field. In addition to starting production from Mahani, the planned work programme will include further drilling in order to determine the extent of the structure.

SNOC (the operator of Area B), and Eni each hold a 50 per cent stake in the Mahani field as part of the Area B concession agreement signed in 2019.

WAM

Turkey's mergers and acquisitions volume hit \$9bn in 2020: Deloitte

Istanbul, Turkey - The volume of mergers and acquisitions (M&A) transactions in Turkey reached US\$9bn in 2020, said audit and consulting giant Deloitte Turkey on Monday.

Last year, the M&A volume increased by 70 per cent on an annual basis, while a total of 304 M&A transactions - historic high - were seen in 2020, the consulting firm said in a press release.

Kivanc Cidam, a financial expert from Deloitte Turkey, said after a decline in M&A transactions in 2019, the record number of transactions in 2020 showed that investors' interest in Turkey increased significantly.

Highlighting that mega transactions constitute 40 per cent of the total volume, the press re-



lease recalled that the first 'unicorn' Peak Games was purchased by US based firm Zynga for US\$1.8bn, and Turkey's

Wealth Fund consolidated several insurance firms worth US\$953mn under an umbrella brand.

During 2020, 82 M&A transactions were made by foreigners worth US\$4.6bn, the release stressed, and added the interest of foreign investors, which made 51 per cent of total transactions in Turkey, continued during the pandemic.

Among foreign investors, European investors made 47 transactions worth US\$1.2bn, followed by investors from North America (13 transactions), and from Qatar (4 transactions).

The release also said that the start-up economy continued to improve in Turkey last year, when 134 transactions worth US\$200mn were made by venture capitals and angel investors.

Anadolu Agency

Saudi approves new mining law

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia - Saudi Arabia's Minister of Industry and Mineral Resources Bandar bin Ibrahim al Khorayef approved the implementation of a new mining investment law, following its approval by the Council of Ministers last June. The law came into force on Friday.

Khorayef said that to establish a mining law that would unlock this potential and enable new investment for the next phase of mining sector growth, the government undertook a comprehensive process of consultation with global experts in mining legislation and carefully studied

some of the world's most successful mining jurisdictions.

"We wanted to ensure the mining investment law would not only enhance governance of the sector, improve transparency, and increase investor confidence, but it was a priority for us to achieve growth sustainability through preserving the environment, promote health and occupational safety, and encourage local communities to participate in the growth of the mining sector," said Khorayef.

He emphasised that the law will help ensure that mining activities contribute to community

development, create new job opportunities, and support the growth of local businesses. Moreover, to protect local environments, the law requires full environmental impact studies for all new projects as well as detailed plans for the eventual closure and rehabilitation of any mining site.

Khorayef highlighted that the new mining law greatly improves the ease of doing business by digitizing the process for issuing new mining licenses, streamlining license approvals, and transparently publishing records.

SPA

Singapore's pandemic-hit economy suffers its worst decline in 2020

Singapore - Singapore's economy suffered its worst ever annual contraction in 2020 as the coronavirus pandemic hampered the city-state's vital trade and tourism sectors, official data showed Monday.

But the 5.8 per cent decline was not as bad as feared - official forecasts had predicted a fall of up to 6.5 per cent - as economic activity picked up with the easing of curbs.

The financial hub plunged into its first recession since the 2008 global financial crisis in the second quarter when the government closed most workplaces as part of drastic measures to contain infections.

One of the world's most open economies, Singapore is seen as a bellwether for the health of global trade, and its economy's dramatic deterioration rang alarm bells.

But curbs were eased in the second half of the year and key sectors of the economy, such as manufacturing, have begun to recover.

In the fourth quarter, the economy shrank 3.8 per cent year-on-year, less than expected,



according to preliminary growth data released by the trade ministry.

Song Seng Wun, a regional economist with CIMB Private Banking, told AFP the contraction was not as bad as feared due to strong exports of some goods.

Song said he expects a 'rebound of around 6 per cent' this year.

"We are seeing businesses continuing to benefit from the

further easing of restrictions and stronger global demand for [microchips] and medicines," he said.

Singapore's small economy is typically hit first by external shocks before ripples spread across the region. However, it usually also recovers quickly from any downturn.

The city-state won praise for keeping the pandemic in check in the early stages only for serious

outbreaks to emerge later in crowded dormitories housing low-paid migrant workers.

But its outbreak has slowed markedly in recent weeks, and only a handful of cases are being recorded a day.

Authorities last week began a coronavirus vaccination campaign, making it among the first Asian nations to roll out inoculations.

AFP

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Hopes for economic recovery help markets start new year with a pop

Hong Kong, China - Optimism about the economic outlook in 2021 helped investors kick off the new year on a positive note on Monday, as hopes surrounding the rollout of coronavirus vaccines offset a frightening surge in infections.

With uncertainty over Brexit and a new US stimulus gone, sights are now on the economic recovery from the calamity that was 2020, with a broad expectation that countries will enjoy strong rebounds as life gets back to some semblance of normal.

Vast amounts of government and central bank cash have been a crucial driver of a global rally in equities from their March troughs, and analysts expect loose monetary policies - particularly at the Federal Reserve - to stay in place for the foreseeable future.

'Stock markets are headed higher and they are headed higher without the old traditional valuation techniques' as long as the Fed 'keeps the liquidity bubble going', David Kotok, at Cumberland Advisors, told Bloomberg TV.

However, while the consensus is for a strong performance for markets this year, he did warn that the first quarter will likely be tough as vaccinations are administered but the virus continues to spread.

Seoul rallied 2.5 per cent following strong export data, while Sydney put on more than 1 per cent as there were signs a spike in new infections in the city was being brought under control.



