



50
GLORIOUS YEARS

MUSCAT DAILY

AN APEX MEDIA PUBLICATION

THURSDAY, 19 NOVEMBER 2020
20 PAGE ISSUE
www.muscatdaily.com
Email: muscatdaily@apexmedia.co.om

OMANIS OWN RO1.46BN WORTH OF
REAL ESTATE PROJECTS IN THE UAE
GO TO PAGE 13 BUSINESS

HM addresses the nation on 50th National Day

Muscat - His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik's address to the sultanate on the occasion of the glorious 50th National Day -

"In the name of Almighty Allah, the Most Gracious, Most Merciful...

We address you on this auspicious day marking the 50th anniversary of Oman's modern Renaissance, when countrywide celebrations were scheduled to be held in a manner that reflects the greatness of the glorious event, but current exceptional conditions undergone by the sultanate and the whole world intervened otherwise. So, we decided that the scope of celebrations this year will be limited to suit precautionary health measures aimed to protect the health and safety of all.

Oman, by the will of Almighty Allah, has been able to overcome the challenges posed over the past decades wisely and tactfully through the leadership of its late monarch,

His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said, and the sacrifices of its people. Oman will remain a source of power, pride and dignity for all of us and for future generations. It has been able to start a modern Renaissance that placed the Omani citizen on top of its priorities. Our deep-rooted history and our role in human civilisation formed a strong cornerstone for the establishment of a development process that covered all parts of the sultanate and across its vast geographical area, so that the achievements could reach every family and every individual on this benign land. The renaissance consolidated the pillars of the state of law and institutions, which will further be perfected and empowered in the time to come.

We will continue to consult the same core principles and values in laying the foundation of the new stage, to which our dear country, God willing, will march confidently forward towards achieving the lofty status it

desires. It is the goal, which we all aspire for, utilising all our resources and capabilities in the quest to protect our national interests. Our goals, considered the mainstay of our future development, are defined by Oman Vision 2040, with the prime aim of transforming all aspects of life. It is a true embodiment of collective national willpower.

Continued on
Page 05



STARRY NIGHT



National Day fireworks light up Muscat's sky on Wednesday. Fireworks are also planned in Buraimi and Musandam on November 21 (Syed Fasiuddin)

Oman-Britain relations of 50 years celebrated

'Britain with Oman' presents photographs reflecting the rich history of cooperation between the two countries over the past 50 years

Muscat - In a recorded video message to mark the opening of the 'Britain with Oman: The Renaissance Renewed' virtual exhibition, Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said hailed the historic ties between Oman and the UK. He noted that the ties between the two countries witnessed remarkable progress during the Blessed Renaissance under the Late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said.

"It is a great pleasure to see this contribution from the Anglo-Omani Society to our celebrations of the 50th anniversary of the Renaissance. These digital images show the friendship that binds the people of the two countries and it is an appropriate way to celebrate the longstanding relations between Oman and Britain," he said. "Our countries



have been friends for a long time. The relationship has been close over the last 50 years of Renais-

sance under the Late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos and remains so today under His Majesty Sultan

Haitham bin Tarik."

In his message, Sayyid Theyazin referred to the landmark joint defence agreement of 2019 as a further boost to ties.

"The 50th anniversary is an occasion to remember and celebrate the achievements of the Late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos in setting up the modern state. In foreign policy, he consistently followed the path of peaceful co-existence with other nations, non-interference in their internal affairs and respect for their sovereignty," he said.

"Under the leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham, we will work on the renewal of the renaissance. We are confident that the UK will remain with us as an old friend and partner. We look forward to celebrate more events in this unique relationship."

'Oman has developed without losing its values'

Muscat - As Oman celebrates the 50th anniversary of the Renaissance founded by the Late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said and renewed under the leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the Anglo-Omani Society in cooperation with Oman's Embassy in the UK, has organised a virtual photography exhibition.

In a video message, Prince Charles, Prince of Wales, greeted Oman and its people on the occasion, stating that the two countries share an 'enduring friendship that goes back over 200 years'.

"As patron of the Anglo-Omani Society, I am delighted that the society has put together this set of images to mark the 50th year of renaissance," he said.

He added that the exhibition gives a glimpse of the rich history of cooperation between the two countries over a vital period in Oman's history. "It's been a most remarkable half century under the wise leadership of the Late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos. Oman rapidly developed all the attributes of an advanced, modern state but it did so without losing the fundamental



characteristics which make Oman and its people unique - tolerance, pragmatism and

pride in its rich past."

He went on to say that Oman's rich legacy is set to flourish further. "I know that under His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, this legacy is cherished and continues to be renewed as the country faces fresh challenges.

"Our countries are old friends, an enduring relationship goes back over 200 years. Her Majesty the Queen made her first state visit to Oman in 1979 and second in 2010. Other members of the family, including myself, have been regular visitors and we have come to know this country with deep affection."



We salute the visionary leadership of
HIS MAJESTY SULTAN HAITHAM BIN TARIK
and extend our greetings to
His Majesty and the people of Oman
on the occasion of the
50th National Day



Takaful Oman Insurance SAOG

P.O.Box 207, Bareeq Al shatti, Postal Code 134, Sultanate of Oman,C.R: 1190750

Tel: (968)22303000, Fax: (968)24699511, Toll Free No:80078264, Email: info@takafuloman.om,

Branches: Sohar: (968)26844042, Nizwa: (968) 25411100, Salalah: (968) 23294242, Ibri: (968)25691507, Ibra: (968) 25509850, Al Khwair:(968) 24991616,Ruwi: (968) 24708821, www.takafuloman.com

ENVOYS GREET HM ON 50TH NATIONAL DAY



**OMAR LEBBE
AMEER AJWAD**
Ambassador of Sri Lanka

On behalf of the Embassy of Sri Lanka and the Sri Lankan community in Oman, I have the honour to extend my warmest greetings to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the government and the friendly people of the sultanate on the 50th National Day.

Oman has been transformed into a progressive, tolerant and peaceful nation over the past five decades under the visionary leadership of the Late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said, and the sultanate continues to progress and prosper under the stewardship of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik.

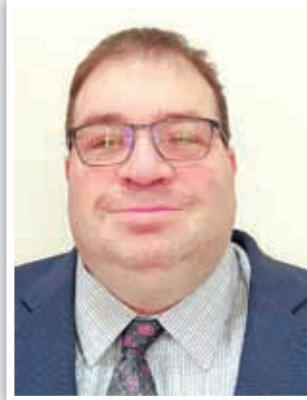
I look forward to further elevate the bilateral relations between Sri Lanka and Oman to new heights in the years ahead.

To mark the occasion of Oman's 50th National Day, several ambassadors accredited to the sultanate congratulated His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and the citizens of the country on behalf of their governments and their countrymen



SUWAT KAEWSOOK
Ambassador of Thailand

On behalf of the Royal Thai Embassy and the people of the Kingdom of Thailand, I have the great honour to extend to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik our heartfelt congratulations on the auspicious occasion of the 50th National Day of Oman. The Kingdom of Thailand has been working closely with Oman to promote friendly cooperation in all fields for the benefit of our two countries and peoples. May His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik continue to be blessed with happiness, good health and a very long life.



ANDREAS NIKOLAIDES
Ambassador of Cyprus

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



**MOHAMMED ARZAN
JAWHAN**
Ambassador of Indonesia

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



JOSE MARCOS NOGUEIRA
Ambassador of Brazil

On this occasion, we commemorate the passing of the Late Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said whose memories remain in our hearts and the hearts of the great people of Oman to inspire and continue the march of prosperity and success under the wise leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik.

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



DR TIBOR SZATMARI
Ambassador of Hungary

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

This year, we celebrate the 30th anniversary of establishing diplomatic relations between the sultanate and Hungary and it is also almost a year since Embassy of Hungary in Muscat was officially inaugurated.



**MUHAMAD DORY
MUHAMAD YAKUB**
Ambassador of Kenya

On this joyous occasion of the 50th National Day of Oman, it is an honour to convey on behalf of President Uhuru M Kenyatta of the Republic of Kenya and the Kenyan people, good health, happiness and long life to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and the Omani people.

I am confident that Kenya's Big Four Agenda and Vision 2030 as well as Oman's Vision 2040 will continue to provide our two great countries with many opportunities to further strengthen and augment our economic cooperation.

May Allah bless Oman with progress, prosperity and peace under the wise leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik.



We salute the visionary leadership of
His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik
and extend our greetings to
His Majesty and the people of Oman
on the occasion of the **50th National Day**



DARK BLUE TRADING LLC
(MEMBER OF DARK BLUE HOLDING)



➔ **Fillter Solutions**
Sole Agent of Ahlstrom
Any Kind of Industrial Fillter

Tel: 00968 92554435
Email: Trade@darkbluetradingllc.com

➔ **Supply of Drilling Materials**

Tel: 00968 92775525
Email: commercial@darkbluetradingllc.com
AlQurum - Muscat - Sultanate of Oman
www.darkbluetradingllc.com



ترفع إن أم سي للرعاية الطبية أسمى
آيات التهاني والتبريكات إلى المقام السامي لحضرة
صاحب الجلالة السلطان هيثم بن طارق المعظم
حفظه الله ورعاه
والشعب العماني الأبي بمناسبة العيد الوطني الخمسين للنهضة

NMC Healthcare sends its warmest greetings and congratulates
His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik
and the people of Oman on the momentous occasion
of the 50th National Day of the Renaissance.

مستشفى أن أم سي التخصصي
nmc specialty hospitals

الغبرة
Al Ghoubra
2450 4000

الحيل
Al Hall
2426 9222

nmchealthcareom

www.nmcoman.com



Red, white and green, every shade in between

Muscat dazzles with the national colours as the country celebrates its golden jubilee. Roads, iconic buildings and signage are swathed in bright light even as shops in souqs did brisk business selling National Day items



Omani products exhibition begins at Qurm City Centre

Muscat - As part of Oman's celebrations of the 50th National Day of the Renaissance and in line with the ongoing month-long 'Made in Oman' campaign, Omani Products Exhibition was inaugurated at Qurm City Centre on Wednesday.

The event was held under the auspices of Hilal bin Hamad al Hasani, CEO of the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates - Madayn. The Made in Oman campaign aims at highlighting and promoting Omani products through commercial centres across all governorates in the sultanate. The campaign encourages consumers to choose locally manufactured products, and emphasises on the significance of buying Omani products and its contribution to the national economy.

Hasani affirmed that promoting Omani products in such platforms plays a key role in increasing the awareness of these products, which eventually



reflects positively on the national economy. He stated that the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, Madayn, Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, in addition to a number of key bodies, are uniting efforts to spread awareness on the importance of supporting

Omani products among various segments of the society.

"Through the ongoing cooperation with the major commercial stores in the country, Omani products are not only showcased at the local level, but also at external markets," Hasani said.

"Madayn offers logistics and

service support to Omani factories within our industrial cities by providing an environment conducive for their production processes. This eventually enhances their marketability and increases the export prospects of their products."

ONA

HOTLINES

- 24-hour pharmacies**
Scientific Pharmacy: Qurm 24566601, Ruwi 24702850
Muscat Pharmacy: Ruwi 24702542, Salalah 23291635
Al Hashar Pharmacy: Ruwi 24783334
- Hospitals and Clinics**
Al Hayat International Hospital, Al Ghubra- 22004000, 94267068 / 97049520
94442000 (Emergency)
Al Raffah Hospital: Muscat - 24618900/1/2/3
Sohar - 26704639/49/50
Apollo Hospital Muscat, Hamriya: 24787766, 24782666, 24787780
Abeer Hospital, Ruwi, Muscat 24770800, 90999335, 90999334 (Emergency)
Starcare Hospital: 24557200
Emergency number: 24558333
Dr Harub's Clinic: 24563217, 2456381, 99254940 (Emergency)
Emirates Medical Center: 24604540
KIMS Oman Hospital: 24760105
Lama Polyclinic: CBD 24799077, 24788881, 24788577, 24707566, 24799655, Al Khuwair 24478817, 24478818, Sohar 26751128



HM addresses the nation

Continued from Page 01

The success of this vision is the responsibility of us all, dear citizens, without exception, with everyone acting within his position and within the scope of his abilities and responsibilities.

Within the context of supporting the government's ability to meet the requirements of Oman Vision 2040, we embarked on developing the state's administrative apparatus, restructured the Council of Ministers and entrusted to it the responsibility of implementing the forthcoming development plans. The overall aim is to enhance government performance and competence.

Meanwhile, steps are underway to revise the legislative and auditing measures and develop accountability so that they can constitute a cornerstone for future action in Oman.

We hereby underscore the great significance of these steps in protecting the rights of citizens, as well their role in consolidating justice and decency. This justice system will be accorded our special attention.

We have also laid down the regulatory foundation of local administration through a system of decentralisation of services and development in the governorates.

We will regularly follow up progress in the administrative system with the aim of supporting and developing it to empower society to shoulder its responsibility in nation building.

Dear citizens,

The world is undergoing an unprecedented situation under the twin impacts of global financial crisis (caused by the slump in international oil prices that hit record-low levels) and the coronavirus pandemic.

Since we are a vital part of this interconnected world, with which we share interests and destiny, rejoicing for its victories and saddened by its calamities, we have accorded special attention to this global scenario.

We follow up its develop-

ments and its implications at national, regional and international levels. We have taken all precautions to accommodate these circumstances and alleviate their negative impacts in all sectors of the state, with priority given to health, social and economic sectors.

We reiterate our support to these sectors so that health and education services, of all types, continue to be rendered in the best was possible to all citizens of this dear country.

In this context, we would like to express our appreciation for all your support, as individuals and institutions, including all initiatives and tasks. We take pride in this support and value all your efforts and your noble endeavours. You have proved, dear citizens of Oman, your originality that was attested by history. You have proved, beyond doubt, the ability of this great country to stand the test of time.

Loyal citizens of Oman,

Crises, challenges and difficulties provide an opportunity to test the readiness of nations and their abilities. The current crisis has opened wide vistas for national cadres to contribute solutions based on innovation and creativity.

They accelerated the pace of transformation in digitisation and the use of technology in government and private sector domains of action in a manner that was unthinkable before. The national cadres' response was prompt and proper.

We appreciate your response and your positive reaction to government measures under these financial and economic conditions undergone by the sultanate with the purpose of rationalising spending and shrinking fiscal deficit and general state debt.

The aim of these procedures and plans is to achieve the state's fiscal sustainability and to establish grounds for the execution of strategic developmental projects in all parts of the sultanate.

Despite these challenges posed to our economy, we are

certain that the Medium-Term Fiscal Plan (2020-2024) and its related procedures, as endorsed by the government recently, will undoubtedly steer our economy to the shores of safety.

The economy will witness, during the next five years, rates of growth that meet the expectations of all citizens of this dear country.

To reaffirm the attention that we accord to the protection of citizens, we gave directives to establish a Social Security Scheme to ensure that the state honours its duty to provide decent living for citizens and spare them the impact of measures entailed by financial policies.

We will also accord attention to channeling some financial policies towards the Social Security Scheme so that it becomes, God willing, an overarching canopy of social protection.

Loyal citizens of Oman,

On the occasion of the 50th National Day of Oman's Renaissance, and as you exert your efforts in the workplace, we would like to express our thanks and commendation of all that you do to safeguard the gains of this renaissance.

We hail all personnel of the Armed Forces and security services across all their formations. We appreciate your efforts in protecting the sovereignty of this country and in defending the safety of its lands. We reiterate our support to you, all the time.

We pray to Almighty Allah to have mercy on the soul of the Late Sultan Qaboos bin Said, to reward him plentifully, and to enable us to follow his footsteps in establishing the next stage of development in a manner that meets the aspirations of the citizens of this dear homeland and reflects the glory of its history, hoping for a brighter future to unveil, God willing.

May Almighty Allah grant us all success to honour the custody and shoulder the responsibility towards the loyal citizens of this country.

ONA

'Oman is deeply committed to tolerance and co-existence'

Our Correspondent
Muscat

In a world of intolerance and injustice, it is important to have dialogue with one another. Tolerance and co-existence is one of the important pillars of the United Nations, and Oman is deeply committed to them, said H E Sheikh Abdullah bin Mohammed bin Abdullah al Salmi, Minister of Awqaf and Religious Affairs.

H E Sheikh Salmi said so while addressing a two-day celebration of the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs on the United Nations' (UN) International Day for Tolerance that concluded at Sheraton Oman Hotel on Tuesday.

The event brought together



H E Sheikh Abdullah al Salmi

several youth leaders and ministries to raise awareness on youth-led strategies, which promote mutual understanding among cultures and peoples, and discuss how member

states, the United Nation and civil society can support young people in effecting positive change.

