



OMR5.9BN TRADE SURPLUS FOR OMAN LAST YEAR

MUSCAT: The Sultanate's trade balance in 2019 recorded a surplus of OMR5.9 billion, down by 4.7 per cent from the surplus recorded in 2018, according to the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI). In the fourth issue of the Economic Outlook of Oman highlighting the Sultanate's economic performance during 2019, the NCSI has released the prospective developments witnessed due to the global economic impact. **>A2**



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OMAN TO START COVID-19 VACCINATION DRIVE TODAY



The Ministry of Health has drawn up a plan to distribute the vaccine at pre-determined locations across the country

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman's vaccination drive against COVID-19 will begin today, following the arrival of the first consignment of vaccines in the country.

The first people to receive the vaccine will be frontline workers, those with chronic diseases, and the elderly, as they are considered the most vulnerable

to the disease.

The vaccine, produced by American company Pfizer in collaboration with German firm BioNTech, will be administered in two doses, 21 days apart. It aims to stimulate the body's immune system to produce antibodies to safely fight the virus.

The Ministry of Health has drawn up a plan to distribute the vaccine at pre-determined locations across the country's 11 governorates.

The first consignment of vaccines consists of 15,600 doses, with a second batch expected to arrive by early January 2021. With the country aiming to vaccinate 60 per cent of people in the country, phase one will cover 20 per cent of the targeted population.

Individuals under the targeted vaccination groups are requested to come forward so they can be administered the vaccine. Awareness programmes educating people about the importance of being vaccinated will be run during the drive. **>A2**

RECOMMENDATIONS



Ministry mulls steps to tackle hidden trade

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion has issued recommendations to clamp down on unethical practices such as hidden trade and prevent companies from registering under multiple names.

A team from the ministry tasked with studying these practices had "worked over a period of two months to analyse a number of existing legislative frameworks, laws and procedures related to this, and proposed improvements in line with current requirements.

"This would help make illegal the practices of hidden trade and companies holding multiple commercial registrations," added MOCI in a statement. "In the spirit of working jointly with the private sector, a number of meetings with businessmen and companies were held, to help identify the challenges they face.

"This would also help them overcome obstacles in a way that ensures government procedures are being followed, while providing quick and fair solutions," the ministry went on to say. **>A3**

ECONOMY'S STRATEGIC DIRECTION

Oman's vision 2040 targets doubling of annual income



Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Sultanate has set a target to raise the real GDP per capita by 90 per cent, according to the Oman 2040 vision. The 2040 vision data revealed that the real GDP per capita in Oman was OMR6,264 in 2017, which is 49th among 187 countries globally.

The government's target is to increase the real GDP per capita to 40 per cent in 2030, where it is targeted to reach 90 per cent by 2040.

The Economy's Strategic Direction as per the 2040 vision is towards a diversified and sustainable economy that is based on technology, knowledge and innovation, operates within integrated frameworks, ensures competitiveness, embraces industrial revolutions and achieves fiscal sustainability.

In 2017 the oil share of GDP was 39 per cent where as non oil sources was 61 per cent, the Sultanate's target is to decrease the oil share

of GDP to 16 per cent in 2030 and to reach 8.4 by 2040. Whereas the non-oil share of GDP is targeted to reach 91.6 per cent in 2040.

The economy is heading towards a robust base of economic diversification with focus on technology, knowledge and innovation. It also aims at reinforcing upstream and downstream integration among economic sectors to expand the production and export base, diversify trading partners, deepen investment in high value-added sectors, and enhance the contribution of non-oil sectors to the GDP.

The 2040 vision said, "Achieving this diversity and integration highly depends on developing local capabilities in innovation and creativity, promoting entrepreneurship, along with preparing a fertile legislative and incentives ground. The competitiveness of the Omani economy will, therefore, increase both regionally and globally, and the growth rates will improve and

stabilise in a sustainable manner. Above all, an integrated framework of insightful socio-economic policies should precede to guarantee macroeconomic stability and fiscal sustainability as top priorities, in addition to the optimal utilisation of natural resources."

The 2040 vision added, "A future Omani economy that embraces technology, knowledge and innovation will allow for the production of competitive products and services with higher knowledge and technology components.

"Consequently this will contribute to developing the economy and enhancing its competitiveness in most sectors and activities such as tourism, education, and manufacturing, including oil and gas-based industries. Innovation will be the new engine of growth but will be closely dependent on appropriate infrastructure and educational system that encourages entrepreneurship."