People walk past a screen showing South Korea's benchmark stock index at the lobby of the Korea Exchange in Seoul on Monday (AFP)

Hong Kong rose, though China Mobile Communications, China Telecommunications Corp and China Unicom (Hong Kong) Limited all dipped more than 3 per cent after they were delisted in New York to comply with an order by Donald Trump barring investment in firms with ties to the Chinese military.

State-owned oil giants CNOOC and Petrochina were also hit on speculation they could be next in line.

Shanghai, Singapore, Taipei, Mumbai, Manila and Jakarta also began the year on a positive note.

But Tokyo fell as investors fretted over reports that Japan-

ese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga was considering issuing a regional state of emergency for the capital and surrounding areas as new virus cases soar.

Still, Rakuten Securities said the Nikkei could hit 30,000 by September as people are vaccinated.

London's FTSE 100 shares index fizzed 3 per cent higher on

its first day since Britain finalised a divorce from the European Union last week, as dealers noted no signs of the Brexit chaos some had feared.

The pound scored a 2.5-year peak at US\$1.3704 to extend last week's impressive run after the announcement of a breakthrough Brexit trade deal on

Christmas Eve. It later pulled back somewhat.

The UK formally left the EU on January 31, 2020 but remained in a year-long transition as both sides negotiated a post-Brexit trade deal which was sealed only on Christmas Eve.

"The FTSE 100 is kicking off 2021 in style, with the headline

UK market enjoying an impressive 3 per cent gain in early trade," said IG analyst Joshua Mahony.

"With Brexit finally here, there are precious few signs of initial difficulties."

The broad gains in Asia came after the Dow and S&P 500 finished at fresh records on Wall Street.

"COVID cases and vaccine distribution will remain the key focus for investors for now. The political forces that influenced markets late in 2020 have almost faded as the US election and Brexit have passed," said Kerry Craig at JP Morgan Asset Management.

"Without the wide distribution of vaccines, the paths of COVID and the economy are locked together, given the impact on social mobility and economic curtailment," Craig added.

"This link will be broken as immunity levels rise into the middle of the year, but until then the economic path will be bumpy over the first quarter."

Investors are also keeping tabs on the US, where Georgia has two runoff elections that will decide which party holds control of the Senate.

"A win by the Democrats will leave them in control of all three legislative bodies and potentially an unfettered legislative path," said OANDA's Jeffrey Halley.

"If the Republican's win just one seat, they will control the Senate and will almost certainly make the incoming President Biden's life as difficult as possible."

AFP

Tesla delivers 499,550 cars

Washington, US - Tesla delivered a record number of cars in 2020, the company said, just narrowly missing its half a million target for the year.

The pioneering high-end electric vehicle maker delivered 180,570 cars to customers and produced 179,757 in the fourth quarter of the year, it said in a statement.

Tesla's previous record was 139,300 vehicles delivered in the third quarter of 2020.

For the full year, Tesla delivered 499,550 cars to customers, just shy of its target of half a million, and produced 509,737 units.

The firm said its delivery count was conservative and that final numbers could vary by up to half a percentage point or more.

Tesla chief and co-founder Elon Musk hailed the figures as a 'major milestone' for the firm.

'At the start of Tesla, I thought we had (optimistically) a 10 per cent chance of surviving at all,' the mercurial tech entrepreneur tweeted.

Tesla's entry-level Model 3 and its crossover Model Y accounted for nearly 86 per cent of deliveries, with the balance split between the luxury Model S sedan and the Model X SUV.

The company also said that production of its Model Y had begun at its Chinese plant in Shanghai, with deliveries expected to begin shortly.

The company joined the prestigious Standard & Poor's 500 stock index on December 21.

AFP

Eurozone manufacturing growth accelerates in December

Ankara, Turkey - The eurozone manufacturing economy gained momentum in December with the backing of Germany's strong growth figure, according to a London-based global data company report published on Monday.

The Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) for the eurozone manufacturing sector rose to 55.2 in the month, up from 53.8 in November, the IHS Markit data showed.

The reading, standing above the crucial 50 no-change mark that separates growth from con-



traction for a sixth successive month, hit its highest since May 2018.

Investment goods producers recorded the strongest improvement, followed by intermediate goods, it noted.

The rise in December PMI was linked to a similar-sized increase in new orders, which also rose for the sixth month in a row.

Germany saw the best expansion rate for nearly three years, and the Netherlands registered its best performance for over two years. Greece remained the only nation in manufacturing contrac-

tion territory, according to data.

Chris Williamson, chief business economist at IHS Markit, stressed that the strong note of eurozone manufacturing stemmed from production growth accelerating to one of the fastest seen over the past three years.

As a critical gauge of manufacturing sector health, monthly PMI indices are based on surveys and national data, and indicate growth compared to the previous month when above 50 points and contraction when below.

Anadolu Agency

PSA shareholders back merger with Fiat Chrysler

Paris, France - Shareholders of French automaker PSA voted on Monday to approve a merger with the US-Italian group Fiat Chrysler, a move that catapults the new company, 'Stellantis', into the fourth position of the world's carmakers by volume.

Approval for the three merger resolutions tabled at PSA's annual shareholder meeting - held online - was nearly unanimous, PSA chief Carlos Tavares said.

Fiat Chrysler shareholders are due to begin voting on the deal at 2:30pm (1330 GMT), and Tavares said the date for making the merger operational would be announced 'very soon'.

The outcome of the votes was seen as a foregone conclusion, coming two weeks after the European Commission gave conditional approval to the deal announced in late 2019.

The 50/50 tie-up, which was delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic, is considered crucial for the two groups to undertake investments needed to transition to clean car technology.



It also allows Fiat Chrysler to strengthen its presence in Europe, while the French group will regain a foothold in the US.

"This merger is a matter of survival for both Fiat and PSA," said Giuliano Noci, a professor of strategy at Milan Business School, citing 'enormous technological and strategic challenges' faced by both as well as damage wrought by the pandemic.