"There is a need to exchange dialogue and ideas with people of other faiths for co-existence," H E Sheikh Salmi added.

"COVID-19 taught us that we can fight back united and so we must do so. We need to work together without hatred and a feeling of superiority."

He added that people need to live in peace, dignity and liberty for the sake of future generations. "We need no wars now," he said.

H E Sayyid Badr bin Hamad bin Hamoud al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, said, "At this time when our values of humanity are challenged by extremism

and armed conflicts around the world, it is very important not to treat people based on their faith. It is important that we co-exist for a better world which is possible only through dialogue and mutual understanding."

The two-day virtual conference convened high-level civil society members to share best practices and consider how civil society organisations and the government can collaborate to achieve the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development that includes 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

The celebration of the International Day for Tolerance comes in continuation and consolidation of the sultanate's efforts to promote a culture of peace and harmony.

411 new COVID-19 cases, 10 deaths reported in two days

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Health (MoH) on Wednesday confirmed 411 new cases of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), taking the total to 121,129.

There were ten deaths and 568 recoveries in the last two days.

The number of recoveries has increased to 112,014 while the number of deaths has reached 1,360,' an MoH statement said.

As of Wednesday, a total of 274 patients were admitted in

health institutions, including 128 in ICUs.

MoH calls upon all to adhere to the isolation procedures by staying in an isolated room with an attached toilet and serving the isolated person from outside the room as instructed. It said that social distancing also helps curb the spread of the virus.

MoH advises all citizens and residents to continue washing hands with water and soap, avoid touching the face, nose, mouth and eyes, and following healthy habits when coughing and sneezing.

CASES FROM NOV 10 TO NOV 18	
Nov 10	381
Nov 11	302
Nov 12	256
Nov 13 to Nov 15 (Average - 315)	947
Nov 16	329
Nov 17, 18 (Average - 205)	411

Swiss airline Edelweiss to fly to Muscat

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) has given approval to Edelweiss Air to operate flights between Muscat International Airport and Zurich Airport, starting from December 20.

Flights between Zurich and Muscat can currently be booked for travel between December 2020 and November 2021, stated the airline.

The first flight will depart Zurich on December 20 at 9.30pm (Zurich time) and reach Muscat at 7am (Oman time) the next day.



Advertisement No.(51 /2020)

Companies specialized in the field and registered with **Tender Board**, may obtain tenders documents for the website through the following link:

Tender No.	No E- Tender	Description of Tender	Tender Fee	Last date to collect the tender	Tender return date	Grade
PRE/ 20/102	MM/QS-/2020 51	RFP for Renewing IBM Filenet & CMS Licenses for Record and Document Management System (E- Tender)	25 Rial	01/12/2020	02/12/2020	Specialized

(<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>) against non-refundable fees as mentioned below starting from the date of this announcement and until the end of deadline stipulated below.
Tender Conditions :-

- Bidders shall submit their offers electronically accompanied with an electronic copy of bond is sued by any local bank in Oman addressed to Muscat municipality. The bond shall be (1%) of the tender value valid for ninety (90) days starting from the date of bids submission.Any tenders which do not meet the required bond shall not be accepted.
- Original Tender Bonds are to be placed in the Tender Box at Muscat Municipality HQ, Ground Floor at the reception .
- For any inquiries regarding tenders, please visit e-tendering website: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>) .
- For technical support of e-tendering system please send an email to (etenderhd@ita.gov.om) or call (+96824166670).



KARWA MOTORS

The **TENDERS** Committee announces the following tenders:

Tender No.	Subject	Document Fees	Tender Bond	Closing Date
MJN-KWM-PM-TED-00010	Rate contract of agents customs clearing and freight forwarding for Karwa motors project	OMR 50/-	1% of Bid Value	10th Dec 2020
MJN-KWM-EQ-TED-00011	On call tender for supply & installation Of office furniture For Karwa Motors project	OMR 50/-		

Conditions:

- The tender documents package can be obtained from the Finance Department of the company on 19th, 22nd 23rd, 24th November 2020 from 8:00 AM – 4:00 PM, upon payment of a non-refundable document fees and signed authorization letter to collect tender document with company stamp.
- KEY DATES:**
 - Issue Tender Package** – From 19th November 2020 to 24th November 2020
 - Last Date for Submission** – 10th December 2020
- Tender should be submitted not later than 12.00 noon on the closing date and must be deposited. Karwa Motors Tendering Office, located Office No 5-25,02nd Floor, Finaa Al Fardan Building No.254, Way 4204, Plot No 836, North Al Ghubra, Postal Code: 1115, Muscat, and should be in sealed envelopes addressed to: Tender Committee, Karwa Motors quoting the Tender No. and subject.
- Offers arriving after the closing date & time shall not be accepted.

E-Mail: tendercommittee@karwamotors.com

Bank Muscat holds 50th National Day prize draw



As part of the celebrations being held on the Glorious 50th National Day of Oman, Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the sultanate, conducted a special Al Mazyona draw for RO500,000.

Fifty lucky winners won RO10,000 each on this special occasion, which was held at the Hala FM radio station in the presence of Abdullah Tamman al Maashani, deputy general manager - Institutional Sales and Product Development, Bank Muscat and other senior officials. The event was broadcast on Hala FM and livestreamed over the social media channels of both the radio station and the bank so as to share the joy of National Day celebrations with customers and the general public.

Speaking on the occasion, Maashani said, "As one of the great achievements of Oman's Blessed Renaissance, Bank Muscat is proud to hold this special draw to celebrate the Glorious 50th National Day. I

congratulate all the winners today for winning these amazing prizes, and more importantly for their savings habit which will stand them in good stead in the future. Bank Muscat recognises the goals and aspirations of its customers and the Al Mazyona draw is a way to encourage them to save more for the future and there is no doubt that this savings habit leads to the building of a strong financial culture and the strengthening of our economy and society."

All customers who maintained a minimum balance of RO1,000 in their Al Mazyona account were automatically eligible for the draw with customers getting more chances for maintaining higher savings. Prior to the holding of the draw, the bank popularised the draw amongst the public through a special campaign through different media including newspapers, radio, and online media, social media and text mes-

sages. The National Day celebrations are a much loved and dear occasion for everybody in the country. Bank Muscat always participates in all national events in order to bring joy and happiness to its customers.

Al Mazyona has succeeded in inculcating a strong savings culture in Oman. For over 29 years, Al Mazyona has rewarded numerous customers and enriched their lives.

Bank Muscat encourages everyone to save for the future with the objective of creating a life-changing experience for winners and improving the well-being of their families. Oman's flagship savings scheme continues to reward a prudent and financially responsible savings habit among millions of customers with a massive RO11mn to be won by 6,677 over the course of the year.

The bank recently celebrated the Omani Women's Day Draw during which RO100,000 in total prize money was given

away to 50 lucky winners. Fifty lucky customers also won prizes of RO500 each in the Shababi special draw which was held recently on the occasion of the Omani Youth Day.

The bank has called upon all its customers to continue their savings in their accounts and get more opportunities to win exciting financial prizes, especially in the upcoming special End-of-Year draw. Two mega prizes of RO250,000 each as well as 5 year-end prizes of RO25,000 each and 3 special prizes of RO50,000 each for Asalah Priority Banking customers and 5 year-end prizes of RO15,000 each and three special prizes of RO25,000 each for Al Jawhar customers are among the exciting prizes on offer.

Also 28 lucky customers will win RO5,000 from across all the governorates of Oman. The bank has invited all its customers to take maximum advantage of the opportunities available and win exciting prizes.



Omran Group celebrates Oman's 50th National Day

Omran Group, the executive arm of the sultanate for tourism development, gathered virtually to celebrate the country's 50th National Day. The ceremony hosted 600 members from Omran Group's family and subsidiaries including Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre (OCEC), Oman Sail, Oman Tourism College and Waterfront and Marina Services (Marina Bandar al Rowdha).

Eng Mohammed al Busaidi, chairman of Omran Group said, "On behalf of all of Omran's employees, I would like to congratulate His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik - May God bless him - and the people of Oman on this glorious occasion. This joyful occasion comes to renew our feelings of joy and loyalty to Oman."

"Today, we have not only one, but two celebrations to commemorate, the glorious 50th National Day event, and Omran's momentous 15-year anniversary. Guided by the solid foundations laid by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said, may his soul rest in peace, and inspired by the vision of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik- may God protect him - I would like to reaffirm that Omran Group will continue to positively impact the nation and support the growth of its economy, ultimately achieving the objectives of Oman Vision 2040 and the National Tourism Strategy," he added.

Peter Walichnowski, CEO of Omran Group said, "We are delighted to mark this great national day virtually in Omran Group. Witnessing the celebra-

tions across the country serves as testament of gratitude and love the Omani people hold for the Late Sultan, the builder of Oman's modern renaissance and their aspiration for the new future under the leadership of Sultan Haitham bin Tarik - may God protect him."

"I am also pleased to celebrate with you the 15th anniversary of the founding of Omran. On this occasion, I would like to express my appreciation for the generous and passionate talents of Omran Group who have contributed to the growth its portfolio which encompasses today unique projects and assets in various parts of the sultanate," he added.

Omran's new corporate film was unveiled which creatively features the legacy of the group and its strategic role in the development of Oman's tourism sector. In addition, a visual milestones timeline of the company was played documenting the journey of Omran from its inception till date, whilst also launching Omran's new sonic signature and jingle music. The last highlight of the online event was the virtual raffle draw for 50 winners from the group who participated in a national day competition.

India's leadership congratulates Oman

The President of India, Ram Nath Kovind sent a message and conveyed heartiest congratulations to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, government and friendly people of Oman on the occasion of 50th National Day of Oman.

President Kovind stated that India and Oman are maritime neighbours and India attaches very high priority to further develop and expand vibrant strategic partnership between the countries. President Kovind mentioned that Indian community in Oman is an important pillar of bilateral relationship, whose contribution is also ap-

preciated by Oman.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi also wrote a letter to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and conveyed greetings on the occasion of 50th National Day.

Prime Minister Modi recalled his visit to Oman in 2018 and stated India-Oman relations are based on mutual trust, shared values and convergence in approaches. He stated that India will be a trusted partner of Oman in its march towards renewed renaissance under the leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham. Prime Minister Modi also paid rich tribute to Late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos.

OAB launches debt exemption initiative

On the occasion of the 50th National Day, Oman Arab Bank (OAB) has written off over 150 defaulting loans. This initiative is part of the bank's social responsibility towards society and was prompted by the special circumstances of the account holders which include the elderly, widows and people with disabilities.

Rashad al Musafir, CEO of the bank, said, "Since our establishment, Oman Arab Bank has been, and continues to be, a financial institution that takes care of its customers and strives to build closer relations with the community. Since the passing of 50 years marks a significant milestone for the country and all its people, we decided to share in the joy and celebration of our



customers. For this reason we are launching this debt exemption initiative to help people in need, especially those who are facing difficult circumstances brought about by the current challenges.

"This way, we can enable them to move forward with their

lives without having to worry about their existing loans with the bank. This initiative stems from our commitment to social responsibility and is our way of giving back to the Omani society."

Commenting on the criteria to select the beneficiaries for this

initiative, Asma al Zadjali, head of Banking Operations Group at OAB, said, "The debt exemption initiative includes a wide range of stringent criteria to ensure that it benefits and supports those most in need. Accordingly, more than 150 customers have been provided exemptions, including elderly customers who do not have sufficient pensions to pay off debts, widows, people with disabilities or chronic diseases, and several others. Additionally, debts of deceased customers that were not covered by insurance companies were also given exemptions, in order to prevent creating a financial burden on their families."

Hilal al Siyabi, head of Corporate Communication at OAB,

stated, "With the completion of our strategic vision for sustainability earlier this year, we are working towards a number of primary pillars: the environment, community partnerships and financial inclusion. This vision allows us to place Oman Arab Bank on the right path to maximise social impact, alongside our commercial activities. This overall goal is to position OAB as more than a banking partner for all its customers."

Oman Arab Bank has a rich and proud history as one of the first financial institutions to be established in the sultanate. Today, the bank operates a nationwide network of 55 branches and representative offices with over 160 ATMs.

Al Jenaibi International Automobiles reveals year-end deal on MINI

Al Jenaibi International Automobiles LLC (AJIA), the official importer of BMW Group in Oman, has revealed a limited time offer on all MINI models just in time for the new year.

With an exclusive 5 per cent cashgift on select MINI models, valid until December 31, customers can cruise into 2021 driving the MINI of their dreams, now at an even better price accompanied by a host of benefits.

Upon purchase, customers can avail MINI Service Inclusive Plus up to 5 years or 100,000km (whichever comes first), MINI Repair Inclusive (MINI Warranty) up to 5 years

or 200,000km (whichever comes first), and complimentary window tinting.

To ensure a hassle-free shopping experience, Al Jenaibi International Automobiles will also provide complimentary vehicle registration for one year.

Salim Sabbagh, acting chief executive officer of Al Jenaibi International Automobiles, said, "While this year has been challenging for many industries, customer service reigns king in the automotive industry and remains our number one focus.

"We are extremely pleased to celebrate the end of the year with the launch of this limited time offer. This decision under-



lines our commitment to our clients, as staying abreast of their ever-changing needs has allowed us to enhance their shopping experience.

"Moving into 2021 we plan to stay agile and continue to listen to our customer's demands, as we have found this has honed our ability to pre-empt the needs of our valued customers. With this information, we are armed with the ability to provide them with an amazing buying experience and the deals they want."

For more information, please visit mini-oman.com or call 96178383, 96179393, or toll-free on 800 50008.

Show-stealing, all-new Infiniti QX55 debuts

Lights up, cameras on, and sound rolling, Infiniti on Wednesday launched the all-new QX55 SUV via a one-of-a-kind streaming concert experience from Los Angeles. The Infiniti QX55 is the spiritual successor to another one-of-a-kind moment: The Infiniti FX. Like its predecessor, the QX55's daring roofline and unapologetic shape are in tune with equally bold buyers; the QX55 doesn't have something for all people — it aims to be everything to some people.

"The new Infiniti QX55 is a statement-maker, designed to deliver first-class comfort and stand out everywhere it goes. It's a unique fusion of style and substance," said Infiniti chairman Peyman Kargar.

The show-stealing QX55 was unveiled by global superstar Aloe Blacc, whose music connects to Infiniti with its verve and unmistakable sound. Known for his standout hits, *The Man*, *Wake Me Up*, and *I Need A Dollar*, Blacc's performance set the table for a new era of exciting vehicle reveals. Blacc's performance in the iconic Belasco Theater in Los Angeles married to immersive discussions with senior vice president of Global Design Alfonso Albaisa and Infiniti's general manager, Product Strategy and Planning Eric Rigaux in



Tokyo, and brand chief Kargar's introduction to the star-studded night, produced with Live Nation. "The all-new Infiniti QX55 is classy. It just looks sleek, and it feels like it's quality. Ultimately, the only thing I ever want to engage with is quality. From the musicians that I pick, to the food that I eat, to the car that I drive. I like to know that something is

crafted with intention and purpose and that there's quality behind every measure of it," Blacc said.

The QX55's design retains all of Infiniti's daring design hallmarks, delivering a fresh interpretation of the FX silhouette. The QX55 inserts Infiniti back into a category it helped to create with an unapologetic style.

The signature double-arch grille is complemented by a stunning, origami-inspired mesh pattern that delivers visual depth and showcases modern Japanese-inspired artistry. Flanked by standard LED headlights that mimic the human eye, the QX55 announces its arrival in style.

Along the body sides, the QX55's alluring profile has plenty

to say but doesn't speak out of turn. The elegant and flowing lines reach from the hood, over the front fenders, across the doors, and over the rear wheels. Twenty-inch wheels are standard on all QX55 models, which fill the wheel arches and assert the SUV's dynamic presence.

The rear of the QX55 accentuates the subtlety of the au-

tomaker's design and interpretation of Japanese minimalism by coupling an uncluttered liftgate with handsome, understated technology to deliver a lasting impression. Digital "piano key" taillights combine 45 separate LEDs in a single housing to create an elegant light signature, recently featured on the stunning QX60 Monograph design study.

The Infiniti logo on the tailgate is similarly advanced and houses the power liftgate release, which further frees the rear end from clutter.

Inside, the QX55 features Infiniti's dual-screen, InTouch infotainment system with Apple CarPlay and Android Auto compatibility, and multiple USB inputs for charging. The upper 8-inch and lower 7-inch high-resolution screens inform the driver and entertain passengers with an available Bose audio system providing a concert like acoustic experience.