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN Churches and temples reopen

1 Worshippers are once again allowed to pray at temples and churches in Oman, which have been allowed to reopen under strict guidelines to prevent the spread of COVID-19. **>A3**

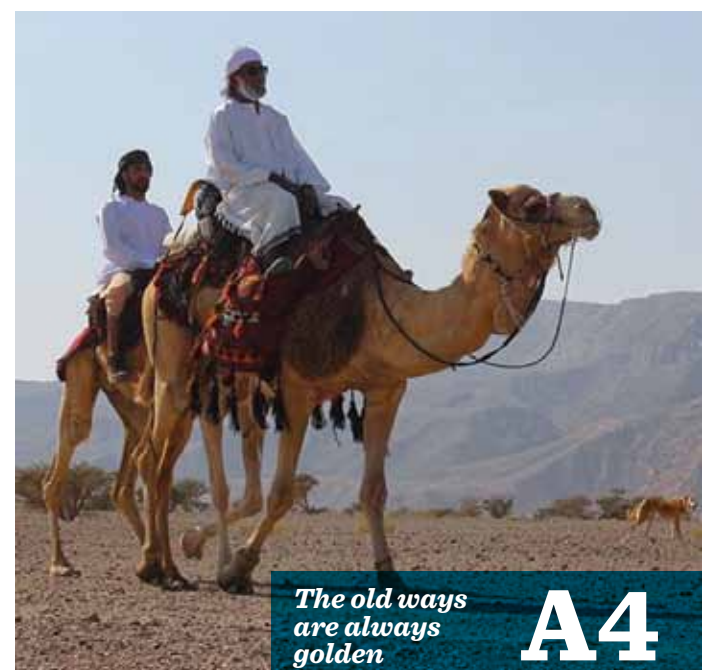


WORLD Mutated COVID-19 virus reaches France

2 France confirmed its first case of a new coronavirus variant that was recently identified in the United Kingdom, health officials said. Experts believe the mutated version of the virus is around 70% more contagious. **>A6**

MARKET Sur Industrial City explores investments

3 In line with the efforts of Madayn to localise investment projects and provide job opportunities for the national cadres, Sur Industrial City, has concluded a project to explore investments in the major industries in the industrial city. **>B1**



The old ways are always golden

A4

PRAYER
TIMINGS

Dhuhr.....12.13pm
Asr.....3:14pm
Maghrib.....5:34pm
Isha.....6:49pm
Fajr (Tomorrow).....5.27am

HISTORIC LANDMARK



RESTORATION WORK: The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism is funding the comprehensive restoration, maintenance and rehabilitation of the project. - *ONA*

Oman to probe collapse of House of Wonders

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism issued a statement on Friday following the partial collapse of Beit Al Ajaib building, popularly known as the House of Wonders in Zanzibar.

In a statement, the Ministry said, “The Ministry, with regret, followed up the partial collapse of the Beit Al-Ajaib structure in Zanzibar. As the Ministry is funding comprehensive restoration, maintenance and rehabilitation of the project, it will form a team to find out the causes and determine urgent and necessary measures to preserve and protect the building from any additional repercussions.”

Meanwhile, Salim Al Mahrouqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism has informed that the Royal holdings were transferred to a safer location.

Dr Hussein Ali Mwinyi, President of Zanzibar visited the House of Wonders, one of Oman’s historic landmarks on the coast of eastern Africa, to acquaint with the damag-



es to the building on December 25.

The Sultanate General Consul in Zanzibar had recently given instructions on commencement of the renovation works. The company undertaking the renovation would take 15 months and the restoration work would cost \$6 million.

The landmark is the longest and largest building at the Stone Town in Zanzibar and is one of the six palaces built by Sultan Barghash bin Said bin Sultan, the second Sultan of Zanzibar. - *ONA*

Oman recorded OMR5.9bn trade surplus last year

The country’s GDP decreased to OMR29.3 billion in 2019 compared to OMR30.7 billion in 2018



TRADE EXCHANGE: The volume of trade exchange in Oman decreased by 7.8 percent in 2019 compared to the previous year, reaching about OMR23.9 billion, compared to OMR26bn in 2018.

MUSCAT: The Sultanate’s trade balance in 2019 recorded a surplus of OMR5.9 billion, down by 4.7 percent from the surplus recorded in 2018, according to the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

In the fourth issue of the Economic Outlook of Oman highlighting the Sultanate’s economic performance during 2019, the NCSI has released the prospective developments witnessed due to the global economic impact.