The accord brings together PSA's Peugeot, Citroen and other

brands with Fiat Chrysler's stable that includes their namesake brands as well as Jeep, Alfa Romeo and Maserati.

By number of cars sold, Stellantis and its workforce of over 400,000 will now rank behind Volkswagen, the Renault-Nissan-Mitsubishi alliance, and Toyota - though it will be the third-largest automaker by revenue.

PSA and Fiat expect the merger to allow them to achieve

billions of euros in synergies each year.

Weathering COVID

"Only the most agile, with a Darwinian spirit, will survive," PSA chief Carlos Tavares, who will take the helm of the merged group, said in November.

The European Commission had been worried the merger could affect competition in Europe's lucrative van market, with PSA and FCA together account-

ing for 34 per cent of market share.

To assuage those concerns, the commission said PSA would continue an agreement with Toyota to manufacture vans to be sold under the Japanese brand in Europe.

The disruptions wrought by COVID-19, which ground manufacturing to a halt for several weeks in the first half of 2020, forced PSA and Fiat to change the terms of their tie-up to ensure it remained a merger of equals.

FCA agreed to lower an exceptional dividend to be distributed to shareholders, while PSA agreed to share its 46 per cent stake in French automotive equipment maker Faurecia among all shareholders of the new company, rather than its shareholders alone as agreed previously.

The two companies have so far shown relative resilience in the face of the pandemic.

Fiat Chrysler posted net profit of €1.2bn for the third quarter,

compared with losses of €1.04bn in the second quarter - when auto sales plummeted as much of the world was in coronavirus lockdown.

French union concerns

PSA sold 589,000 fewer vehicles in the third quarter but sold them for more money as part of a strategy to maximise profitability and cash flow, which lifted turnover by 1.2 per cent.

When the merger was announced, Tavares assured no plant would be closed, but unions in France remain sceptical.

"On the whole it's a good insurance policy for the future of our group. Those who don't make the shift risk being left by the wayside," a representative for the CFTC union at PSA, Franck Don, said.

But he wondered, "What synergies will they find and what consequences will that have for sites in France?"

AFP

Shiites mourn miners killed in Pakistan attack claimed by IS

Quetta, Pakistan - Thousands of mourners from a minority Shiite community in Pakistan on Monday protested alongside the bodies of miners killed in an attack claimed by the Islamic State group.

The ten miners were kidnapped before dawn on Sunday as they slept near the remote coal mine in the southwestern mountainous Machh area - 60km southeast of Quetta city, local government official Abid Saleem said.

Up to 2,500 protesters gathered with eight of the bodies in coffins and blocked a bypass on the outskirts of Quetta, capital of oil and gas-rich Balochistan province, demanding justice.

"We will not end our protest until the arrest of all the assassins," chief of Balochistan Shiite Conference, Agha Daud, said.

"The latest wave of killings will spread to other cities including Quetta if a decisive action is not taken at this stage," he added.

Security officials said the attackers first separated the miners before tying their hands and feet and taking them into the hills to kill them. At least four were beheaded, they added.

Two of the miners were Afghans and their bodies have been sent to Afghanistan for burial, a local security official told AFP.

Officials on Monday clarified ten people had died in the attack, revising a previous death toll of 11.

Sunni extremist group IS



Mourners from the Shiite Hazara community weep as they gather with the coffins of the miners who were killed in an attack by gunmen in the mountainous Machh area, during a sit-in protest at the eastern bypass, on the outskirts of Quetta in Pakistan on Monday (AFP)

claimed the attack, according to SITE Intelligence, which monitors extremist activities worldwide.

Ethnic Hazaras make up most of the Shiite population in Quetta, the capital of Balochis-

tan - the country's largest and poorest region, rife with ethnic, sectarian and separatist insurgencies.

They have proven to be particularly vulnerable with their distinct Central Asian features

making them easy targets for Sunni militants who consider them heretics.

Pakistani officials have long denied the presence of IS in the country, but the group has claimed a number of attacks in

the past including a bombing at a vegetable market in 2019.

Though Pakistan's mines are notorious for poor safety standards, such attacks against miners are rare.

Pakistan has long been a

cauldron of unrest and sectarian violence, with the official Islamic Republic home to myriad sects of Islam and religious minorities that have been targeted by violent extremists for decades.

AFP

Algerian jailed for three years for memes

Algiers, Algeria - An Algerian supporter of the Hirak protest movement was sentenced to three years in jail on Monday for satirical social media posts mocking the government and religion, a campaign group said.

Walid Kechida (25) was accused of insulting President Abdelmadjid Tebboune in Internet memes and other online posts, said Kaci Tansaout, from the CNLD prisoners' rights group.

"Walid Kechida is sadly sentenced to three years in prison with a fine," he said, adding that lawyers would appeal.

Lawyer Moumen Chadi confirmed the sentence.

The public prosecutor in Algeria's northeastern Setif province had called for a five-year sentence, and Kechida has already spent eight months in detention awaiting trial.

Algerian authorities have arrested and prosecuted several activists in a bid to stem the Hirak protesters.

The CNLD says over 90 people, including activists, social media users and journalists, are currently in custody in connection with the country's anti-government protest movement or individual liberties - mostly for dissenting social media posts.

Tebboune last week signed Algeria's new constitution into law, a change the government hopes will turn the page on the long-running Hirak mass protest movement. The Hirak first launched vast street demonstrations in early 2019 to oppose then-president Abdelaziz Bouteflika's bid for a fifth term in office.

AFP



This file photo released by the US Navy shows the aircraft carrier *USS Nimitz* (front) and the guided-missile cruiser *USS Philippine Sea* during a transit through the Strait of Hormuz on September 18 this year (AFP)

US aircraft carrier to stay in Gulf: Pentagon

Washington, US - The US reversed a decision to bring an aircraft carrier home from the Gulf Sunday, with the Pentagon saying that due to 'recent threats' by Iran the *USS Nimitz* would stay in position.