Leatherette, leather, or semi-aniline leather appointments for the seats adorn the QX55's spacious interior, and its sliding second-row seats provide flexible cargo capacity or increased legroom, depending on need.

Under the hood of every QX55 is Infiniti's award-winning and innovative Variable Compression Turbo four-cylinder engine that makes 268 horsepower and 380 Nm of torque. The dynamic engine imperceptibly changes its compression and displacement to deliver enhanced efficiency or on-demand power, based on the driver's needs. That power is shifted through a confident Continuously Variable Transmission with manual shift mode.

Z-Corp employees reminisce Oman's achievements, progress

The Zubair Corporation (Z-Corp) and its group companies joined nationwide celebrations to commemorate Oman's 50th National Day by bringing together its vibrant community of employees at a special event held online.

The event, which was held virtually as per the country's COVID-19 guidelines, reminisced national achievements, progress and development of the country in the last 50 years.

As part of the celebrations, group of employees spoke about Oman's strong commitment to excellence and progress. They extended their greetings to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq and pledged their allegiance and support in his journey to take the country towards progress and prosperity. They reflected upon the life, values and farsightedness of the visionary leader, Late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said.

The programme was attended by Rashad M al Zubair, chairman of The Zubair Corporation, members of the board of di-



rectors, CEOs, top executives and group of employees of the Zubair group of companies.

Speaking on the occasion Rashad M al Zubair said, "On behalf of Z-Corp and its group companies, it gives me pleasure to extend my heartiest and sincere greetings to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq on the glorious occasion of the 50th Na-

tional Day of our beloved nation. May the Almighty protect and preserve him. We wish His Majesty good health and the people of Oman further glory, progress and prosperity. We also remember with sincere loyalty our cherished leader, Late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said, the architect of Oman's Modern Renaissance."

He added, "The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has posed great challenges to the world. However, at the same time, the crisis has been a strong driver of creativity and innovation. We too must make the satisfaction a facilitator of creativity and innovation to ensure continuity and durability of our business. The administration has made great efforts to contain the ravages of COVID-19 and reduce its effects. If it were not for your commitment to hard work and the continuation of the spirit of giving, there is no doubt that the impact would have been more severe."

Urging the employees to contemplate on the journey ahead, Zubair said, "The Oman Vision 2040, which is supervised by His Majesty, requires from you - especially in light of the current circumstances - a doubling of effort, firmness, patience and determination in order to achieve the national vision. It needs effective partnership in order to preserve the advancement of modern Omani renaissance."



Incredible surprises from Dhofar Automotive on the occasion of National Day

Dhofar Automotive, the official distributor of Chrysler, Jeep, Dodge, RAM, Fiat and Alfa Romeo vehicles in Oman, as parts of its celebrations of the 50th Omani National Day of the Renaissance, is welcoming all its valued customers to its showroom premise in Azaiba till November 19, to share in their happiness and joy, by offering great benefits on its range of brands, including Jeep, Dodge, Chrysler, Fiat, Alfa Romeo.

Commenting on the National Day celebrations, Hatem al Nagger, general manager at Dhofar Automotive said, "Dhofar Automotive has always strived to maintain a close relationship with its customers and share in their joy during special occasions. As part of our celebration, our showrooms in all the wilayats of the sultanate have been decorated. We have also prepared great surprises for our valued customers on all our brands, while maintaining relevant precautionary measures, to ensure the highest levels of health and safety for our customers and employees alike."

Dhofar Automotive offers a wide range of models from prominent brands, renowned for their distinctive features and incredible capabilities that place each of them within leading positions and above the other vehicles in their class.

These models have also

gained the trust of high-performance car enthusiasts due to their world-class quality. As part of the celebration, Dhofar Automotive is presenting an excellent opportunity for car enthusiasts to own one of the Jeep, Dodge, Chrysler, Fiat, Alfa Romeo vehicles and enjoy a unique driving experience.

Jeep has a wide range of distinctive models that include the Cherokee, Compass, Renegade, Grand Cherokee and Gladiator. Holding popular appeal by the general public, these vehicles are distinguished by incredible capabilities and performance under various conditions, making them stand out at the top of their class.

Among the Dodge models that are renowned for their high-quality, the Durango, Charger, Challenger and Neon are favoured for their vehicle excellence and performance. These vehicles are among the best choices for people who are looking to enjoy owning a power car and drive with passion.

Chrysler models have been acknowledged for their luxury appearance and striking presence on the road, complemented by elegant designs and unmatched capabilities. Equipped with a range of advanced engines, each Chrysler vehicle embodies the concepts of confidence and superiority through its performance.

Throughout its history, the

Fiat line-up has stood out as a perfect blend of Italian craftsmanship and elegance in a small car, suitable for crowded cities. Each Fiat model represents the capabilities of the Italian brand and comes at competitive prices. The brand continues to feature attractive elements, without compromising on performance, to meet the aspirations of modern brand enthusiasts. In addition, it features a high level of fuel efficiency alongside enriching the owner's driving experience.

Alfa Romeo has always signified an unparalleled level of Italian craftsmanship, class-leading performance, cutting edge technology and true driving passion, stemming from the brand's long legacy of sportsmanship. Each Alfa Romeo vehicle offers customers a unique blend of sophistication, elegance and performance.

"We would like to invite our valued customers to visit us to celebrate this wonderful national occasion and take advantage of what we have to offer, especially on the occasion of the 50th National Day," he added.

In the sultanate, Jeep, Dodge, Chrysler, RAM, Fiat and Alfa Romeo models are available at Dhofar Automotive showrooms with different equipment classes. For more information on Dhofar Automotive visit www.dhofar-automotive.com or call +968 2458 4530.

Oppo showcases three concept products

Oppo Inno Day 2020 themed "Leap into the Future" was held in Shenzhen. Against the backdrop of the Internet of Experience, Oppo put forward "Technology for Mankind, Kindness for the World" and "virtuous innovation", unveiling for the first time the "3+N+X" technology development strategy. At the event, Oppo also debuted the Oppo X 2021 rollable concept handset, Oppo AR Glass 2021 and Oppo CybeReal AR application.

With "Technology for Mankind, Kindness for the World" in mind, Oppo Affirms 3+N+X Technology Development Strategy. At the event, Oppo Inno Day 2020, Tony Chen, Oppo founder and CEO, pointed out that Oppo is determined to pursue virtuous innovation and create more great products through its 3+N+X technology development strategy. Oppo believes in



"Technology for Mankind, Kindness for the World" that the purpose of corporate innovation should be people.

Tony Chen said, "Oppo uses technology to empower people to capture the beauty around them and to unleash their imagination of the future; thereby helping everyone get the best out of life. Accordingly, we decide to set forth the 3+N+X technology

development strategy for Oppo's long-term development."

The "3" refers to the three underlying technologies, namely hardware, software and services technologies, which help Oppo to bring an integrated smart life to users worldwide. "N", represents a number of Oppo's essential capabilities, including AI, security and privacy, multimedia, and interconnectivity. Lastly, "X", refers to the leading-edge and differentiated technologies and strategic resources such as the flash charge technology that foster innovation and greatly improve user experience.

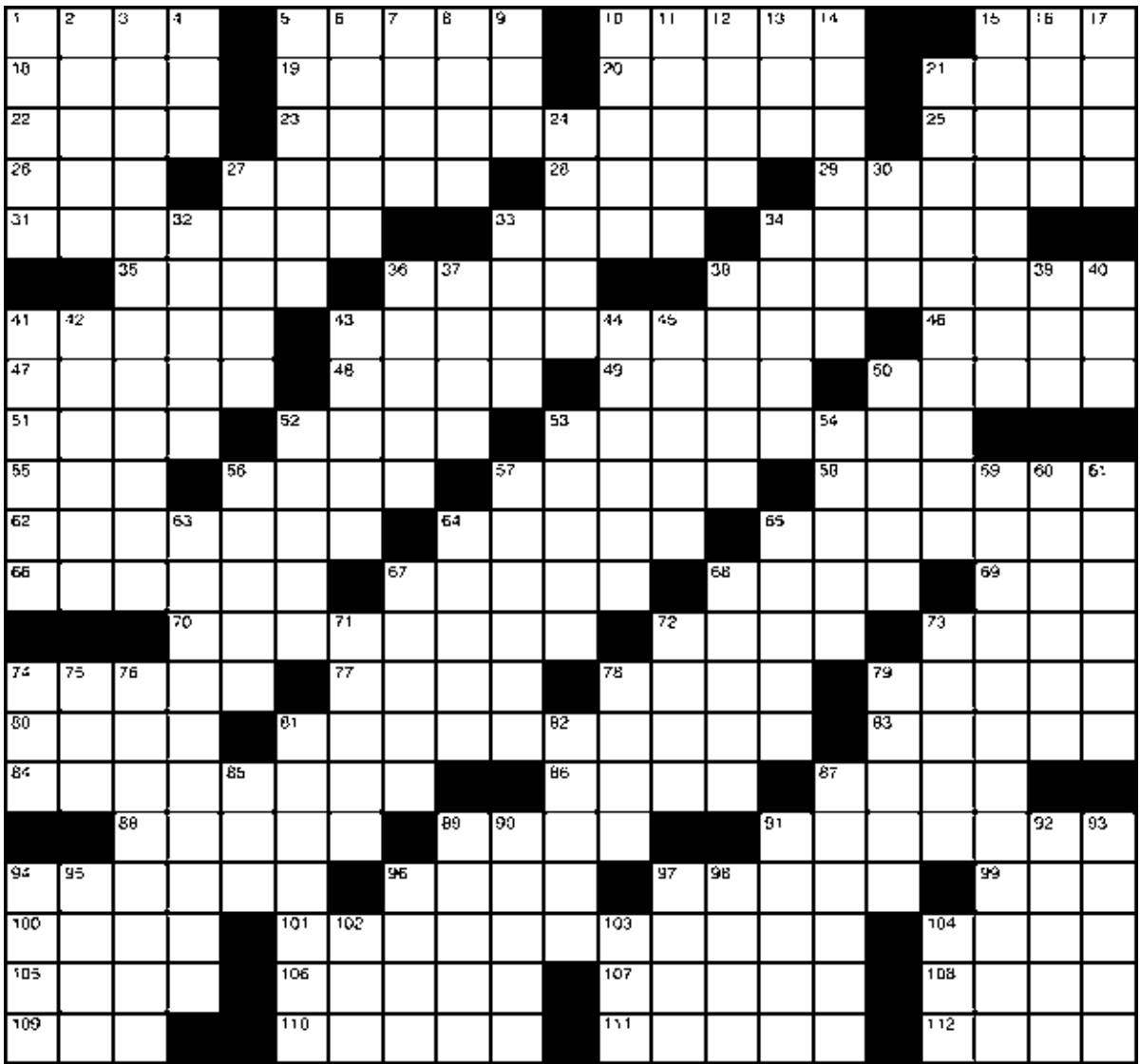
"It's important to build technical capabilities, but it's even more important to innovatively integrate them. Oppo believes we should bring the benefits to users, and leave all the complexity to us," said Levin Liu, Oppo vice president and head of Oppo

Research Institute, in his keynote speech.

During the event, Oppo also introduced three concept products, which demonstrated all-new possibilities of human-tech interaction and exploration of future technology.

The Oppo X 2021 rollable concept handset is the latest achievement of Oppo's R&D in flexible display and structural stacking, bringing users more natural interactive experience. The concept handset features Oppo's three proprietary technologies, including the Roll Motor powertrain, 2-in-1 Plate, and self-developed Warp Track high-strength screen laminate. They lead to a continuously variable OLED display that measures as small as 6.7 inches and as large as 7.4 inches, which allows users to adjust the size of the display based on actual needs.

DAILY CROSSWORD



©2020 Tribune Content Agency, LLC All rights reserved

- ACROSS**

1 Ham in a can
5 Stage play
10 Keglers' venue
15 Small weight?
18 ___ Le Pew
19 Colorless gas
20 For all to see
21 Garr or Hatcher
22 Engrossed
23 Herbicide used in Vietnam
25 Humdinger
26 Not well
27 Exhausted
28 French spread
29 Victoria ruled one
31 Plains homes: var.
33 One of "The Avengers"
34 Sop
35 Heavyweight champ Max
36 Legal delay
38 Good taste
41 Geometric figure
43 Large-bottomed
46 Military ranks: abbr.
47 Close pal
48 Her, to Henri
49 Hebrew boy's name
50 Knocks out
51 Get up
52 Take it on the lam
- 53 Funny fellow
55 Dawn goddess
56 Rents
57 Carries
58 Place of worship
62 Romeo and Juliet, e.g.
64 Split
65 Condemnation
66 ___ Lion: Hercules's victim
67 Abetted
68 Scores for golf
69 ___ about-town: dandy
70 Booth or Oswald
72 Haughtiness
73 Lhasa ___
74 Passover
77 Engineering deg.
78 SW USA holly
79 Trekker
80 Author Sholem
81 Big-bang firecracker
83 Beethoven dedicatee
84 Artist who painted his mother
86 Vintner's prefix
87 Très ___
88 Place
89 Rheas' relatives
91 Sets
94 Italians from a
- tower city
96 Medical condition: suffix
97 Tilts
99 Architects' org.
100 Poke about
101 Finn
104 British gun
105 Concerning
106 Dined
107 Author Loos
108 Certain
parallelogram: abbr.
109 Car necessity
110 Took an oath
111 Infatuated (with)
112 Territory
- DOWN**

1 Small spar
2 Painter Charles Wilson
3 State flower of Arkansas
4 Encountered
5 Polly, of "thirtysomething"
6 Storms
7 Yemen port
8 Blanc, for one
9 Member of an army?
10 Actor Peter
11 To no ___: fruitlessly
- 12 Hawaiian goose
13 Work unit
14 Took the helm
15 Indulgence
16 ___ Rabbit
17 Beget
21 Some comics
24 Minds
27 Rundown
30 Russian jet
32 "Common Sense" author
33 Cut down
34 Mix well
36 Hingis rival
37 Old wives' ___
38 Dueling swords
39 Cote sound
40 Definitely not a beeline
41 Word with sun or silver
42 Blue Jay's rival
43 Trapper's trophies
44 Jeered
45 Ready for battle
50 Madeline and Otto
52 Plants with fronds
53 Assembly of witches
54 Puck passers, at times
56 Retriever restrainer
57 Less messy
59 Peter with wife
- woes
60 Rubs out
61 Poe title character
63 Georgia
64 Stair part
65 Lesser Antilles
Indian
67 Son of Jacob
68 Beach near Santa Barbara
71 Felt sore
72 "Unto us ___ is given. . ."
73 Felt poorly
74 Ferret's foot, e.g.
75 Volcanic issue
76 Salon snippers
78 Lincoln and others
79 Will principals
81 Conflicts
82 You guys, nonstandard style
85 Gymnast's goal
87 Spreading tree?
89 Glacier ridge
90 Pooh creator
91 "Poker Flats" writer
92 Sibling's daughter
93 Seasonal symbol
94 Self-righteous one
95 Scottish isle
96 Eight: prefix
97 Horne of song
98 Composer Satie
102 AFL-CIO grp.
103 Stand at the plate
104 Mrs. in Madrid

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

Thursday's skies possess a decidedly serious tone. The moon marches through the tail end of Capricorn, merging with Saturn. This creates a heavy but focused atmosphere around career conditions. Elsewhere, the sun and bond-building Venus find themselves in talks with Saturn too, placing added emphasis on the reality of unspoken relationship matters that need addressing.



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

Thursday's skies are all work and no play. The moon ploughs through the end of Capricorn, turning your attention to errands and overdue workloads. The emotional moon, Venus, and the sun all find themselves wrapped in serious Saturn's embrace throughout. This likely dashes the day with little roadblocks and reassessments to consider—especially around job matters.



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

It's easy to get caught up in a bout of negative thinking. The heavy Capricorn moon spends the morning snuggled up with Saturn, prompting an uncomfortable review of your finances and the potential of your talents. Meanwhile, Venus and the sun are roped into Saturn's trials too, prompting minor hindrances to be managed around goal planning or community efforts.



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

You might feel as if you've run headfirst into an invisible wall. Your ruling planet, Venus, finds herself bearing the brunt of heavy Saturn's limitations. It's an ideal day to pause and review the fine print before moving forward with any big leaps. The sun and moon spend the day cuddled up in Saturn's cold embrace too, helping you firm up plans and view things more realistically.



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

The universe wants you to take your chosen craft to the next level. The moon meanders through ambitious Capricorn, uniting with focused Saturn, bringing stamina and follow-through to your creative efforts. Elsewhere, the sun and Venus are roped into heavy talks with Saturn too, likely prompting inner hindrances around self-worth or financial roadblocks.