The NCSI report highlights the Sultanate’s economic performance in 2019, which recorded a decline in the growth of GDP at current prices by 4.3 percent as a result of the decrease in the value added of oil activities by 8.4 percent and a decrease in non-oil activities by 1.5 percent. The GDP decreased to OMR29.3 billion in 2019 compared to OMR30.7 billion in 2018.

The report shows that the deficit in the Sultanate’s general budget reached OMR2.62 billion, recording a decline in the total revenue by 3.3 percent, while the total public spending decreased by 2.9 percent, recording OMR13.2 billion.

The decrease in the Sultanate’s public spending in 2019 was due to the decrease in investment expenditures in by 7.4 percent compared to the previous year.

The report states that the domestic liquidity (M2) in Oman grew by 2 percent in 2019, reaching OMR17.8 billion, compared to OMR17.4 billion in 2018. This increase in 2019 was due to the increase in the money supply in its narrow sense (M1) by 8.5 percent

in 2019, reaching OMR5.3 billion, compared to the previous year.

The Economic Outlook of Oman also shows that the total deposits in the Sultanate’s commercial banks increased by 0.3 percent in 2019, reaching OMR20.1 billion, compared to the previous year of 2018, where it reached OMR20 billion. This increase is attributed to an increase by 3.9 percent in the total private sector and an increase by 0.7 percent in the government sector deposits - ministries and other government agencies, while the deposit of other public establishment decreased by 27.5 percent in 2019, compared to the previous year.

The report points out that Muscat Securities Market index declined by 7.9 percent in 2019, reaching 3,981 points, compared to the previous year of 2018. The Shariah Index also declined by 9.4 percent in 2019, compared to 2018.

The report also states out that the volume of foreign direct investment in the Sultanate till the end of the fourth quarter of 2019 reached OMR14.6 billion, compared to OMR12.7 billion in 2018, while the inflow volume of foreign direct investment till the end of the fourth quarter of 2019 reached OMR1.9 billion.

It shows that the tourism share in GDP increased from 2.2 percent in 2018 to 2.5 percent in 2019, while direct value added of the tourism sector increased by 4.1 percent in 2019, recording OMR717.9 million, compared to OMR689.5 million in 2018. The tourism balance recorded a deficit of OMR256.4 million in 2019, down from the recorded deficit in 2018, reaching OMR19.7 million. The Sultanate’s inflation for the base year (2012) rate was 0.1 percent in 2019, compared to 0.9 percent in 2018.

The volume of trade exchange in the Sultanate decreased by 7.8 percent in 2019 compared to the previous year, reaching about OMR23.9 billion, compared to OMR26 billion in 2018. This decrease was due to a drop in the value of commodity imports by 9.5 percent, and the commodity exports which declined by 7.2 percent in 2019, compared to 2018.

The report also points out that the labor market and employment recorded a decline by 2.5 percent in 2019, while the total number of workers in the Sultanate in 2019 reached 2.16 million, compared to about 2.21 million workers in 2018.

The percentage of workers in the private and family sector reached 89 percent of the total number of workers, compared to only 11 percent in the government sector.

The economic outlook of Oman report points out that, according to the expectations of the Arab Monetary Fund, the Sultanate’s GDP growth may decrease by 3.8 percent due to the impact of the performance of oil and non-oil activities, due to the repercussions resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. - *ONA*

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COVID-19

< FROM

A1 Viable and reliable vaccine

In the context of efforts to address the pandemic, one of the priorities of the Ministry of Health was to ensure that the country gets its share of the COVID-19 vaccine by following several steps, the most important of which is the formation of a working group to help provide a viable, reliable vaccine.

The group was headed by the Deputy Minister of Health for Health Affairs, with its other members including the Director General Disease Surveillance and Control, the Director General of Medical Supplies, the Director General of Primary Health Care, the General Director of Pharmacy and Drug Control, and the in addition to the Director of the Infectious Diseases Control Department.

The role of the group was defined under Ministerial Decision No. 120/2020, which states that the team is responsible for following up global developments in the field of manufacturing and producing an anti-coronavirus vaccine, and setting up methods to obtain the appropriate vaccine in coordination with the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation, the World Health Organization, and other companies providing this specialised service.

Experts and specialists may be sought by the team to this end, and the team’s leader is required to submit a report on the recommendations over choosing the appropriate vaccine from among those produced globally.