The *USS Nimitz* has been patrolling Gulf waters since late November, but in a statement issued on December 31, acting US defence secretary Christopher C Miller ordered the vessel to 'transit directly home to complete a nearly ten month deployment'.

The *New York Times*, quoting US officials, said this move was part of a 'de-escalatory' signal to Tehran to avoid a conflict in President Donald Trump's last days in office.

However, Miller issued a new statement changing course on

Sunday. "Due to the recent threats issued by Iranian leaders against President Trump and other US government officials, I have ordered the *USS Nimitz* to halt its routine redeployment," he said.

"The *USS Nimitz* will now remain on station in the US Central Command area of operations. No one should doubt the resolve of the United States of America."

He did not elaborate on the threats involved.

His statement came one year after a US drone strike in Baghdad killed Iran's revered commander Qasem Soleimani and his Iraqi lieutenant Abu Mahdi al Muhandis.

Thousands of Iraqi mourners chanted 'revenge' and 'no to America' on Sunday.

The anniversary of the Baghdad drone strike was also marked in recent days across Iran and by supporters in Syria, Lebanon, Yemen and elsewhere.

Trump unilaterally withdrew the US from a landmark nuclear deal with Iran and world powers in 2018 and launched a 'maximum pressure' campaign against Tehran, reimposing and reinforcing crippling sanctions.

The two countries have twice come to the brink of war since June 2019, especially following the killing of Soleimani. Days after the Soleimani assassination, Iran launched a volley of missiles at Iraqi bases housing US and other coalition troops, with Trump refraining from any further military response.

AFP

Iran says 20% uranium enrichment process at Fordow facility started

Tehran, Iran - Iran has started the process to enrich uranium to 20 per cent purity at its Fordow facility, state media reported on Monday, going well beyond the threshold set by the 2015 nuclear deal.

"The process for producing 20 per cent enriched uranium has started at Shahid Alimohammadi enrichment complex (Fordow)," government spokesman Ali Rabiei said, quoted on the website of the state broadcaster.

According to the official, President Hassan Rouhani ordered the enrichment 'in recent days', and 'the gas injection process started as of hours ago'.

The move follows a bill passed last month by the conservative-dominated parliament 'for the lifting of sanctions and protection of the Iranian people's interests' and mandating Rouhani's government to 'produce and store 120kg per year of uranium enriched to 20 per cent'.

The law also calls on the administration to end UN inspections of Iran's nuclear facilities, if



This file photo released by the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran on November 6, 2019, reportedly shows a truck carrying UF6 fuel leaving the Natanz nuclear research centre in Isfahan province to the Fordow facility (AFP)

the remaining parties to the deal - Britain, China, France, Germany and Russia - do not facilitate Iran's oil sales and guarantee the return of the proceeds.

Before the bill became law, Rouhani slammed it as 'detrimental to the course of diplomatic activities'.

But the Guardian council, which arbitrates disputes be-

tween the parliament and the government, approved the bill into law last month.

Iranian officials, including foreign minister Javad Zarif, had said the government will comply with the parliament's decision.

Quoted by the government's website, Rabiei said that the administration's stance towards the law is clear, 'but the govern-

ment considers itself bound to carry out the law'.

The government has signalled a readiness to engage with US President-elect Joe Biden after four tense years under Trump, who reimposed and reinforced crippling sanctions on Tehran after withdrawing the US from the nuclear agreement.

AFP

Arrested Palestinian DJ freed on bail

Ramallah, Palestinian Territories - A prominent Palestinian disc jockey arrested after a dance event at a religious and cultural site last week has been freed on bail, her father said on Monday.

Palestinian Authority police arrested Sama Abdulhadi (30) on December 27, the day after she performed at Nebi Mussa, the burial place of Moses under Islamic tradition, near the city of Jericho.

Her father, Saad Abdulhadi,



DJ Sama Abdulhadi (AFP)

told AFP that she was released on Sunday evening after payment of a US\$3,500 guarantee to attend a future court hearing, whose date has yet to be fixed.

She is banned from travelling in the meantime, he added.

Sama Abdulhadi is considered by many to be the first Palestinian woman to have become a professional disc jockey and Israeli daily Haaretz has called her the 'Palestinian Techno Queen'.

Video of the electronic music

event posted on social media showed men and women dancing together at the gathering, sparking public anger and accusations of desecration of the site, where there is a mosque.

Saad Abdulhadi said that his daughter had official permission to stage the event at Nebi Mussa, which is also a tourist site. "Unfortunately, the arrest of my daughter was decided to please the street," he said.

AFP



This file photo shows members of the Afghan security forces at the site of an attack in Kabul on December 20, 2020 (AFP)

US blames Taliban for Afghan assassinations

Kabul, Afghanistan - The US military on Monday blamed the Taliban for a spate of assassinations of prominent Afghans, the first time Washington has directly accused the insurgent group of the killings.

The charge comes as the Afghan government and Taliban are due on Tuesday to resume peace talks in Qatar, as both sides seek an end to the long-running conflict.

'The Taliban's campaign of unclaimed attacks and targeted killings of government officials, civil society leaders & journalists must... cease for peace to succeed,' Colonel Sonny Leggett, spokesman for US forces in Afghanistan, said on Twitter.

The Taliban's campaign of unclaimed attacks and targeted killings of government officials, civil society leaders & journalists must... cease for peace to succeed

COLONEL SONNY LEGGETT

The deputy governor of Kabul province, five journalists, and a prominent election activist have been among those assassinated since November.

Afghan officials blame the Taliban for the killings, but the hardline group has denied the charge, while the rival Islamic State group says its fighters were responsible for some of them.

Leggett's statement comes as

the Taliban accused US forces of carrying out airstrikes against insurgents in Kandahar, Nangarhar and Helmand provinces in recent days.

The Taliban said the strikes violated an agreement signed in February that paved the way for the withdrawal of all foreign forces by May 2021.