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

You understand the slow and steady climb required of the persistent mountain goat. That same patience is required to make sense of Thursday's skies. The sun, moon, and Venus, all meet up for serious talks with your ruling planet, Saturn. It's likely that several stories find culmination, especially around career concerns. Emotional roadblocks are likely today.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

A heaviness seems to loom over Thursday's cosmic landscape. The moon trudges through the end of Capricorn, stopping only for a union with serious Saturn, which likely prompts you into loaded topics around relationship matters. Elsewhere, the confidence-giving sun and romantic Venus link arms with Saturn too—imbuing the day with little blockages to be navigated around love.



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

You might feel blocked on all sides. Take the cue the universe is dishing out and slow your pace. Your ruling planet, Venus, locks into a stifling square with heavy Saturn, prompting you to reevaluate your current course of action around your living environment. The sun and moon also receive a harsh word from Saturn, helping provide a more realistic outlook to your POV.



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

Thursday's skies take on a decidedly slow and serious tone. The Capricorn moon merges with your ruling planet, Saturn, creating a quiet and emotionally reflective moment to inspect the state of your changing identity. The sun and other-oriented Venus lock into talks with Saturn today too, creating room for reassessment and review around big picture goals and beliefs.



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

There's no escaping reality. You're dealing with your current relationship scenario in a raw, practical light. This is all as the Capricorn moon merges with serious Saturn. The identity-giving sun and bond-building Venus find themselves deep in talks with responsible Saturn this afternoon too, stirring up heavy conversations around family or past connection confrontations.



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

Take a moment before proceeding with any major ventures. The cosmic landscape is unusually serious and harshly realistic. The moon trails through the end of heavy Capricorn, merging with taskmaster Saturn. This union is likely to place roadblocks around positive thinking. The sun and Venus lock in with Saturn too, dredging up long buried feelings that need addressing.



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

Patience is required to make it through Thursdays sanely. The Capricorn moon conjoins responsible Saturn, prompting somber moods and a need to review the goals you're working to accomplish. Elsewhere, the sun and Venus are roped into Saturn's heavy lectures too, potentially putting plans on pause and calling for a realistic approach to relationship matters.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. Lata Mangeskar holds the world record for maximum number of ____

a. song recordings
b. singing songs
c. songs composing
d. None of the above

2. John F Kennedy was

a. one the most popular Presidents of USA
b. the first Roman Catholic President
c. writer of Why England slept and Profile in Courage
d. All the above

3. Nalanda is located at

a. Gujarat
b. Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh
c. Near Patna, Bihar
d. Near Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh

Answers: 1: a 2: d 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

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

BOGGLER

A	S	B	S
M	C	Y	D
G	E	L	R
N	U	T	O

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

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

DAILY CROSSWORD ANSWERS (NOVEMBER 17)

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
103	104	105	106	107	108	109	110	111	112							

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



MEDICAL SUPPLY SERVICES for Home, Hospital, Clinic, School, College, Ministry, Club, Company/Factory

3M N95



1860/1860S

3M N95



8210

3M N95



9010



**For any information please
Contact us by phone call & WhatsApp**

DR. KUMAR RAKESH
92989109 97700963

Clean City LLC,
Opposite Al Nahada Hospital, Muscat, Oman

WJ Towell Group Company

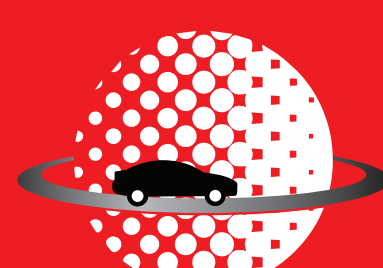


Quality car rentals at competitive prices.

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

Muscat 9014 6672, 9679 0684
Sohar 9731 6218 | Salalah 9429 9325

www.orbit-oman.com



**أوربيت
ORBIT**

Car Rental & Lease

SITUATION WANTED

Looking for driving jobs Contact91103996

Arabic speaking Public Relations Executive required for Marketing.
Email CV: nmohamed@pmedia.me. 99314164.

♦ RESIDENTIAL ♦ COMMERCIAL ♦ OFFICE

DISINFECTION SERVICES for COVID 19

30 YEARS
EXPERIENCE IN
OMAN



For ENQUIRIES call
♦ 94021502 ♦ 95437921 ♦ 98400408

♦ FREE ESTIMATES
♦ 24x7 AVAILABILITY
♦ PROFESSIONAL TEAM
♦ EMERGENCY SERVICES

We only use Electro Chemically Activated Solution/disinfectant which is safe and certified.

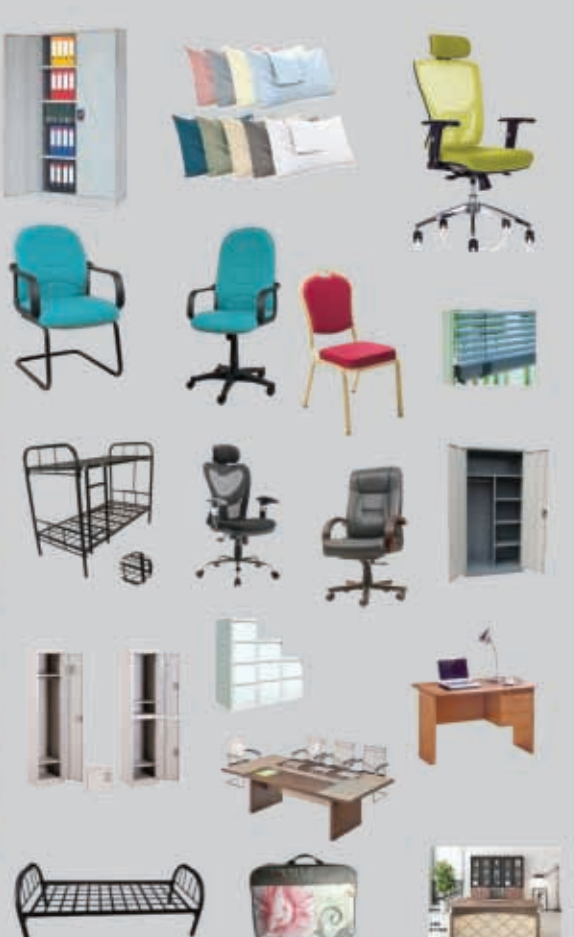
MODERN CLEANING SERVICES AND TRADING LLC
A Subsidiary Unit of W.J. Towell & Co.

EDUCATION FURNITURE

uniQue
CITY TRADING

LABOUR CAMP FURNITURE





Contact: 9611 5353 / 9611 5252 Email: mybusinessoman@gmail.com

TO ADVERTISE IN
MUSCAT DAILY CLASSIFIEDS
CALL 99104346
OR E-MAIL
dailyclassifieds@apexmedia.co.om

FREE CLASSIFIED LISTING

Muscat Daily now offers free classified listings for individuals in the following categories: **Situations Wanted/Accommodation Wanted or Available/Sale of Household Items/Car for Sale or Wanted/Matrimonial Alliances (Word limit is 35)**
Please email your listing to dailyclassifieds@apexmedia.co.om or call 99104346

FOOTBALL ROUND-UP

BRAZIL, ARGENTINA WIN



Brazil's Arthur (right) celebrates with teammate Gabriel Jesus after scoring against Uruguay during their closed-door 2022 FIFA World Cup South American qualifier in Montevideo on Tuesday

SOUTH AMERICAN
WORLD CUP QUALIFIERS

Montevideo, Uruguay - Brazil continued their perfect start to the qualifiers for the 2022 World Cup with a 2-0 win over Uruguay while rivals Argentina stayed in touch with an easy win in Peru on Tuesday.

First-half goals from Arthur and Richarlison helped Brazil to a 2-0 win over Uruguay, who had Manchester United striker Edinson Cavani sent off.

Argentina, with Lionel Messi pulling the strings, brushed aside a limited Peru 2-0 in Lima, with goals from Inter Milan's Lautaro Martinez and Nicholas Gonzalez in a game in which they were never troubled.

Ecuador, playing on their home turf in high-altitude Quito, hammered Colombia 6-1. Paraguay and Bolivia fought out a 2-2 draw while Venezuela - the only South American team never

to qualify for a World Cup finals picked up their first points in a 2-1 victory over Chile in Caracas.

Victory in Montevideo left Brazil on top of South America's qualifying standings on 12 points with four wins from four games. Argentina are second on ten points after beating Peru, with surprise team Ecuador third on nine points.

Uruguay are fifth on six points, behind Paraguay on goal difference after four matches.

The first four teams in South America's round-robin competition qualify directly for the World Cup finals in Qatar, while the fifth-placed nation faces a playoff against the country qualifying from Oceania.

Five-time world champions Brazil were fortunate to be two goals up at half time in Montevideo after Uruguay had hit the woodwork twice at ei-

ther end of the half. The win also extended Brazil's long reign of dominance over the Celeste, who have not beaten their fierce rivals since 2001.

Cavani's sending off with 20 minutes to go capped a miserable night for his side,

despite having the better of things for much of the first half.

Chilean referee Roberto Tobar showed him a yellow card after his lunge caught Richarlison on the ankle. But after a VAR check, that changed to red, leaving Cavani incredulous, and he left the pitch reluctantly.

Brazil broke through however with their first real chance in half an hour, and with a large slice of luck.

Feeding on a slick layoff from Gabriel Jesus, Arthur's shot from outside the area took a wicked deflection off the back of Uruguay defender Jose Gimenez, wrongfooting the luckless Campana, who could only watch it bounce into the net.

Brazil gradually got on top on midfield as the half wore on, and struck a body blow to Uruguay's hopes of a revival when Everton striker Richarlison headed in a long cross from Renan Lodi out on the left, to score his eighth goal for Brazil.

Uruguay missed the physical presence of Luis Suarez, out with a positive COVID-19 test.

AFP



Peru's Horacio Calcaterra (left) and Argentina's Lionel Messi vie for the ball during their South American World Cup qualifier in Lima on Tuesday

Mali and Tunisia
qualify for Africa
Cup of Nations

Johannesburg, South Africa - Mali and Tunisia qualified for the 2021 Africa Cup of Nations finals on Tuesday to follow in the footsteps of title holders Algeria, Senegal and hosts Cameroon.

Another 19 places will be up for grabs during the final two matchdays between March 22 and 30 with record seven-time champions Egypt among those close to securing places. Sekou Koita and Moussa Doumbia scored in Mali's 2-1 win over Namibia in Windhoek, which clinched an eighth consecutive appearance at the African football showcase.

Tunisia will be going to the finals for a record-extending 15th consecutive time after drawing 1-1 with Tanzania in Dar es Salaam. Neither Group A frontrunners Mali nor Group J pacesetters Tunisia are assured of winning their four-nation groups, but both are certain of top-two finishes and qualification.

Aston Villa forward Mahmoud Trezeguet scored the final goal as Egypt romped to a 3-0 Group G win over Togo in Lome, with Mohamed 'Afsha' Magdy and Mohamed Sherif also on the scoresheet.

Chelsea's Hakim Ziyech scored the first goal and created the second as Group E leaders Morocco won 2-0

against the Central African Republic, who had to stage the match in Cameroon because of security concerns.

After the dramatic four-goal comeback by Sierra Leone to force a 4-4 Group L draw in Nigeria last week, the reverse fixture provided little drama and ended 0-0 in Free-town. A stoppage-time goal from Mohamed A bdellrahman gave Sudan a surprise 1-0 victory over Group C leaders Ghana, who were captained for the first time by Jordan Ayew, the Crystal Palace forward.

Madagascar and the Ivory Coast remain joint Group K leaders after drawing 1-1 in Toamasina with a brilliant goal from Ibrahima Amada cancelling out a Franck Kessie penalty.

Ethiopia are just one point behind thanks to a 3-0 hammering of Niger in Addis Ababa. The Democratic Republic of Congo narrowed the gap behind Group D front-runners Gambia and Gabon to a single point by defeating Angola 1-0 in Luanda.

Rwanda drew 0-0 with Cape Verde in Kigali and Benin remained one point behind Nigeria, and on course for a second straight Cup appearance, by drawing 0-0 with Lesotho in Maseru.

AFP

Club World
Cup in Qatar
rescheduled
for February

Doha, Qatar - Qatar will host the coronavirus-delayed Club World Cup, an important test event ahead of the 2022 World Cup, in February, FIFA said on Tuesday.

The competition, which had been due to be played in Doha in December of this year, sees club champions from the six regional confederations and the champions of the host nation, Qatar's Al Duhail, brought together for the annual contest.

"The FIFA Club World Cup 2020 will now be held from February 1 to 11, 2021, taking place in Qatar," FIFA said in a statement.

"FIFA and the host country will provide the required safeguards for the health and safety of all involved."

It is the second successive Club World Cup to be held in Qatar. Liverpool lifted the trophy in 2019 in Doha.

European champions Bayern Munich and Qatari side Al Duhail, who qualify through being hosts, are the only teams yet confirmed for the competition with other continental tournaments around the world delayed by the coronavirus.

A revamped 24-team Club World Cup, including eight sides from Europe, was due to be played in China in 2021, but is set to be rescheduled for a later date after the delayed Euro 2020 and the Copa America were pencilled in for next June and July.

Meanwhile, FIFA announced that the postponed women's U17 and U20 World Cups were to be cancelled altogether, but that the 2022 editions would be offered to the countries that were set to act as hosts this year. It means Costa Rica will host the U20 women's World Cup in 2022 and India will host the U17 event.

AFP

Nadal faces Tsitsipas showdown after
shock defeat to Thiem at ATP Finals

London, UK - Rafael Nadal insisted he can still win the ATP Finals for the first time despite a damaging 7-6 (9-7), 7-6 (7-4) defeat against Austria's Dominic Thiem on Tuesday.

Thiem overpowered Nadal behind closed doors at London's O2 Arena to put a dent in the Spanish star's bid to finally lift the one major prize missing from his packed trophy cabinet.

Thiem became the first player to qualify for the semifinals a few hours later when reigning champion Stefanos Tsitsipas beat Russian seventh seed Andrey Rublev 6-1, 4-6, 7-6 (8-6).

Nadal, who lost the 2010 and 2013 finals of the event, has to beat Tsitsipas in his last group match to reach the semifinals of the prestigious season-ending tournament.

Despite his perilous position, Nadal goes into the showdown against Tsitsipas, with the winner guaranteed to progress to

the last four, in confident mood after battling hard against the inspired Thiem.

"He played I think an amazing match, and I played well too. So my feeling is not negative. I lost, but I had plenty of chances, said Nadal, who had beaten Rublev in straight sets in his first match.

"I'm happy with the way I played. I think my chances are bigger to have a very good result now than five days ago because the level of tennis, even if I lost today, for me is much higher."

Nadal, who last month equalled Roger Federer's record of 20 Grand Slams by winning the French Open, has won 86 titles but just one of those has come on an indoor hard court.

The world No 2 has qualified for the ATP Finals for 16 years in a row, but his record at the eight-man elite event pales in comparison with Federer and Novak Djokovic after six injury withdrawals.

AFP



Spain's Rafael Nadal returns against Austria's Dominic Thiem during their men's singles round-robin match at the O2 Arena in London on Tuesday

BSI CT and
Israr Ghala
record
victories

LOCAL CRICKET

Saud Khan's allround performance along with Rathana Acharya's half-century guided BSI CT to an exciting 32-run victory against KCA Deutag in an Oman Cricket F Division T20 game at OAC 3 ground in Seeb on Friday.

In another F Division game at the same venue on Friday, Ihsanullah struck 76 off only 46 balls to steer Israr Ghala to a 14-run win over ACT Cricworld.

BRIEF SCORES:

F Division: BSI CT 168-8 (Rathana Acharya 67, Saud Khan 48; Rehan Ahmed 2-23; Wajeedullah 2-31) beat KCA Deutag 136-8 (Jibin Basheer 27, Sultan Ali 26; Khan 2-16, Alistair Pinto 2-27).

F Division: Israr Ghala 190-8 (Ihsanullah 76, David Raj 25; Neil Paily 3-33, Sameer Hameed 2-27) beat ACT Cricworld 176-8 (Alif Khan 65; Yasir Jamal 3-34, Mohammed Saqib 2-27).

50th National Day Celebrations

oman OASIS
BALANCED DRINKING WATER

Oman Water Co. LLC, PO Box 87, Rusayl 124, Sultanate of Oman.
CALL TOLL-FREE 800 71 222 or GSM: 9275 5522
www.omanoasis.com

Sodium Free Drinking Water

The healthy choice

It is beneficial to limit sodium intake if you have blood pressure, diabetes, heart or kidney disease.