The arrival of the vaccine has been preceded by many steps, including the implementation of a nationwide questionnaire to poll public opinion about the COVID-19 vaccine, which is aimed at assessing the level of community awareness, attitudes and practices related to its presence in the Sultanate.

A digital surveillance and recovery programme to help administer the vaccine, and follow up with those who have received it has also been set up.

Several meetings were held at various levels, including between the Minister of Health and the Directors General across the governorates to discuss the implementation plan for the vaccine, in keeping with preparations to administer it to people.

Meetings were also held with directors of infectious disease control, and vaccination specialists across the country. A training programme for healthcare workers issuing the vaccine was also held.

Because this vaccine has to be preserved at temperatures of -80 degrees Celsius, maintaining the cold storage chain for it is one of the most basic requirements to ensure its retains its quality and is safe to use.

It was important to ensure the readiness of all the governorates for storing the vaccine, after all of the required logistical support was provided as part of the national campaign for COVID-19 immunisation, which included the provision of ultra-low temperature thermal fridges to maintain steady temperatures.

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Temples, churches reopen with safety measures in place

The measures mentioned in the Ministry guidelines are intended to limit the spread of COVID-19

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Temples and churches in Oman have reopened with all measures to limit the spread of COVID-19 in place.

The Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs (MARA) had allowed the reopening of temples and churches in the country, after they had been temporarily shut during the pandemic, with an official listing the precautions required for them to operate.

"The measures required for them are the same as the ones taken for the reopening of mosques," said the MARA official.

"These include physical spacing, sterilising hands, wearing masks during their time spent in the church or temple, avoiding shaking each other's hands, avoiding touching surfaces and objects as much as possible and preventing overcrowding while entering or leaving the premises, and a commitment to stay at home if a person exhibits any relevant symptoms."

"The decision to allow places of worship to reopen was taken on 13 December," added the MARA official. "This is providing



REOPENING: The decision to allow places of worship to reopen was taken on 13 December.

they follow all the precautionary measures required."

A representative of a church in Muscat did confirm what the ministry had said.

"Only some religious facilities have resumed so far," said Father Shijo Scaria, the vicar of St Mary's Jacobite Syrian Orthodox Church in Muscat, which is located in a complex in Ruwi that has a number of other churches.

"A number of churches in our campus have indeed reopened."

In keeping with MARA guidelines, instructions for visitors worshipping at two temples in Muscat were also issued, ahead of their reopening.

"Visitors entering the temples will not be allowed to sit or meet/talk with other visitors, temple priests, and staff, on the premises," said temple management in their advisory.

"They should pray and move out of the temple as early as possible. Visitors need to undergo temperature checks during entry. If temperatures are above 37.2 degrees Celsius, they will not be per-

mitted to enter. "Wearing masks or face shields is mandatory, and a physical/social distance of 1.5 metres must be maintained at all times," they added.

"Do not share your personal protective equipment, and no social gatherings are allowed in and around both the temples."

Photography and videography on the premises are currently prohibited, and washrooms and toilets will remain closed for the time being.

Those who are sick or present symptoms of COVID-19, or have been in contact with someone who has tested positive for the disease, must not visit the temple, as well as those who suffer from chronic diseases, and the elderly.

Some places of worship, while they were closed, continued to hold prayer meetings virtually. Among them was the Protestant Church in Oman.

"We're using technology to worship, to grow through discipleship programmes, to pray, to connect, and to care for each other," said the church in an announcement.

HIDDEN TRADE

<FROM A1 Stakeholders consulted

"Proposals were also received from groups specialising in how these practices impacted society, which stressed the importance of community partnership in the functioning of the ministry."

A number of representatives from various public and private sector bodies were involved in these meetings, including the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Economy, the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Finance, the Royal Oman Police, Muscat Municipality, Dhofar Municipality, the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority.

"The tasks of the work team in-

cluded reviewing the mechanisms and controls regulating multiple commercial registrations, monitoring private institutions to ensure correct business practices, and following up with companies to make sure they provide adequate housing for expatriate workers," said the MOCIIP.

"This also included meetings with the private sector, related organisations and the concerned authorities to discuss their views over reducing the practice of multiple commercial registration and the cancellation of lease contracts for commercial stores, as well as their consequences, as well as finding ways to ensure companies in the country follow the correct Omanisation practices," said the

statement.

This latest meeting of the working group, which was formed under Ministerial Decision No. 183/2020, was chaired by Qais bin Mohammed bin Moosa Al Yusuf, the Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, in the presence of Dr. Saleh bin Said bin Salim Masan, Undersecretary for Commerce and Industry at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Economy, the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Labour, the President of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and a number of representatives of the authorities associated with such practices.