Leggett said the US would continue to defend Afghan

forces against Taliban attacks.

Violence has surged across Afghanistan, with the Taliban and government forces fighting daily across swathes of rural areas.

The Taliban carried out more than 18,000 attacks in 2020, Afghanistan's spy chief Ahmad Zia Siraj told lawmakers on Monday.

Nishank Motwani of the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit said the insurgents would not claim responsibility for the killings while peace talks were ongoing, but nevertheless wanted to demonstrate to its cadre 'that the Taliban are who they are and have not changed'.

AFP

Trump heard on tape urging state official to 'find' votes for him

Washington, US - US President Donald Trump pressured Georgia's top election official, a fellow Republican, in an extraordinary phone conversation to 'find' enough votes to overturn Joe Biden's victory in the southern state, US media reported on Sunday.

In the conversation with Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger on Saturday, a recording of which was first obtained by *The Washington Post*, Trump warns Raffensperger that he and his general counsel could face 'a big risk' if they failed to pursue his request.

"The people of Georgia are angry, the people in the country are angry," Trump is heard saying on the tape, which was also aired by other media.

"And there's nothing wrong with saying, you know, um, that you've recalculated," the President says. "You're off by hundreds of thousands of votes."

Raffensperger is heard responding: "Well, Mr President, the challenge that you have is, the data you have is wrong."

Biden won the traditionally conservative state by fewer than 12,000 votes - a margin unchanged after recounts and audits. Even a hypothetical reversal there would not be enough to deprive Biden of victory.

Word of the recording came at an extraordinary juncture, two days before special runoff elections in Georgia that will decide control of the US Senate, and three days before Congress is to certify the results of the November 3 election.

That certification, normally



US Representative Marjorie Taylor Greene wears a 'Trump Won' face mask at the House of Representatives in Washington, DC on Sunday (AFP)

routine, is now being challenged by scores of lawmakers at Trump's behest - though Republican Congressman Adam Kinzinger urged them to reconsider in light of the tape.

"This is absolutely appalling. To every member of Congress considering objecting to the election results, you cannot - in light of this - do so with a clean conscience," he tweeted.

'Contempt for democracy'

The New York Times reported that aides to Raffensperger had recorded the call, but that he told advisors he did not want it released unless the President attacked state officials or misrepresented what had been discussed.

On Sunday, before the audio was released, Trump tweeted about the call, saying that Raffensperger 'was unwilling, or unable, to answer questions such

as the 'ballots under table' scam, ballot destruction, out of state 'voters', dead voters, and more'.

Raffensperger tweeted back, ahead of the release of the audio, saying, "Respectfully, President Trump: What you're saying is not true. The truth will come out."

After the audio was released, the White House declined to comment.

Democrats were quick to condemn the call.

'Trump's contempt for democracy is laid bare. Once again. On tape,' Representative Adam Schiff said on Twitter. 'Pressuring an election official to 'find' the votes so he can win is potentially criminal, and another flagrant abuse of power by a corrupt man who would be a despot, if we allowed him. We will not.'

Some political commentators compared the call to the Watergate tapes that led to the fall of past US president Richard Nixon.

AFP

UK court blocks WikiLeaks founder's extradition to US

London, UK - A British judge on Monday ruled that WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange should not be extradited to the United States to face espionage charges for publishing secret documents online, finding he was at risk of suicide.

District Judge Vanessa Baraitser said extradition of the Australian publisher would be 'oppressive by reason of mental harm and I order his discharge'.

She said if detained in the United States, Assange 'faces the bleak prospect of severely restrictive detention conditions designed to remove physical contact and reduce social interaction and contact with the outside world to a bare minimum'.

"He faces these prospects as someone with a diagnosis of clinical depression and persistent thoughts of suicide," she said in her ruling.

"I am satisfied that the risk



Supporters of WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange celebrate outside the Old Bailey court after the verdict, in central London on Monday (AFP)

that Mr Assange will commit suicide is a substantial one."

The 49 year old wiped his forehead as the decision was announced while his fiancée Stella Moris burst into tears. She was embraced by WikiLeaks editor-in-chief Kristinn Hrafnsson.

Outside the Old Bailey court in central London, Assange supporters who had gathered since

the early morning cheered and shouted 'Free Assange!'

However, US and British prosecutors can appeal Baraitser's ruling.

Assange and his legal team have long argued that the protracted case, which has become a cause celebre for media freedom, was politically motivated.

AFP

Bond actress, 'That '70s Show' star Tanya Roberts dies at the age of 65

Los Angeles, US - Former Bond actress and *That '70s Show* star Tanya Roberts has died in Los Angeles at the age of 65, media reports said.

Roberts, who had been hospitalised since December 24 after she collapsed while walking her dogs, died on Sunday, her publicist Mike Pingel told *The Hollywood Reporter*.

"I'm devastated. She was brilliant and beautiful and I feel like a light has been taken away. To say she was an angel would be at the top of the list," he said.

"She was the sweetest person you'd ever meet and had a huge heart. She loved her fans, and I



Tanya Roberts

don't think she realised how much she meant to them."

Roberts is best known for her role as geologist Stacey Sutton in the 1985 James Bond film *A View*

to a Kill, which starred Roger Moore in his last appearance as 007.

Beside her Bond outing, Roberts starred in the 1982 sword-and-sorcery fantasy *The Beastmaster* and as the title character in *Sheena: Queen of the Jungle*, a female version of Tarzan which was nominated for five Golden Raspberry Awards and has gone on to become a cult classic.

Other notable movie appearances included *Body Slam* and *Night Eyes*.

Born in the Bronx, New York, in 1955, Roberts did some modeling and commercial work before get-

ting her big acting break on the final season of *Charlie's Angels*, where she played private investigator Julie Rogers helping the team of women crime fighters.

"It was my first steady job, and it launched my career," Roberts said on her website.