OMAN'S ONLY SODIUM FREE DRINKING WATER

5 IN 5 GALLON BOTTLE

Call Toll-Free 800 71 222 or GSM 9275 5522
OmanOasis @ OmanOasisOfficial www.omanoasis.com
OASIS WATER COMPANY LLC P.O.Box: 87, PC: 124, Rusayl, Sultanate of Oman.

England announce India series, aim for fans' return in 2021

London, UK - The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) said on Wednesday they hoped spectators would return to matches next year as they announced a full international programme for 2021 culminating with a five-Test series at home to India.

Unlike this year's coronavirus-hit schedule, where a full set of men's international matches were played behind closed doors at Old Trafford and Southampton, the ECB are now planning to take fixtures all round the country as in a normal year.

The draft itinerary issued on Wednesday includes nine different host grounds and anticipates a ticket ballot to allow spectators to attend matches once again.

The centrepiece of next year's programme is a Test series against India in August and September, with matches at Trent Bridge, Lord's, Headingley, the Oval and Old Trafford.

Meanwhile, white-ball series against Sri Lanka and Pakistan are scheduled throughout June and July, with fixtures also due to take place at Durham, Edgbaston, Bristol and Cardiff.

It is possible that more games could be added amid uncertainty over whether the planned 2021 World Test Championship final will go ahead after several



Photo for illustrative purpose only

qualifying matches this year were cancelled because of the COVID-19 outbreak.

An optimistic Tom Harrison, the ECB chief executive, said in a statement: "It's an exciting prospect for England fans and, while COVID means there's still a great deal of uncertainty, we really hope to be able to welcome fans back into the grounds safely next year to bring that unique atmosphere to stadia across the country."

Pakistan tour

The ECB also announced earlier on Wednesday that England would tour Pakistan in October, ending a 16-year absence.

England will arrive in Karachi on October 12, playing two T20s on October 14-15 before both teams depart for India ahead of the T20 World Cup.

The series follows Pakistan' widely praised tour of England earlier this year amid the pandemic.

It's an exciting prospect for England fans and, we really hope to be able to welcome fans back into the grounds safely next year

TOM HARRISON, ECB CHIEF EXECUTIVE

"As was demonstrated this summer, we have a strong relationship with the PCB (Pakistan Cricket Board) and the ECB is delighted to be able to play our part in ensuring the safe

return of international cricket to this wonderful nation of passionate cricket fans," said Harrison, underlining however that safety concerns would remain 'paramount'.

"It's a real pleasure to announce that the England men's IT20 squad will be playing in Pakistan in October 2021," said Harrison in a statement.

"This will be the first time since 2005 that an England team has toured Pakistan and as such it represents a significant moment for both nations."

Harrison added that the priority would be to ensure the squad operated under the greatest security possible.

"As always, the safety and welfare of our players and staff will be paramount," he said.

"We are working closely with the PCB to ensure all the necessary plans are in place, especially concerning the anticipated levels of security around the team, the proposed travel protocols and of course the situation regarding the fast-moving and ever-changing COVID-19 pandemic."

His Pakistan counterpart Wasim Khan said England's tour was confirmation of the positive steps Pakistan had taken in assuring security for visiting teams. "England's visit to Pakistan for the October 14 and 15, 2021 T20s will provide further lift to our passionate fans," said Khan in a statement.

"The nation has waited patiently for cricket to return sustainably to Pakistan and the 2021 tours by South Africa, New

Zealand and England will only ensure international cricket is played uninterrupted. England had tentatively suggested they would tour in early 2021 but due to prior commitments to Sri Lanka and India they would have been compelled to field a second string squad.

The T20Is will serve as a warm-up for the World Cup being hosted by India in October and November. "Importantly, this announcement speaks volumes for the relationship that we have with the ECB," said Khan.

"I would like to thank the ECB for their strong will and desire to make this short tour a reality."

England allrounder Moeen Ali agreed that Pakistan's fulfilling their tour commitment played a role but added England going there would have more positive far-reaching consequences.

"It's a massive moment for cricket going forward," Ali said via conference call from Cape Town ahead of a Twenty20 international series against South Africa. "I think it's right we go back after such a long time for the game itself and for Pakistan and cricket in the country."

Dates and venues have yet to be fixed for the England women's team but the ECB have said that South Africa and New Zealand are both expected to travel for 50 and 20-over series.

AFP

Karachi Kings clinch maiden PSL crown

PAKISTAN SUPER LEAGUE

Karachi, Pakistan - One of the world's leading batsman, Babar Azam knocked a commanding half century to help the Karachi Kings win their first Pakistan Super League title with a five-wicket victory over the Lahore Qalandars on Tuesday night.

Azam smashed seven boundaries in his 49-ball 63, but it was skipper Imad Wasim who hit the winning boundary to help the Karachi Kings overhaul a modest 135-run target in 18.4 overs.

The final - one of the most anticipated in the PSL's short

history, given the rivalry between Pakistan's two biggest cities - failed to live up to the hype as Lahore managed just 134 for seven after winning the toss and batting on a flat National Stadium pitch.

With Azam, the world No 2 batsman in Twenty20 international rankings, on Karachi's side it proved an easy chase, despite losing three wickets from 110 for two to 124 for five.

The Kings will take home a glittering trophy plus a US\$500,000 purse, while Lahore received US\$200,000.

The fifth edition of Pakistan's inaugural Twenty20 league started on February 20, but was abandoned after 30 of its 34 matches after England player Alex Hales, playing for Karachi Kings, reported symptoms of COVID-19.

It resumed on Saturday behind closed doors, with the Kings beating the Multan Sultans in the qualifier while Lahore downed Peshawar Zalmi and the Sultans in two eliminators to book a place in the final.

Lahore lost their way after a confident 68-run start in ten overs, provided by Bangladeshi

opener Tamim Iqbal (35) and Fakhar Zaman (27).

They lost both of them and Mohammad Hafeez in the space of seven deliveries with the addition of just two runs, spoiling a solid start.

Iqbal struck four boundaries and a six off 38 balls while Zaman had four boundaries in his 24-ball stay.

Karachi pace trio Umaid Asif (2-18), Waqas Maqsood (2-18) and Arshad Iqbal (2-26) bowled nagging line and length to keep the flow of runs down as well as taking wickets.

AFP



Karachi Kings' players celebrate with the trophy after winning the PSL T20 final in Karachi on Tuesday night

Ishant 'looking good' after long spells

Bengaluru, India - Ishant Sharma 'is looking good', a BCCI observer said after the India quick went through two long bowling spells at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bengaluru on Wednesday. Looking on were Sunil Joshi, the chairman of selectors, and Rahul Dravid, the NCA chief, among others, as Ishant, who is on the path to recovery after suffering an abdominal muscle tear during IPL 2020, bowled for close to two hours overall, much of it at full tilt.

He bowled on one of the side pitches at the stadium, first for around 45 minutes during the lunch break of a 50-overs-a-side corporate cricket match and then for around an hour at the end of it. After his first bowling stint, Ishant went through a few basic stretching routines too, and then returned for a short fielding session, alternating between high and flat catches. While the club fixture was on, he was engaged in long discussions with Joshi outside the boundary rope.

Ishant, who is hoping to make his way to full fitness in time for India's Test series in Australia (starting December 17), has



Ishant Sharma at the nets in Bengaluru, India, on Wednesday

been named in the provisional squad, but has to be passed fit to make the trip.

The signs on Wednesday were positive, with Ishant not appearing in any discomfort while bowling.

His sessions were supervised by Paras Mhambrey, the former India fast bowler who is also the head coach of India's U19 team.

Ishant has been at the NCA, housed within the Chinnaswamy

Stadium complex, since returning from his IPL stint with the Delhi Capitals because of the injury, details of which came to light when he complained of pain in his rib cage during a training session in Dubai. He was officially ruled out of the IPL on October 12, after having featured in just one game.

He had started from a short run-up in the morning, but then proceeded to mark his normal

run-up with a measuring tape after just three deliveries. He bowled uninterrupted for the next 20 minutes, before taking a short break, stopping for chats with Mhambrey, who he has been working with since reaching the NCA last month, and the trainers.

After that, in both sessions he proceeded to run in full tilt and swung the ball both ways, peppering the lone stump placed

at the batting end. He got a few deliveries to rear up from a length too, and got them to carry nicely to the man placed behind the stump with a baseball mitt on, getting thumbs-ups more than once from Mhambrey.

Should he be declared fit - recently the NCA had communicated to the BCCI that Ishant would be ready to start bowling from November 18, after which he would need to prove his match fitness - Ishant will travel separately to Australia to meet up with his teammates.

Ishant has been hampered by a number of injuries this year. Having picked up a five-for in the first Test in New Zealand at the start of the year, he missed the second because of an ankle injury. He is currently three matches short of becoming only the second Indian fast bowler to play 100 Test matches after Kapil Dev. India will play two practice games in Sydney (December 6-8 and December 11-13) before travelling to Adelaide for the series-opening pink-ball Test, India's first day-night Test overseas.

Cricinfo

India's Saha on road to recovery

Sydney, Australia - India's Test wicketkeeper Wriddhiman Saha was back at the team's nets in Sydney on Wednesday. Saha showed signs of recovery from his hamstring injury with four weeks still left for the much-anticipated December 17-21 Test series opener against hosts Australia in Adelaide.

Saha had injured both his hamstrings during a short but successful IPL campaign for the Sunrisers Hyderabad, in which he scored two match-winning half-centuries that took them to the playoffs.

Because of the injury, the 36 year old wicketkeeper missed the eliminator as well as the second qualifier of the IPL.

On Wednesday, Saha was seen facing throwdowns at the nets from the Sri Lankan left-arm specialist Nuwan Senewiratne and Indian right-arm bowler Dayananda Garani for a considerable period of time.

He didn't keep wickets though and the extent of recovery couldn't be ascertained from the video uploaded by the BCCI media.

Cricinfo



Wriddhiman Saha at the nets in Sydney, Australia, on Wednesday

SPAIN 6 GERMANY 0



Spain's Ferran Torres scores past Germany's goalkeeper Manuel Neuer during the UEFA Nations League match at La Cartuja stadium in Seville, Spain, on Tuesday night

UEFA NATIONS LEAGUE
Paris, France - Ferran Torres grabbed a hat-trick as Spain condemned Germany to their worst defeat in 89 years on Tuesday, winning 6-0 in Seville to qualify for the UEFA Nations League finals and join France, who came from behind to beat Sweden 4-2.

Manchester City forward Torres was the star for Spain, who were as brilliant as Germany were bad. The result raises further questions about Ger-

many coach Joachim Loew, who was already under pressure coming into this game. "This has been a black day for us," admitted Loew after Germany's heaviest defeat since losing 6-0 to Austria in 1931.

They came into their final game in League A, Group 4 on top, a point clear of Spain, and so only needed a draw at an empty La Cartuja to qualify for the finals in October next year.

But Alvaro Morata headed Spain in front in the 17th minute

before Torres crashed in the second on 33 minutes after Dani Olmo's header hit the bar.

His City teammate Rodri headed in another to make it 3-0 for Spain before the end of a first half in which they lost Sergio Canales and skipper Sergio Ramos to injury, with the latter coming off feeling his hamstring.

Germany's defence was posted missing as Jose Gaya burst through and squared for Torres to get the fourth on 55

minutes, and Fabian Ruiz teed up the 20 year old Torres to complete his hat-trick.

Serge Gnabry hit the bar for Germany before substitute Mikel Oyarzabal completed the rout.

"It was one of the best and most complete matches of the Spanish national team," said Spain coach Luis Enrique.

Spain, meanwhile, became the second side to qualify for the Nations League finals after France clinched their place by beating Portugal at the weekend.

Portugal win
The World Cup holders finished off their League A, Group 3 campaign by beating Sweden behind closed doors at the Stade de France as Olivier Giroud continued his remarkable scoring record for Les Bleus with a brace.

Viktor Claesson's deflected early strike gave Sweden the lead, but Giroud soon equalised and Benjamin Pavard put France ahead before half-time.

Giroud then headed in Kylian Mbappe's cross to make it 3-1

HM's Cup football final to be held on November 29 in Rustaq

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Eight-time champions Dhofar will be chasing history as they try to equal Fanja's record of nine titles when they take on former champions Al Arouba in the final of the 2019-2020 His Majesty's Cup Football Championship at the Rustaq Sports Complex on November 29.

H H Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, the Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, will be the chief guest and award the trophy to the winners.

The summit clash, featuring teams that have a total of 12 titles between them, is expected to be a hotly-contested game with four-time winners Al Arouba looking to salvage their disappointing 2019-20 season, having been relegated to OFA First Division from the top-flight Omantel League for next season.

Dhofar, coached by former national coach Rasheed Jaber, finished runner-up in the 2019-20 Omantel League, and are fancied to claim the crown. A victory will put them level with Fanja for HM's Cup honours.

Dhofar currently hold the record of 11 top-flight league titles, two more than Fanja.

In the double-leg semis, Dhofar defeated Al Nahda while Arouba beat Ibri.

www.gulfgemology.com

Gulf Institute of Gemology love to extend it's heartfelt greetings on the occasion of the 50th National Day under the rule of **His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik**. May HM guide us towards a new era of peace and prosperity

GIG
GULF INSTITUTE OF GEMOLOGY

Bait Al Reem, 3rd Floor, Office No.32
Thaqafah St, Al Khuwair, Muscat
Sultanate of Oman
☎ +968 9173 6811
✉ muscatgemlab@gulfgemology.com



737 MAX JET TO FLY AGAIN
After nearly two years of scrutiny and a standoff with regulators, Boeing Co won approval from the US Federal Aviation Administration to fly its 737 Max jet again after two fatal disasters

BUSINESS

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2020 **MUSCAT DAILY** 13

UAE says bilateral trade with Oman hits RO5bn in 2019

Omanis own RO1.46bn worth of real estate projects in the UAE

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The United Arab Emirates on Wednesday announced that the bilateral trade between the UAE and Oman reached AED48bn (approximately RO5.02bn) in 2019.

Congratulating the sultanate on the occasion of the 50th National Day, the UAE's Ministry of Finance in a statement highlighted the country's keenness to reinforce its overall cooperation and trade ties with Oman.

The non-oil trade between the UAE and Oman was valued at AED48bn in 2019, reflecting the strong economic partnership between the two countries, the ministry said as reported by Emirates News Agency.

The ministry said that the UAE's real estate market continued its uptrend performance and attracted more Omani investors. 'The value of real estate projects owned by Omanis in the UAE totalled AED14bn (approximately RO1.46bn) in 2019.'

The Ministry of Finance fur-



ther said that the real estate projects owned by Omanis were distributed in a variety of areas, with 68 per cent of real estate deals being in the commercial sector and 25 per cent in residential real estate projects. The statement also noted that the number of Omani owners of real estate in the UAE in 2019 stood at 3,993, of whom 1,796 (or 45 per cent) owned residen-

tial real estate and 1,607 (or 40 per cent) owned commercial real estate.

Emirates News Agency on Wednesday also published a statement from Dubai Customs which said the trade between Oman and the emirate of Dubai jumped 8.4 per cent to AED37.85bn in 2019 compared to AED34.9bn in 2018. The Dubai-Oman bilateral trade

stood at AED14.85bn during the January-June period of 2020, according to latest figures released by Dubai Customs.

Ahmed Mahboob Musabih, director general of Dubai Customs, said, 'We congratulate our brothers and sisters in Oman on their 50th National Day, and we look forward to further collaboration and mutual trade in the future.'

He said, 'We provide the clients at the Hatta Border Crossing with top-notch services and facilities. It is a very instrumental, strategic crossing-point between the UAE and Oman, and we have equipped the centre with the most advanced technologies and equipment to streamline the flow of trade and traffic in accordance with the GCC Common Customs regulations.'

'We also focus on raising the capacities of our inspection staff at the border to ensure safe and efficient cargo and passenger clearance operations, following the directives of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid al Maktoum, Vice President, Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai,' Musabih added.

The value of Omani capital in the UAE's public joint stock companies registered in the Securities and Commodities Authority totalled AED1.8bn, while the number of Omani investors in these companies reached 23,000, according to the UAE's Ministry of Finance.

Al Zain Feeds signs usufruct deal with Port of Duqm



Our Correspondent
Muscat

Al Zain Feeds LLC, a group company of Al Zain Poultry Farms, has signed a usufruct agreement with Port of Duqm Company for 13,000 sqm of land to establish storage facilities for feed ingredients.

The design work for the state-of-the-art facilities for Al Zain's project will be completed within six months and the construction work is expected to begin in March 2021.

This unique first of its kind facility at Duqm Port will enable direct import of premium feed raw materials from major

producing countries i.e. the US, Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay in bulk vessels, Port of Duqm Company said in a press statement.

Shabbir Boriyawala, a partner in Al Zain Feeds LLC, highlighted that this unique project will secure the demand of basic raw materials like corn, wheat and soybean meal for poultry and ruminant feed manufacturers in Oman with uninterrupted supply. The project cost is estimated at RO2mn.

The project consists of silo storage facilities of 50,000 metric tonnes of corn and wheat and 25,000 metric tonnes of soybean meal.



جمعية المصارف العمانية
Oman Banks Association

Over the years, the banking and finance sector in Oman, has shown a remarkable level of maturity, adapting quickly to support the growth of the Sultanate, by implementing international quality standards and establishing technologically advanced digital solutions. A lot of banks have set up base in Oman that manage the entire gamut of banking and finance work packages – catering to corporate and individuals alike.

Presently, Oman's banking sector has continued to perform well despite economic headwinds. Falling oil prices have increased the demand for credit and, as a result, banks' lending and assets have continued to expand, although liquidity has tightened. According to a report by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Sultanate's GDP is expected to grow 3 per cent in 2021, compared to -2.8 per cent in 2020, as the COVID-19 pandemic adversely impacts economies globally.

CENTRAL BANK OF OMAN: PIONEERING CHANGE SINCE INCEPTION

Established in early 1974, Central Bank of Oman has been at the forefront of driving change and providing the required impetus to the country's banking sector. Until 1970, Oman had no regulatory body to supervise the monetary and banking system. With the introduction of its own national currency,

Oman felt an overbearing need for an authority in currency management. This led to the birth of a monetary authority called Muscat Currency Authority, whose main work was printing, issuing and redemption, management and safekeeping, of the new currency.

After this, as a natural outcome of the steady evolution of the monetary system in the Sultanate, as well as of the enhanced influx in the economic activities the country witnessed, under the wise and visionary leadership of the Late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Said Bin Taimur, the necessity for a comprehensive legislation to govern the activities of the banking system, was imperative. This led to the establishment of the reputed and highly respected Central Bank of Oman.

Today, with the significant expansion in banking and economic activities in the country, Central Bank of Oman plays a pivotal role in pursuing fintech-led growth, regulating policies and practices, and enabling banks to align with the global trend of embracing a digital economy. Central Bank of Oman is taking coordinated initiatives and studying the diverse needs and potential applications of automation from business, regulatory and technology perspective.

The Oman Banks Association (OBA) has played a pivotal role in catalysing the growth of the banking sector in the country. The association regularly

initiates activities which are focused on promoting communication and cooperation between banks and financial institutions, working in partnership with regulators to strengthen the financial sector in Oman and reaching out to the general public to increase financial inclusion and awareness. OBA is actively engaged with Central Bank of Oman, banks operating in the Sultanate and educational institutions, to conduct several activities and undertake programs that promote financial awareness and inclusivity.

OMAN VISION 2040 SUPPORTS INNOVATION

The Oman 2040 vision envisages a diversified, sustainable and competitive economy that is based on knowledge and innovation, operates within integrated frameworks of the fourth industrial revolution, and achieves fiscal

sustainability. With a calibrated approach, Oman will be able to leapfrog traditional phases of development, usher in a new era of growth and sustain its economic wellbeing.

Defining the roadmap for evolution of the nation's banking sector, The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) continues to pursue policies so that the banking sector fulfils its role of financial intermediation efficiently in the economy. Towards this objective, over the years, the CBO has undertaken several policy measures, enabling additional space for lending and effective liquidity management of banks, among others.

The 'digital transformation' is one of the cornerstones of the development of the country's banking sector. As a development hub for new services, Oman must enhance the way industries and customers operate. Keeping this in mind, the features of existing mobile payment clearing and switching system are further expanded to promote the use mobile banking services and mobile wallet in Oman, even to non-banking customers. Islamic Banking Entities are an essential part of these initiatives, which will increase financial inclusion and ease the access of digital financial services to the customers.

It is important to highlight the banking sector's contribution in building a world class infrastructure in Oman, through funding relevant projects in housing, national manpower development, manufacturing, roads, etc. The sector has been instrumental in advancing strategic

DRIVING INNOVATION & VALUE IN OMAN

Over 50 years, Oman's banking sector is tapping opportunities to accelerate digital innovation



infrastructure projects and promoting further economic diversification. Also, the banking sector has left no stone unturned in encouraging a savings culture among the citizens of the country. Various prize draw schemes have been implemented by many commercial banks to encourage maintaining a savings balance in their respective bank accounts, thereby qualifying them for the cash draws. Different segments participated in that schemes on a large scale, including, youth, children, senior citizens, salaried and more.

Additionally, Oman's banking and finance sector have been on a conscious path of Omanising various posts at the higher and middle levels. The Central Bank of Oman is pursuing a process-led approach towards generating employment for local talent and follows up on it at regular intervals. According to recent data, the banking sector has achieved 93.5 per cent, and the finance and leasing companies' sector has achieved 82.3 per cent, Omanisation rate till date.

As part of the Central Bank of Oman's efforts to provide equal opportunities for the banking sector, by allowing traditional banks to open specialised Islamic banking windows, along with two banks offering Islamic banking services, the CBO has also been encouraging the growth of Islamic Banking in the Sultanate through various policy interventions. Furthermore, prudential limits pertaining to overseas investments were not made applicable to Islamic Banking Institutions as there were no

feasible Shari'ah compliant investment opportunities in the Sultanate. Although the performance of these entities has been remarkable so far, the regulators are cognisant of the fact that more is needed for their sustainable growth and efficient operations. In this regard, the strategic plans include liquidity management frameworks and instruments, diversified financing portfolios and innovative Islamic finance products. With the introduction of novice products, especially for corporate customers and SMEs, and Shari'ah-compliant liquidity management tools for interbank and central bank interface, Islamic Banking continues to grow steadily and achieve all potential opportunities.

FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES

The Sultanate's banking sector keeps pace with recent technological developments and finding innovative ways to align it to the challenges associated with traditional methods of managing various banking activities. While the sector remains on the growth path, some areas continue to pose a challenge to the sector. What needs to be kept in mind is the fact that banking and finance is a technology, capital and skill intensive industry.

The government's priority is to indigenise the industries, attract global investment in Oman and increase Oman's exports, and lower the dependency on imports. With encouraging regulatory policies and enablers, increased private sector participation and global attention, the banking and finance sector seems to be set on the growth trajectory.

MSM index falls 0.46% on low volumes

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The benchmark index of the Muscat Securities Market (MSM) fell 0.46 per cent to close at 3,624.26 points on Wednesday.

Trading activity deteriorated from the previous session as turnover declined 49.02 per cent to RO1.41mn and volumes fell 51.05 per cent to 4.91mn shares.

All the sectoral indices closed in red territory. Financial index fell 0.29 per cent, Industrial index declined 0.55 per cent and Services index fell 0.95 per cent. The MSM Shariah index closed down by 0.07 per cent at 516.90 points.

Market breadth remained negative as three companies closed up, while 12 companies closed down. The rest 13 traded stocks closed flat for the day.

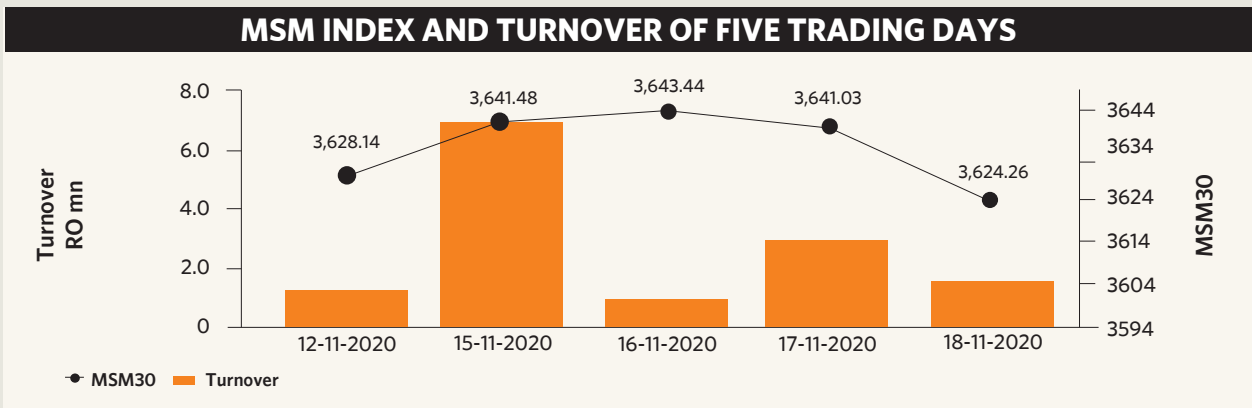
The three gainers were Muscat Fi-



nance (2.7 per cent), Al Suwadi Power (1.85 per cent) and Ooredoo (0.53 per cent).

Top losers were Renaissance Services

(-4.68 per cent), Phoenix Power (-3.57 per cent), Oman Investment and Finance (-3.23 per cent) and Raysut Cement (-3.05 per cent).



OPEC+ signals readiness to act on oil output cuts



Saudi Arabia's Energy Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman

Vienna, Austria - Members of the OPEC+ club of oil producers have agreed that they had to be ready to act on output cuts in order to prevent another slump in prices.

A joint statement issued after the monthly meeting said, 'All participating countries need to be vigilant, proactive and be prepared to act, when necessary, to the requirements of the market.'

Earlier Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman, Energy Minister of OPEC kingpin Saudi Arabia, had said in a live-streamed address ahead of the OPEC+ meeting that the group 'must be ready to tweak the terms of our agreement if need be'.

OPEC+ comprises the OPEC oil cartel member countries as well as allies such as Russia.

"Flexibility and pro-activeness must continue to be the guiding

principles of our deliberations today and in the future," Prince Abdulaziz added.

The alliance is currently sticking to deep cuts to production agreed in April in order to protect prices from a fall similar to that seen when global demand collapsed in the wake of the first wave of the coronavirus pandemic.

According to the deal currently in force, the current reduction in output of 7.7mn barrels per day (bpd) is due to be tapered to 5.8mn bpd as of January 2021.

Despite the lifeline for the market represented by encouraging news on several coronavirus vaccines, many market watchers expect the January date to shifted back by three to six months as the world economy and oil demand remain

According to the agreement currently in force, the current reduction in output of 7.7mn barrels per day (bpd) is due to be tapered to 5.8mn bpd as of January 2021

weak.

The delay would be signed off at the next full meeting of the group on November 30 and December 1.

The joint statement issued noted the positive news on vaccines and robust demand in Asia but said 'these developments have been overshadowed by the resurgence of COVID-19 cases in major economies'.

'More stringent COVID-19 containment measures across continents, including full lockdowns, are impacting the oil demand rebound,' the statement said, adding that 'the underlying risks and uncertainties remain high'.

Prince Abdulaziz congratulated fellow OPEC+ members on their achievements in hitting the targets for cuts thus far.

AFP

Iran's economy progressing, says Rouhani

Tehran, Iran - Iranian President Hasan Rouhani said on Tuesday that the country's economy is progressing although the US reimposed economic sanctions in August 2018.

Rouhani said his government continues implementing plans to support the most affected populations from the coronavirus pandemic, according to the Iranian



Iran's President Hasan Rouhani

news agency, IRNA.

The Iranian economy was badly damaged by the US after Washington withdrew from a nuclear deal with Iran and resumed economic and commercial sanctions on Tehran.

"Despite the severe damages that the Iranian economy had endured due to the [US]

sanctions, the Iranian government didn't allow those who imposed such sanctions from achieving their goals," said Rouhani.

Figures by OPEC show Iranian oil exports have declined because of sanctions from an average of 3.9mn barrels per day to 2mn barrels.

Anadolu Agency

US unveils their star-spangled pavilion for Dubai's Expo 2020

Dubai, UAE - Star-spangled and featuring a SpaceX rocket module, the US pavilion at the gigantic Expo 2020 Dubai site was handed over on Wednesday less than a year before the delayed launch of the world fair.

The six-month mega event, a milestone for the wealthy Gulf emirate which has splashed out US\$8.2bn on the eye-popping venue in the hope of boosting its soft power and resetting the economy, will open its doors in October 2021 after the coronavirus pandemic forced a one-year postponement.

But despite the delay, armies of workers in protective masks were still racing to complete dozens of pavilions among the 192 participating countries, including Israel, which signed a normalisation agreement with the United Arab Emirates in September.

The United States pavilion will 'showcase our values', US Ambassador to the UAE John Rakolta Jr told journalists during a handover ceremony.

The theme of the silver building draped in stars is 'life, liberty



The US pavilion building is unveiled at the Dubai Expo 2020 site on Wednesday (AFP)

and pursuit of the future', he said.

Once opened, visitors will be taken on a tour via a moving walkway that meanders through the building.

Set to highlight American values, the pavilion website said the US delegation aims to exhibit 'American freedom, ideals, enterprise and innovation'.

The US pavilion nearly failed to get off the drawing board because of funding issues.

But in January the State Department announced it had found a way to finance it - through the UAE government, a close ally of President Donald Trump's administration.

"The Emiratis have been very generous, they provided the opportunity for us to participate... and we are very grateful," said Rakolta, donning a black mask with the official logo of the UAE printed on it.

US diplomats took selfies and

group photos as the final metallic star was installed on the silver building, while others rushed to watch fog encircling the white SpaceX rocket.

Before the pandemic, Dubai hoped the largest event ever staged in the Arab world - billed as the 'World's Greatest Show' - would attract some 25mn visits.

But the virus forced a one-year postponement, creating a logistical headache.

AFP

HITACHI

INVERTER X Dual Fan Cooling

THE NEXT GENERATION REFRIGERATORS

10 YEARS HITACHI COMPRESSOR WARRANTY

جيتكو Genetco

MUSCAT 94108890, 96742452

SALALAH 79011363

Available at Major Hypermarkets & Electronics Retailers

Congratulations and Warm Wishes to
His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik
and the people of Oman on the occasion of the 50th National Day.

مصطفى سلطان للصرافة
MUSTAFA SULTAN EXCHANGE

SBI

1988

مصرف

مصرف

مصرف

1233246

Saudi to host online G20 summit amid pandemic, recession

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia - Saudi Arabia hosts the G20 summit on Saturday in a first for an Arab nation, but the scaled-down virtual format could limit debate on a resurgent coronavirus pandemic and crippling economic crisis.

The two-day meeting of the world's wealthiest nations follows a bitter US election disputed by President Donald Trump and comes amid criticism over what campaigners call the group's inadequate response to the worst recession in decades.

Held under the shadow of a raging pandemic, the summit which is usually an opportunity for one-on-one engagements between world leaders, is reduced to brief online sessions on pressing global issues - from climate change to growing inequality.

Discussions are expected to be dominated by the 'implications of the pandemic' and 'steps for reviving the global economy', a source close to the Saudi organisers told AFP.

New vaccine breakthroughs have raised hopes of containing the virus, which has infected 55mn people globally and left 1.3mn dead.

The Paris-based OECD projects global economic output will contract by 4.5 per cent this year.



Saudi Arabia's King Salman bin Abdulaziz al Saud

G20 nations have contributed more than US\$21bn to combat the pandemic, including production and distribution of vaccines, and injected US\$11tn to 'safeguard' the virus-battered world economy, organisers said.

But the group faces mounting pressure to help stave off possible credit defaults across developing nations.

Last week, G20 finance ministers declared a 'common framework' for an extended debt

restructuring plan for virus-ravaged countries, but campaign group Action Aid described the measure as 'woefully inadequate'.

Mistrust between member states has hampered coordination, with a US Treasury official accusing China - a top creditor to poor countries - of a 'lack of full participation' and transparency.

Saudi Arabia's King Salman bin Abdulaziz al Saud will preside over what some observers call

'digital diplomacy'.

The virtual setting could frustrate 'spontaneous combustion' among leaders, limiting 'encounters on unscheduled subjects', said John Kirton, director and founder of the Canada-based G20 Research Group.

World leaders, from German Chancellor Angela Merkel to Chinese President Xi Jinping and Russian leader Vladimir Putin, are expected to make speeches.

AFP

Amazon launches online pharmacy for US consumers

Washington, US - After books, clothes, appliances, fresh food and even streaming content, Amazon is branching into one of the last realms it has yet to conquer: prescription drugs.

The e-commerce giant said on Tuesday it was launching an online pharmacy for US consumers, who will be able to order prescription medications directly from its website or mobile app.

The move comes two years after Amazon acquired PillPack, an Internet pharmacy offering pre-sorted dose packaging and home delivery.

"As more and more people look to complete everyday errands from home, pharmacy is an important and needed addition to the Amazon online store," said Amazon senior vice president Doug Herrington.