Roberts is probably best known for her role in the sitcom *That '70s Show*, where she played Midge Pinciotti, the dim-witted mother of Donna, played by Laura Prepon.

"*That '70s Show* was her favourite show, she really loved doing comedy," Pingel told *USA Today*.

AFP

Australian 'lives and homes' at risk as fire nears Perth: Emergency

Perth, Australia - An out-of-control bushfire threatened lives and homes in Australia's west coast city of Perth on Monday, with locals told to shelter in place from toxic fumes.

Residents in several suburbs south of Perth have been warned to be on watch as around 150 firefighters battled a blaze which has razed more than 230 hectares since Saturday.

The local emergency department downgraded the fire from earlier 'emergency' level, but warned there was still 'a possible threat to lives and homes as a fire is burning in the area and condi-

tions are changing'.

It is not known what triggered the fire.

Hazardous and reeking fumes emanating from a burning rubbish tip are also causing concern, with locals told to 'shelter in place for safety'.

Several roads were forced to close and motorists have been told not to travel to the fire-stricken area.

There are other wildfires in and around the Perth metropolitan area too, including one that forced the evacuation of a retirement village on Sunday in the southeast suburb of Gosnells.



A firefighter tries to put out spot fires while battling a bush fire in Kwinana, 30km south of Perth on Monday (AFP)

Residents in several suburbs of Perth have been warned to be on watch as around 150 firefighters were battling the blaze since Saturday

About 60 people were moved to safety and an evacuation centre has been set up in the area.

Hot and windy conditions - pushing 40°C - are forecast for Perth this week.

Western Australia was spared the brunt of last summer's devastating climate change-fuelled wildfires, which mostly ravaged the country's two most populous states New South Wales and Victoria.

The fires razed more than 24mn hectares of drought-stricken bushland and forest across Australia in late 2019 and early 2020, killing more than 30 people and destroying thousands of homes.

AFP

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Britain rolls out AstraZeneca shots

London, UK - Britain on Monday began rolling out the Oxford-AstraZeneca coronavirus vaccine, a possible game-changer in fighting the disease world-wide, while China raced to inoculate millions with a homegrown prophylactic.

Britain started the new drive with 530,000 doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine, as it struggled to control a severe wave of infections that has threatened to overwhelm the public health system and prompted the government to warn tougher curbs can be expected.

The vaccine, developed by AstraZeneca and the University of Oxford, is seen as a game-changer by many experts because it does not require very cold temperatures for storage like the ones from Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna.

That could mean greater access to the vaccine for less wealthy parts of the world in the fight against the coronavirus, which has infected nearly 85mn people with more than 1.8mn known deaths.

Brian Pinker, an 82 year old retired maintenance manager, received the first jab at Oxford's Churchill Hospital, NHS England said.

"I'm very pleased that I got the Oxford vaccine," he said, adding that it was a 'no-brainer' to get the shot.

British Health Secretary Matt Hancock tweeted that he was 'delighted that today we roll out the @UniofOxford / @As-



Brian Pinker receives the first shot of Oxford University/AstraZeneca vaccine at the Churchill Hospital, in Oxford on Monday (AFP)

traZeneca vaccine across the whole UK'.

'It's a vital step in our fight against this pandemic,' he said.

"We can see the way ahead in terms of a route forward, we can see how we can get out of this. But we do have a tough period ahead," Prime Minister

Boris Johnson said on Sunday.

Britain has already vaccinated around one million people after approving the Pfizer vaccine in early December and hopes to give shots to tens of millions in the next three months, Johnson said in a BBC interview.

Vaccinations were also under way in other parts of Europe.

Elsewhere, American officials on Sunday rejected claims by outgoing President Donald Trump that the country's death toll of more than 350,000 was exaggerated, as they defended

the stumbling rollout of vaccines in the world's worst-hit nation.

The United States has a known caseload of more than 20mn, and the Trump administration has faced intense criticism for its handling of the pandemic, which has ham-

pered the US economy.

It has started giving people the Pfizer and Moderna shots, but the 4.2mn people vaccinated so far are far below the official predictions of 20mn by the new year.

More than 13mn vaccine doses have been distributed nationwide, but efforts to inoculate health workers and vulnerable people have been hampered by logistical problems and overstretched hospitals and clinics.

"There have been a couple of glitches, that's understandable,"

"We know it induces identical immune response," Slaoui said, adding that officials are in discussions with Moderna and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) about the proposal.

Indian approvals

India, with the world's second-largest number of known cases, approved the emergency use of two COVID-19 vaccines on Sunday, paving the way for one of the world's biggest inoculation drives.

The South Asian giant has set an ambitious target of inoc-

Delighted that today we roll out the @UniofOxford / @AstraZeneca vaccine across the whole UK. It's a vital step in our fight against this pandemic.

MATT HANCOCK

top US expert Anthony Fauci said, adding it was a challenge 'trying to get a massive vaccine program started and getting off on the right foot'.

Troubling reports have emerged of vaccines going bad due to poor organisation, lack of healthcare professionals to administer them or, in one isolated case, sabotage.

Moncef Slaoui, chief advisor to the US government's military-led vaccine effort, said another alternative was being explored for the Moderna vaccine: Administering half doses twice.

ulating 300mn of its 1.3bn people by mid-2021, and it gave the green light to the AstraZeneca vaccine as well as one developed by local pharmaceutical firm Bharat Biotech.

But Indian authorities, like many across the world, must overcome public skepticism about the vaccine, often promoted by social media campaigns and conspiracy theories that offer no credible evidence.

A recent survey of 18,000 people across India found that 69 per cent were in no rush to get vaccinated.

AFP

Pressure on French government to speed up virus vaccinations

Paris, France - The French government on Monday faced growing pressure to accelerate its COVID-19 vaccination drive, with President Emmanuel Macron reportedly also furious over the slow pace of progress.