TJ Parker, vice president of the new unit, said it was designed 'to put customers first - bringing Amazon's customer obsession to an industry that can be inconvenient and confusing'.

Amazon has long been rumored to be interested in the pharmacy business, and the entry by a powerful new player could unsettle a business dominated by large American chains including CVS Health and Walgreens.

"An integrated pharmacy removes one of the few gaps in Amazon's offerings," Art Hogan, chief market strategist at National Securities.

Transparency

Amazon Pharmacy will allow



customers to either use their insurance or pay out of pocket, with discounts and free two-day delivery offered for Amazon Prime members.

The tech and retail giant said it would comply with US health privacy laws and not offer certain controlled medications such as opioids.

PillPack will continue to operate as a distinct unit, it said.

As the coronavirus pandemic grinds on, the e-commerce giant could quickly earn a decent share of the market, by offering customers a way to fill prescriptions without leaving the house.

With consumers demanding more transparency from big pharma on drug prices, and with discount programmes like GoodRx growing in popularity, Amazon is clearly betting that price transparency will be an asset.

Customers of Amazon Pharmacy will be able to see if a drug is cheaper if bought

with insurance, or outright with cash. They will also have access to generic and brand-name drugs.

"Infusing transparency into a system that has been frustratingly opaque for consumers could alter the supply chain," Hogan said.

The move comes as scrutiny Amazon and other tech giants grows over their increasing dominance in key sectors of the economy.

Amazon earlier this year launched an online pharmacy for consumers in India for both prescription and over-the-counter medications.

For Craig Garthwaite, a professor at Northwestern University's Kellogg School of Management, the launch of Amazon Pharmacy 'is a meaningful threat to brick and mortar pharmacies'.

"These retail pharmacies must now offer more than just easy access to a prescription," he added.

AFP

US Senate blocks Trump's controversial Fed candidate

Washington, US - The US Senate on Tuesday blocked President Donald Trump's controversial pick from joining the US Federal Reserve board, at least for now.

Two Republicans joined Democrats in opposing Judy Shelton, a strident critic of the central bank who has faced an unprecedented public wave of resistance from dozens of well-known economists and Nobel laureates.

Vice President-elect and Senator Kamala Harris returned to Washington to cast the tie-breaking vote, interrupting planning for President-elect Joe Biden's administration.

However, Senate Republi-

can leader Mitch McConnell also voted no making the final tally 50-47, likely a strategic move which leaves the door open for him to call for another vote.

COVID-19 complicated the voting, as two Republican senators were unable to vote because they were in quarantine, including Chuck Grassley of Iowa - who missed a vote for the first time since 1993.

A third Republican who was absent publicly opposed Shelton's nomination.

Shelton was an outspoken supporter of low interest rates when president Barack Obama was in office. Her nomination was one of several Trump made that would have under-

mined the political independence of the US central bank.

'We need a reliable Federal Reserve to help manage our economy in this pandemic. Judy Shelton's dangerous ideas would devastate our economy, and her lack of commitment to using the full force of the Fed to provide COVID-19 relief is unacceptable,' Harris said on Twitter after the vote.

Senator Chuck Schumer, the top Democrat in the upper chamber, lambasted Shelton as supremely unfit for the position. She is 'without a doubt one of the most unqualified nominees I have ever seen for our nation's central bank', he said.

AFP

Sri Lanka to open up Chinese-backed Colombo Port City, offer tax breaks

Colombo, Sri Lanka - A mega Chinese real estate development in Sri Lanka will open early next year offering tax concessions to attract investors and revive the struggling economy, the government said on Tuesday in its first budget.

Colombo Port City - a US\$1.4bn land reclamation project beside the capital's port which started in 2014 - has doubled the size of Sri Lanka's current financial district.

The development - the largest single foreign investment in Sri Lanka so far - is one of several massive Asian infrastructure projects funded by China as Beijing increases its footprint in the region.

With Sri Lanka's economy reeling from last year's Easter



An aerial photo shows a view of the construction site of the Colombo Port City in Colombo, Sri Lanka (Xinhua)

Sunday suicide bombings and the coronavirus pandemic and lockdowns, the recently elected government led by the Rajapaksa brothers is hoping the development will attract new investment

to the country.

"I expect to present to parliament a new legal framework conducive to promote commercial services and investment in this Special Economic Zone in

January," Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa, who is also the Finance Minister, told parliament in his budget address.

He said the Port City - an area of 269 hectares reclaimed from the Indian Ocean - will offer tax concessions to attract trade, banking and foreign exchange transactions.

He did not give further details. "We believe that the Colombo Port City will become a prime choice for investors and business community due to the business and investor-friendly legal framework," he added.

The government is set to build roads and set up electricity and water supplies as it tries to attract commercial property developers.

AFP

China targets frozen food imports over virus fears

Beijing, China - Chinese health officials said on Wednesday that two cold-chain storage workers in the port city of Tianjin were infected with COVID-19, as the country shifts focus to contaminated imports after a number of outbreaks linked to frozen food.

Workers in hazmat suits were painstakingly screening food shipments across a country which has largely brought domestic infections under control but now blames a resurgence of local infections on imports.

Mass-testing campaigns have been rolled out after reports of coronavirus traces on imported food and packaging, with state TV showing workers hosing down food transport trucks with disinfectant and inspecting packages of frozen salmon.

Two cities in southern Fujian province said on Wednesday

they found traces of the virus in shipments of pomfret from India and beef from Argentina.

In Wuhan, where COVID-19 first emerged in late 2019, authorities said last week they had detected the virus on frozen beef from Brazil, while several other cities reported positive test results on samples from imported food - including Indian cuttlefish.

Customs inspectors across the country have so far tested more than 800,000 samples from refrigerated imports and suspended shipments from 99 overseas suppliers, customs official Bi Kexin told a press conference last week.

Authorities have stepped up screening since coronavirus traces were found on equipment used to process imported salmon after a June outbreak.

In Tianjin, officials said the



A customer walks past an imported frozen fish counter at a supermarket in Hangzhou in eastern China's Zhejiang province on Wednesday (AFP)

two infected workers 'had previously both had contact with contaminated cold-chain food products'.

Customs data in September showed that Chinese meat imports had increased by more than 70 per cent this year as the

country's food supply was disrupted by swine fever and heavy flooding which destroyed swathes of farmland.

The World Health Organization says, "There is currently no evidence that people can catch COVID-19 from food or food packaging".

Transmission of COVID-19 across countries on frozen food is 'possible but it has not been comprehensively studied so we do not know the extent of this spread', Paul Tambyah, president of the Asia Pacific Society of Clinical Microbiology and Infection, told AFP.

Fears of second wave

China's Foreign Ministry defended the measures on Wednesday as 'very reasonable and legitimate'.

Screening has been ramped up after the outbreak in Tianjin - just over 110km from the capital Beijing - was linked to food transport workers, sparking fears of a

second wave of virus cases in the coming winter.

Earlier this month, China banned visitors from countries including the UK and India and raised testing requirements for other travellers.

State media has also ramped up claims that imported food could have been to blame for the initial Wuhan outbreak, where the virus was first linked to a seafood market.

Beijing insists that the source of the initial outbreak remains a mystery and that it may not have originated in China - a claim vigorously disputed by countries including the US and Australia.

The Foreign Ministry also floated a conspiracy theory earlier this year that the American military may have brought the virus to Wuhan last year.

AFP



Israel has carried out hundreds of air and missile strikes on Syria since civil war broke out there in 2011, targeting Iranian and Lebanese Hezbollah forces as well as government troops

Israel strikes Iran targets in Syria

10 people were killed, including foreign fighters as well as Syrian soldiers: Observatory

Jerusalem - Israeli warplanes struck Syria on Wednesday, hitting Iranian targets and killing ten Syrian and foreign fighters in what the Israeli army called a retaliatory attack after explosive devices were found near one of its bases on the occupied Golan Heights.

The airstrikes came hours before US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo was to land in Israel for talks including on Iran, in what was likely to be his last visit to the staunch American ally before President Donald Trump leaves office.

An Israeli army statement said its fighter jets had overnight hit 'military targets belonging to the Iranian Quds Force and the Syrian armed forces'. The elite Quds Force is the main foreign operations arm of Iran's Revolutionary Guards.

The targets included 'storage facilities, headquarters and military compounds' as well as 'Syrian

surface-to-air missile batteries', it said.

Syrian state news agency SANA said the strikes had killed three of its soldiers and wounded another.

The monitoring group Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said ten people were killed, including foreign fighters as well as Syrian soldiers.

The foreigners included five fighters who were 'likely Iranian and belonging to the Quds force' as well as two pro-Iran fighters of undetermined nationality, the Britain-based monitor said.

Israel has carried out hundreds of air and missile strikes on Syria since civil war broke out there in 2011, targeting Iranian and Lebanese Hezbollah forces as well as government troops.

Retaliatory strikes

The Jewish state rarely acknowledges individual strikes, but has done so when responding to

what it describes as aggression inside Israeli territory.

Israel's military said it had discovered improvised explosive devices (IEDs) on its side of the armistice line on the Golan Heights on Tuesday.

"We are talking about three connected Claymore anti-per-

Iranian Quds forces," he said.

Most Arab residents of the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights retain Syrian citizenship, having spurned the offer of Israeli papers.

Conricus said Israel had carried out retaliatory strikes against eight separate targets in-

army division and a 'secret military site which served as a hosting facility for senior Iranian delegations'.

"We hope now that the message is clear - that it is unacceptable that the Syrian regime allows and tolerates and facilitates the use by Iranian forces of Syria as a launchpad for attacks against Israel."

Israel and Syria, still technically at war, have a border along the Golan Heights, which the Jewish State has occupied since the Six-Day War of 1967.

Iran has been a key ally of Syrian President Bashar Assad's regime throughout the civil war that erupted after the brutal repression of anti-government protests and has killed more than 380,000 people.

Pompeo visit

The air strikes came hours before Pompeo was to land in Israel, for talks on Iran that are likely to

Fighter jets have overnight hit military targets belonging to the Iranian Quds Force and the Syrian armed forces. The targets included headquarters and military areas.

ISRAELI ARMY

sonnel charges that were planted close to an IDF position," army spokesman Jonathan Conricus told reporters on Wednesday.

"This was another attempt led by Iranian Quds forces. The actual planting of the IEDs was by Syrian locals but the guidance, instruction and control was by

side Syria, from the armistice line on the Golan all the way to the southern outskirts of the capital Damascus.

He said they included three Iranian command centres - a headquarters in the Damascus airport, a Quds Force base in the headquarters of Syria's seventh

Emirati Red Crescent team attacked in Yemen

Dubai, UAE - The Emirati Red Crescent said on Wednesday one of its mobile health clinics was attacked by gunmen in Yemen, in a strike it condemned as a 'cowardly terrorist act'.

It did not mention any casualties in the assault in Yemen's third largest city of Ta'ez, which is under government control but surrounded by forces of the Huthi rebels.

The United Arab Emirates is a member of the military coalition led by its ally Saudi Arabia, which intervened in the conflict five years ago to support the anti-Huthi government.

'The Emirates Red Crescent condemns and deeply regrets the cowardly terrorist act that targeted its medical staff working in mobile clinics,' the organisation said in a statement.

The 'shooting attack' on its medical staff 'represents a major violation of international norms, treaties and covenants', it said.

The UAE Foreign Ministry did not accuse any group of the attack, but also criticised the breaching of conventions that provide special protection for aid and rescue workers.

"The ministry stressed that such hostile acts impede relief operations and hinder humanitarian access in Yemen, which may aggravate the plight of the people and worsen their conditions," the state news agency WAM said.

Yemen's long war has plunged the country into what the United Nations describes as the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

AFP



This file photo shows Bahraini Foreign Minister Abdellatif al Zayani (right) and Israeli National Security Advisor Meir Ben Shabbat, at the signing ceremony of a peace agreement between Israel and Bahrain, in Manama on October 18

Bahrain Minister in Israel on first official visit from Gulf kingdom

Jerusalem - Bahrain's foreign minister arrived in Israel on Wednesday on the first official visit from the Gulf kingdom, which normalised relations with the Jewish state in September.

The minister, Abdellatif al Zayani, was welcomed at Tel Aviv's Ben Gurion airport by his Israeli counterpart Gabi Ashkenazi, a live Israeli television broadcast showed.

Bahrain and its Gulf neighbour the United Arab Emirates both signed US-sponsored normalisa-

tion accords with Israel at the White House on September 15, pacts that were condemned as a 'betrayal' by the Palestinians and their allies.

The agreements shattered a longstanding Arab consensus that there should be no normalisation with Israel until it reaches a comprehensive peace deal with the Palestinians.

Zayani was due to hold talks in Jerusalem with both Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and outgoing US Secre-

tary of State Mike Pompeo, who was to arrive in Israel in the afternoon.

Pompeo, during his two-day visit, was expected to make the first visit by a senior US official to a Jewish settlement in the occupied West Bank.

All Jewish settlements on occupied Palestinian land are regarded as illegal by most of the international community.

Their persistent expansion under successive Netanyahu-led governments has proved one of

the biggest obstacles to the peace process with the Palestinians.

The United States has very close relations with Bahrain too. The tiny but strategic kingdom just across the Gulf from Iran is home to the US Fifth Fleet.

All three allies - Israel, Bahrain and the US - see the mainly Shiite Muslim regional power Iran as a common threat.

Zayani's visit is expected to be followed by others.

AFP

Gaza's first woman cab driver

Gaza City, Palestinian Territories - Palestinian mother-of-five Nayla Abu Jubbah launched a small revolution this week by becoming the first woman taxi driver in the deeply conservative Gaza Strip.

In the impoverished Palestinian territory, women have the same legal rights as men to drive a vehicle, but in practice the trade of taxi driver has been exclusively male - until now.

"One day I was talking with a friend who works as a hairdresser and I said to her: 'What would you say if we started a taxi service for women?' She said it was a crazy idea," the 39 year old told AFP.

The Israeli-blockaded territory was suffering 50 per cent unemployment even before the COVID-19 pandemic.

After drinking a steaming cup of tea in her home, the social work graduate in a headscarf puts on a face mask and marches to her car parked outside.

After slotting her smartphone into its holder and giving a toot on the horn for show, she starts the engine and is off on the roads of Gaza, where the Islamist Hamas movement has ruled for more than 13 years.

Abu Jubbah does not cruise the streets for fares, taking only advance bookings.

"I leave my home and I will pick up my clients, to bring them for example from the hairdress-



Nayla Abu Jubbah, the first woman Palestinian taxi driver in the Gaza Strip, at the wheel of her vehicle, in Gaza City on Wednesday (AFP)

ing salon to a wedding," she says.

She bought the vehicle with her inheritance when her father died.

"I said to myself one day that I needed to take advantage of the car, to put it to work," she said. "Hence the project of a taxi service entirely for women, to put them at ease."

Today she is driving through the streets of Gaza City to pick up 27 year old Aya Saleem for a shopping trip.

"We live in a conservative society. So when I saw that there was a taxi company especially for women... I felt a kind of freedom," says Saleem.

She wears a long brown tunic, beige headscarf and a pale blue mask and carries a stylish bag.

"When I'm with a woman, I feel comfortable... I feel freer and then we can talk," she says, adding that women's taxi services are in line with sharia, the Islamic code which Hamas promotes in the Gaza Strip.

Saleem is delighted with the idea and hopes to see more female taxi drivers on Gaza's roads soon.

Abu Jubbah says she wants to expand her business.

"A woman called me recently to tell me that she wanted to work as a taxi driver by my side," she said.

"I told her that we would talk again but I already have the feeling that the project will gain momentum."

AFP

US to slash troops in Iraq, Afghanistan

Washington, US - The US will slash troop levels in Afghanistan and Iraq to their lowest levels in nearly 20 years of war after President Donald Trump pledged to end conflicts abroad, the Pentagon announced on Tuesday.

Rejecting concerns that precipitous drawdowns could give up all the US has fought for, Acting Defence Secretary Chris Miller said around 2,000 troops would be pulled from Afghanistan by January 15.

Five hundred more would come back from Iraq by the same date, leaving 2,500 in each country.

The moves reflect Trump's policy 'to bring the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq to a successful and responsible conclusion and to bring our brave service members home', Miller said.

Miller said the US had met its goals, set in 2001 after the Al Qaeda attacks on the United States, to defeat Islamist extrem-

The moves reflect Trump's policy 'to bring the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq to a responsible conclusion and to bring our service members home'

CHRIS MILLER



This file photo shows soldiers from the 3rd Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, boarding a C-17 transport plane ready for departure from Camp Adder, now known as Imam Ali Base, near Nasiriyah in Iraq on December 17, 2011 (AFP)

ists and to help 'local partners and allies to take the lead in the fight'. "With the blessings of providence in the coming year, we will finish this generational war and bring our men and women home," he said.