Just a few hundred people have received the jab so far in France, compared with over 200,000 in Germany and around one million in Britain.

"What we have seen is a government scandal," Jean Rottner, the head of France's Grand Est eastern region, which has seen a particularly sharp rise in infections, told France 2 television.

"Things need to accelerate," said Rottner, a member of the right-wing Republicans (LR) opposition party. "The French need clarity and firm messages from a government that knows where it is going. It is not giving this impression."

Macron in his New Year address to the nation had already pledged there would be no 'unjustifiable delays' in the rollout



A nurse administers a dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine at a hospital, in Paris on Saturday (AFP)

of the vaccination, but the *Journal du Dimanche* newspaper reported on Sunday that he has been scathing in private about the speed of progress.

A pace at the level of 'a family stroll' was not 'worthy of the moment nor of the French', the newspaper, seen as close to the Elysee Palace, quoted Macron as saying. "I am at war in the

morning, noon, evening and night," the President, who recently himself recovered from COVID-19 infection, said according to the report.

"I expect the same commitment from all. This won't do. It must change quickly and firmly."

The deputy president of the far-right National Rally (RN), Jordan Bardella, said that France

had become the 'laughing stock of the world'. "We vaccinated in a week the same number that the Germans vaccinated in 30 minutes. It's shameful," he told RTL television.

According to the French Health Ministry just 516 people had received the vaccination by January 1.

AFP

Beijing vaccinates thousands as China races to cover millions

Beijing, China - Thousands of people lined up in Beijing on Monday to receive a COVID-19 vaccine as China races to inoculate millions before the Chinese New Year mass travel season in February.

More than 73,000 people in the Chinese capital have received the first dose of the vaccine over the last couple of days, state media reported on Sunday, including community workers and bus drivers.

Health authorities on New Year's Eve granted 'conditional' approval to the Chinese pharmaceutical Sinopharm's vaccine, which the company said had a 79 per cent efficacy rate.

An AFP journalist saw people being bussed into a temporary vaccine centre at a central park, after being instructed to fill in electronic forms about their health status and any allergies at an outside gate.

Some were wearing two layers of surgical face masks.

One man surnamed Gu, a catering worker in his 30s, told AFP his employer had booked



Medical workers amidst people waiting to get inoculated at a temporary vaccination centre in Beijing on Sunday (AFP)

him a vaccine appointment at the centre, and that he wanted the jab 'for peace of mind'.

"I believe any adverse effects will be controllable," he said.

Footage from state broadcaster CCTV showed queues outside local hospitals and community health centres as people waited to read consent forms and have their temperatures taken before getting the jab.

Health officials said gyms and empty factories were among centres being used for the vaccination programme.

China plans to vaccinate millions this winter in the run-up to Lunar New Year in mid-February. Beijing has already administered around 4.5mn doses of largely unproven vaccines this year - mostly to health workers and other state employees destined for overseas jobs, according to authorities.

But China now plans a gradual rollout for the vaccine starting with key groups considered to have a high risk of exposure to the virus.

AFP

Japan PM says weighing coronavirus emergency for greater Tokyo area

Tokyo, Japan - Japan's Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga said on Monday he was considering declaring a state of emergency in the greater Tokyo area over a 'very severe' third wave of coronavirus infections.

Speaking at a customary New Year press conference, Suga also said he hoped vaccinations would begin in Japan in late February, adding that he would be among the first to receive one.

He urged people to avoid non-essential outings, and said the government would intro-

duce legislation to penalise businesses that flout requests to shorten hours or close, as well as provide incentives to those who abide by such calls.

Suga also insisted the government was still committed to holding the virus-postponed Tokyo 2020 Olympics this summer, saying the Games would be 'proof that mankind overcame the virus'.

Suga has faced increasing pressure over his government's response to record numbers of new infections.

Tokyo on Monday recorded 884 new infections, and said the number of serious cases - those on a ventilator or ECMO machine - rose to a record 108.

On Saturday, Tokyo governor Yuriko Koike, joined by governors from three neighbouring regions, called on the central government to impose a state of emergency in their areas.

But the government has been reticent to take measures that could send the economy back into reverse, soon after it exited a recession.



Japan's Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga addresses a customary New Year press conference at his official residence in Tokyo on Monday (AFP)

However, Suga said on Monday he realised 'a stronger message was necessary'.

"The national government will consider issuing a state of emergency," he said, adding that it would prioritise measures to reduce infection risks from drinking and dining.

Japan imposed a first state of emergency in spring, allowing local governors to call on businesses to close and to request people to stay at home.

The measure carries no penalties for non-compliance,

but the requests were widely observed this spring.

The scope of any new emergency remains unclear, though the *Nikkei* daily reported the government would not seek school closures.

Suga said 'limited and focused measures' would be effective, without specifying further.

Local media reported the measure could begin from Saturday, but there was no immediate confirmation.

AFP



5 FOODS TO EAT THIS WINTER

WINTER DIET

Don't give in to the temptation of skipping the gym and convincing yourself you deserve a calorie splurge to warm up and offset your winter discomfort. If you do so, you may not be alone, but remember, no weather warrants unhealthy eating habits. Just as you shouldn't overdo ice cream during summer, you shouldn't go bonkers over hot chocolate and warm cookies during winter.

So, it is time to winterise your diet and this is the right way to do so:



Root vegetables

Local produce can be hard to find when cold weather inhibits crop growth, but root vegetables (beets, carrots and turnips) can withstand the cold and you can reap the benefits. Roast carrots for a boost of beta-carotene, or boil turnips for vitamins C and A.



Oatmeal

Oatmeal is much more than just a convenient breakfast food, it also provides nutrients that are essential during winter. Oatmeal is high in zinc (important for proper immune function) and soluble fibre (associated with heart health).