The moves took the United States closer to disengaging from conflicts that have blazed and smouldered through three presidencies with no end in sight since 2001.

But critics said they risk appearing like a humiliating defeat, leaving the original threat of Islamic extremist attacks intact.

The announcement came just weeks before Trump cedes the White House in the wake of his November 3 re-election loss to Democrat Joe Biden.

Amid criticism that Trump was acting abruptly since his defeat, White House National Security Advisor Robert O'Brien

said the troop cuts have been in the works for some time.

"Four years ago President Trump ran on a promise to put a stop to America's endless wars. Today it was just announced at the Pentagon that President Trump is keeping that promise to the American people."

"By May it is President Trump's hope that they will come home safely and in their entirety."

Baghdad rockets

It comes ten days after Trump fired defence secretary Mark Esper, who had insisted on keeping 4,500 troops in Afghanistan to support Afghan security forces.

Esper had reduced US forces from about 13,000 following a deal with the Taliban in February, in which both sides agreed the Taliban would enter into peace talks with the Kabul government,

in return for US troops withdrawing by May 2021.

But until Esper's removal, the Pentagon had argued that the Taliban had not met pledges to reduce violent attacks, which have surged across the country in recent months.

President Ashraf Ghani's spokesman Sediq Sediqqi confirmed in a tweet that Ghani and Miller had spoken on the phone about 'continued meaningful US

military support to the Afghan Security and Defence Forces'.

In Iraq, Trump has also pulled back US forces amid dozens of rocket attacks by Iran-allied groups on the US embassy and bases housing American troops.

On Tuesday, a volley of rockets slammed into Baghdad's Green Zone, where the US embassy sits, breaking a month-long truce on attacks against the US embassy.

A senior US defence official dismissed concerns over the risk of resurgences by Al Qaeda and the Islamic State.

"The professionals in the military service have agreed that this is the right move," the official said. "Al Qaeda has been in Afghanistan for decades and the reality is, we'd be fools to say they are going to leave tomorrow."

AFP

Thai protesters mass for new rally after six suffer gunshots

Bangkok, Thailand - Thousands of democracy activists gathered in downtown Bangkok on Wednesday for a second day of protest, after six people were shot during violent clashes, as lawmakers voted on possible constitutional reforms.

Thailand has been rocked by months of protests demanding changes to the constitution, the removal of Prime Minister Prayut Chan-O-Cha - and even changes to the untouchable monarchy.

But Tuesday saw the most violent confrontations since the movement began in July, as police used tear gas and irritant-laced water cannon on protesters trying to reach parliament, and democracy activists clashed with royalists.



Large inflatable ducks are lined up on the road as pro-democracy protesters gather for an anti-government rally at a major intersection in Bangkok on Wednesday (AFP)

We should not be afraid - this is just a transitional moment in our history. People are working for us in parliament and the rest is up to us: Keep fighting.

PROTESTER SIRAPOP POOMPUENGPOOT

More than 50 people were injured, six of them with gunshot wounds, according to medical officials, though it is not clear who was responsible for the shooting.

Protesters gathered on Wednesday at the Ratchaprasong junction in Bangkok's shopping and commercial heart, after their leaders vowed to step up the movement.

Police used dumper trucks, concrete blocks and razor wire to barricade their nearby national headquarters, while many protesters came equipped with helmets, goggles and gas masks.

"We will protect our people. We don't want any violence but there will be no compromise until they meet our demands," pro-

tester Jay (26) told AFP.

National police spokesman Yingyos Thepjamnong warned protesters not to encroach on the HQ, saying more than 2,000 officers had been deployed.

Prime Minister Prayut has urged protesters to refrain from violence, but ruled out introducing another emergency decree - like

the one banning public gatherings of more than four people which spanned a week in October.

But there is little sign the demonstrators are prepared to back down. Late Tuesday prominent student leader Parit 'Penguin' Chiwarak said a 'new era' in the movement had begun.

"We should not be afraid - this

is just a transitional moment in our history," Sirapop Poompuengpoot, another student leader, told the gathering on Wednesday. "People are working for us in parliament and the rest is up to us: Keep fighting."

Tuesday's drama saw protesters plough through police barricades towards parliament to put pressure on MPs debating constitutional reform, prompting the use of tear gas and water cannon.

More than 50 people were injured, mostly by tear gas, according to an ambulance and medical coordination service, which said six people were shot.

AFP

One team: Disabled duo help each other in war-torn Syria

Damascus, Syria - One is deaf and mute, the other is paralysed from the waist down; but together, Ahmad and Bader form a duo equipped to handle life in war-torn Syria.

In an ancient Damascus alley, Ahmad pushes Bader along in a wheelchair on one of their near-daily strolls.

The two friends have known each other for three years, and both say that neither can imagine life without the other.

"We are one team," 28 year old Bader told AFP. "My ears are his, and his legs mine."

In 2012, Bader al Hajjami's spinal cord was hit by a piece of shrapnel, leaving him paralysed in both legs.



This file photo shows Bader al Hajjami (left) and Ahmad Moussa in an alley of Syria's capital Damascus, on November 1 (AFP)

He said the wheelchair was his only friend, until he met Ahmad Moussa two years later.

Ahmad (24) lost his ability to hear and speak when he was struck by a sudden illness aged just two years old.

Now the two can often be seen strolling through the alleyways of Old Damascus, loved by residents and shop keepers alike.

Bader, of Moroccan descent but who has lived his entire life in Damascus, has become an interpreter for Ahmad, after learning from him how to communicate in sign language.

He fills Ahmad in on conversations and events happening

around them, and translates for him when they are in a cafe or inside a taxi.

"We spend most of our time with each other, eating and playing [cards]," Bader said.

"I cannot imagine life without him."

'Isolated world'

Ahmad and Bader are among 3.7mn disabled people in Syria.

That figure, which is equivalent to 27 per cent of Syria's population, has grown since the 2011 onset of a conflict that has since killed more than 380,000 people.

Sixty-two per cent of disabled Syrians are unemployed, the United Nations says.

In central Damascus, Ahmad helps Bader climb into a taxi that will take them to their weekly basketball session.

Inside the stadium, Ahmad steadies a sports wheelchair as Bader hops on.

The two pass the ball to each other as they glide across the court.

In his wheelchair near the hoop, Bader catches a fast side pass and shoots - the basketball swishing through the net.

"Deaf people live in their own isolated world, and the same applies to blind people and people in wheelchairs," Ahmad told AFP, with Bader's help.

AFP

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Europe sees first dip in cases in months, but death toll rose, indicate WHO report

Geneva, Switzerland - The number of new COVID-19 cases declined last week for the first time in over three months, but deaths in the region continued to climb, WHO data showed on Wednesday.

In total, nearly four million cases of the novel coronavirus were registered worldwide during the week ending Sunday, and almost 60,000 people died from the disease during the same period, the World Health Organization (WHO) said.

Europe, which on Tuesday saw its total number of coronavirus infections climb past 15mn, remained the hardest-hit region.

Last week it accounted for 46 per cent of the new global cases and 49 per cent of the deaths, the UN health agency's weekly epidemiological update showed.

With 1.84mn new cases registered, the caseload across the region remained staggeringly high, but WHO noted that 'in the past week, for the first time in over three months, the region observed a decline of ten per



A demonstrator holds up a poster reading 'Would rather die upright than live on knees' as police use a water cannon to disperse people protesting against measures to limit the spread of COVID-19, at the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin on Wednesday (AFP)

cent in weekly cases'.

At the same time though, more than 29,000 new COVID-19 deaths were registered across Europe - an 18 per cent jump from the previous week, it said. The WHO data showed that Austria reported the sharpest increase in new cases on the continent last week, marking a 30 per cent hike from the previous week.

The Americas, which is the second worst-hit region, meanwhile continued to show surging numbers of cases and a hike

Europe, which on Tuesday saw its total number of infections climb past 15mn, in the past week observed a decline of 10% in weekly cases for the first time in over three months.

WHO

in deaths from the novel coronavirus.

Case numbers across the region grew by over 40 per cent, with more than 1.45mn new cases registered, and deaths were up by 11 per cent, with over 19,100 new fatalities during the seven-day period.

More than 1mn of the new cases were seen in the United States, which has counted nearly 11mn cases since the beginning of the pandemic.

AFP

Head of UK's criticised test scheme self isolates

London, UK - Dido Harding, the embattled head of Britain's coronavirus test and trace system, on Wednesday revealed she would go into self-isolation after being contacted by her own phone app.

'Nothing like personal experience of your own products...got this overnight. Feeling well. Many hours of Zoom ahead,' she tweeted, along with a screen shot of the Test and Trace app message telling her to self-isolate. Harding came under fire for the bungled rollout of the initial app, which informs anyone who has recently been in proximity to someone reporting coronavirus symptoms to self-isolate for 14 days.

South Australia announces six-day 'circuit-breaker' lockdown

Adelaide, Australia - South Australia announced a six-day 'circuit-breaker' lockdown for its nearly 2mn people on Wednesday to contain a sudden coronavirus outbreak that ended a months-long streak of no infections.

Schools, shops, pubs, factories and even takeaway restaurants were told to close at midnight and stay-at-home or-

ders were issued for residents across the state.

A total of 22 cases have now been linked to a cluster that emerged from an Adelaide hotel used to quarantine travellers from overseas.

"We are going hard and we are going early," state premier Steven Marshall said. "Time is of the essence and we must act swiftly and decisively. We can-



People queue up at a supermarket after the South Australian state announced a six-day lockdown, in Adelaide on Wednesday (AFP)

not wait to see how bad this becomes."

The state is the first in Australia to issue a blanket ban on outdoor exercise, and mask-wearing will be required across the state, which had not recorded a significant outbreak since April.

The measures stand in stark contrast to the United States - where some politicians are re-

fusing to implement basic virus measures even as case numbers surge - or Europe, where lockdowns were introduced only after infections spiralled.

Chief health officer Nicola Spurrer said the infections appeared to be caused by a particularly virulent strain that was spreading 'very, very rapidly', with people becoming contagious within 24 hours.

"I cannot be making this decision in two or three weeks' time or even two or three days' time because it is going to be too late," she said.

Since the cluster was confirmed officials had begun ordering thousands of suspected close contacts to self-isolate, and suspended international flights.

AFP

Iraq, Saudi reopen land border after 30 years to Iran's chagrin

Baghdad, Iraq - Iraq and Saudi Arabia on Wednesday reopened their land border for the first time in 30 years, with closer trade ties between the two countries irking allies of Riyadh's rival, Tehran.

Top officials including Iraq's interior minister and the head of its border commission travelled from Baghdad to formally open the Arar crossing.

They met up with a delegation who had joined them from Riyadh, all in masks, and cut a red ribbon at the border crossing as a line of cargo trucks waited behind them.

Arar will be open to both goods and people for the first time since Riyadh cut off its diplomatic relationship with Baghdad in 1990, following Iraqi ex-dictator Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait.

Ties have remained rocky ever since, but current Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al Kadhemmi has a close personal relationship with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

Kadhemmi was to travel to Saudi Arabia on his first foreign trip as prime minister in May, but the visit was cancelled at the last minute when Saudi King Salman was hospitalised.

He has yet to make the trip, although Iraqi ministers have visited Riyadh to meet with their counterparts and a top-level Saudi delegation travelled to Baghdad last week.

Baghdad sees Arar as a po-



The Arar border crossing between Iraq and Saudi Arabia (AFP)

tential alternative to its crossings with eastern neighbour Iran, through which Iraq brings in a large share of its imports.

The two Arab states are also exploring the reopening of a second border point at Al-Jumayma, along Iraq's southern border with the Saudi kingdom.

'Let them invest'

But pro-Iran factions in Iraq, which call themselves the 'Islamic Resistance', have stood firmly against closer ties with Saudi Arabia.

Ahead of Arar's opening, one such group identifying itself as Ashab al-Kahf published a statement announcing its 'rejection of the Saudi project in Iraq'.

"The intelligence cadres of the Islamic Resistance are fol-

lowing all the details of the Saudi enemy's activities on the Iraqi border," it warned.

Speaking to reporters on Tuesday evening, Kadhemmi fired back against those describing the rapprochement as Saudi 'colonialism'. "This is a lie. It's shameful," he said.

"Let them invest. Welcome to Iraq," Kadhemmi added, saying Saudi investment could bring in a flood of new jobs to Iraq where more than one-third of youth are unemployed.

The closer ties have been a long time coming.

They did not improve much after Saddam's toppling in the 2003 US-led invasion, as Riyadh looked at the new Shiite-dominated political class with suspicion due to their ties to Iran.

A thaw began in 2017 when then Saudi foreign minister Adel al Jubeir travelled to Baghdad - the first such visit in decades - followed by a Riyadh trip by Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al Abadi.

The first commercial flights resumed between the two countries and officials began discussing Arar, with high-profile US diplomat Brett McGurk even visiting the crossing in 2017 to support its reopening.

But those plans were repeatedly delayed, with Arar only opened on rare occasions to allow through Iraqi religious pilgrims on their way to Mecca for the hajj.

Iraq is the second-largest producer in the OPEC oil cartel, outranked only by Saudi Arabia.

AFP

Indian street dog saved from bad injuries finds home in England

New Delhi, India - With a wagging tail, an Indian street dog that lost its front legs in a train accident headed on Wednesday for a new life in the English countryside.

The three-year-old mutt was found 'covered in blood' and badly injured after being run over by a train at Faridabad in the northern Indian state of Haryana last October.

A railways constable took the wounded bitch to a local shelter that looks after stray dogs, cows and monkeys that get maimed in accidents.

"It is almost impossible to save such a badly injured dog," veterinarian Mahesh Verma said in a graphic video shared by the People for Animals Trust that named the pooch Rocky.

"There was a lot of bleeding... we arranged a healthy dog and transfused blood."

Vets had to amputate the forelegs, leaving the dog with stumps. Her back legs were also badly injured.

But the dog - although not named after the famous 'Rocky' Sylvester Stallon movie - nevertheless battled as hard as the underdog boxer to recover, using her chin for balance as she hobbled about.

The rescue organisation's video on her went viral, attracting the attention of the global dog rescue group Wild at Heart Foundation. They found her a home in the rural Cotswolds region of south-west England, while an Indian living in London paid for new artificial legs.



A caretaker feeds Rocky in Faridabad on Tuesday (AFP)

We are missing her already. Everyone is watching her old videos and photos. Not seeing her in her usual spot is heartbreaking.

RAVI DUBEY

In July Rocky took her first steps on her new limbs, made by a leading doctor in Jaipur, and over several months gradually learned to walk again.

Rocky boarded a plane in New Delhi early on Wednesday bound for London, where she is due to be collected by the foundation and her new owner.

She appeared to be taking everything in her shaky stride.

"She has always been fond of travelling, so I don't think she realised she was going away from us. She was happy, wagging her tail as we said goodbye," Ravi Dubey from the People for Animals Trust said. "We are missing her already. Everyone is looking at the stories published about her yesterday and watching her old videos and photos. We are at the shelter home right now and not seeing her in her usual spot is heartbreaking."

An estimated 30mn stray dogs roam India's streets.

"We are very happy that Rocky will have a safe and open space," said Dubey.

"She made it," Dubey said, hailing the animal's 'incredible resilience, strength and spirit to live'. "She's a fighter."

AFP



BRITAIN WITH OMAN

As Oman celebrates the 50th anniversary of the Renaissance started by Late HM Sultan Qaboos bin Said and renewed under the leadership of HM Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the Anglo-Omani Society presents a gallery of images reflecting the many and varied aspects of Britain's cooperation with the Sultanate over the years.

The Anglo-Omani Society (AOS) is a charitable organisation working with the objective of preserving the longstanding friendship between Britain and Oman. The Society was formed in January 1976 with HM Sultan Qaboos bin Said al Said as the society's patron and the Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman in London as its president.



Warm greetings to
His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik
and the people of Oman on the occasion
of the **50th National Day**



فنادق عُمان
OMAN HOTELS

Oman Hotels and Tourism Company SAOC

P.O. Box: 2031, P.C. 112, Muscat, Sultanate of Oman

T: +968 2450 6565, www.omanhotelscorp.com

ISO 9001:2015 CERTIFIED COMPANY



TULIP INN DOWNTOWN, MUSCAT
Renovation coming soon



SUR PLAZA HOTEL, SUR



DESERT NIGHTS RESORT, BIDIYA- AL WASIL



AL WADI HOTEL, SOHAR



NOVOTEL HOTEL, AL KHUWAIR
Coming soon