Soups

Soup is winter's perfect food — as long as you go easy on the salt and beef. Look for soup recipes that call for chicken broth, vegetable broth or water as the base and include a lot of vegetables. Pair your soup with a side of whole-grain crackers for a dose of grains.



Spicy tuna roll

For a surprising alternative to typical comfort foods — often loaded with fat and sugar — try sushi. Choose rolls lined with tuna or salmon. Both are good sources of vitamin D. During the winter months, when you have limited exposure to the sun, food sources of the bone-healthy vitamin become even more essential.



Broccoli and cauliflower

Aside from getting the flu shot and washing your hands regularly, these cruciferous vegetables may be your top defense against winter sickness. Broccoli and cauliflower are both high in vitamin C, which is associated with enhanced immune function.

Three types of immunity

According to Ayurvedacharya Dr Partap Chauhan, director Jiva Ayurveda, ayurveda propagates three types of immunity:
Sahaj (hereditary) - immunity that you are born with.
Kalaj (seasonal) - immunity that comes and goes with seasons.
Yuktikrit (established) - immunity that you can develop with a balanced diet and systemic practice of yoga.
It is the third type of immunity one should acquire during the winter and it can be easily done by adopting an ayurvedic lifestyle.



Oils and butter

More than half your immunity is driven by the process of digestion. Ayurveda equates digestive strength with a 'fire' (known as 'agni' in Sanskrit) in the stomach. Because we tend to become fairly lethargic during winters, this fire may lose some of its potency. That's why it's important to include generous amounts of natural oils, ghee, and butter in your diet to keep this flame alive.



Boiled food

Boiled food is one of the best options for the winter months as well as all through the year. Have plenty of soup, stews, and broths made of winter foods. Carrots, beets, green leafy vegetables as well as other root-based vegetables are extremely beneficial and can be had steamed or otherwise. Boiled food preserves most of the nutrients found in plant-based as well as non-vegetarian food.



Nuts

Dry-fruits are a must for the winters. Cashews, pistachios, dates, almonds, walnuts – are all good for your winter diet but go for what is easily available and in-season where you live. Not only do these nuts and dried fruits help generate heat within the body, they also give you the energy needed to fight winter laziness. Nuts keep you active as well as activates cells in the brain.



SKIN CARE

FIGHT WINTER WRINKLES

Preventing wrinkles is a year-round task, but it's more difficult to do so during winter. It is said cold temperatures, lower humidity, wind and the winter sun can all work together to dry out skin and cause fine lines and wrinkles. Our skin is unable to retain water in the winter and a drop in humidity, thus results in dry skin and winter weather wrinkles.

Dr Alex Khadavi, a certified dermatologist and researcher, who is an associate professor of dermatology at the University of Southern California and the creator of Rejuve MD, an effective anti-aging treatment for the face/eye, believes that this product activates the skin's natural rejuvenation process by sending messages that awaken the collagen and elastin, while curbing enzymes that destroy the skin's supportive matrix.

Dr Khadavi says dry skin lacks moisture, and when skin isn't hydrated, wrinkles and other flaws become more apparent. "When your skin is dry, the protective barrier of the skin is damaged, allowing moisture to escape. This leaves skin looking dry, papery, and dull, and if you don't take care of skin, you could end up with crow's feet and other fine lines and wrinkles before winter is over." To prevent winter weather wrinkles, here are some of his expert tips:

Exfoliate your skin

Exfoliating skin regularly is important during the winter. It helps to slough away dead skin cells that make skin look dull, and by removing that layer of dead skin cells, it allows moisturisers and anti-aging products to work better. Just avoid exfoliating too often to avoid irritating skin.

Moisturise regularly

To prevent dryness before it starts, make sure you moisturise regularly. You may need to moisturise more often during the dry winter months. The best time to moisturise in when skin is still damp



(after a shower) since it helps skin trap extra water, preventing dryness.

Use appropriate moisturisers

Don't expect your summer moisturiser to do the job during the winter. To prevent those winter weather wrinkles, look for moisturisers that have super-hydrating ingredients. It's also important to avoid ingredients that may irritate skin. Look for moisturisers that have aloe vera, coconut oil, or olive oil, since they soothe skin and lock in moisture.

Use a humidifier

Since running the heat during the winter leaves indoor air dry, use a humidifier. This keeps moisture in the air, preventing dryness that can lead to wrinkles.

Don't forget sun protection

You need sun protection, even during the

winter, and sun damage can increase your chance of developing winter wrinkles. Use sun protection daily, and apply extra sunblock if you plan to participating in outdoor winter activities for an extended period. Wearing sunglasses and protective clothing can also protect skin from sun damage.

Eat a diet high in antioxidants

It's easy to turn to comfort foods during the winter, but to protect your skin from dryness and winter weather wrinkles, you need to make sure your diet is high in antioxidants. Antioxidants help protect and heal your skin from the inside out.

Use an anti-aging cream

To fight those winter weather wrinkles, use an anti-aging cream daily. Look for anti-aging creams that contain wrinkle-fighting ingredients like hyaluronic acid, apricot oil, vitamin, and retinol.



FOR DRY SKIN: HONEY AND ALMOND MASK

What you need

1 packet plain instant oatmeal, 2tbsp pure honey, 2tbsp butter-milk, ½ cup skinless blanched almonds.

What to do

Mix all ingredients, except almonds in a blender. Pour into bowl. Blend almonds for one minute, then add oatmeal mixture and blend until smooth. Cleanse face and neck, then apply mask. Leave on for 10 minutes. Rinse well and moisturise.

FOR OILY SKIN: DEEP CLEANSING AND TONING MASK

What you need

1tbsp crystallised honey, 1 egg yolk, 1tbsp cornmeal.

What to do

Mix all ingredients. Cleanse face and neck, then apply mask and massage lightly into face. Leave it on for at least 25 minutes (soon, you'll experience a tingling sensation all over the face). Rinse it out well with cold or warm water and follow with toner and moisturiser.