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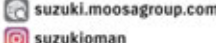
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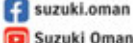
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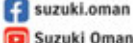
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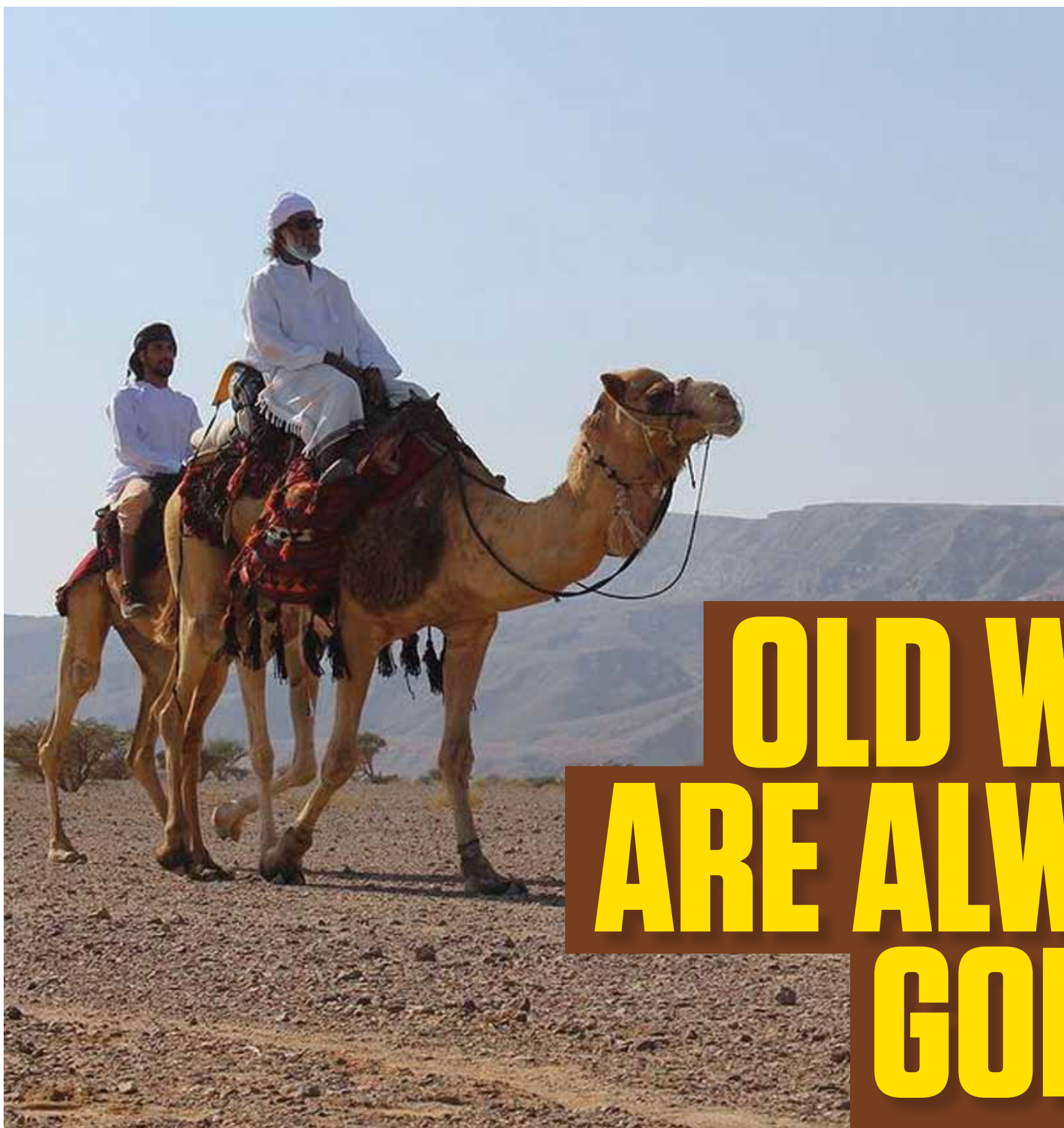
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To Omani
adventurer
Ahmed Al
Mahrouqi,

THE OLD WAYS ARE ALWAYS GOLDEN



IF YOU WERE, over the past week, driving on the road from Muscat to the town of Adam, some two hours' south of the capital, you might've come across an Omani riding a camel.

To spot a local riding a camel is, even in this day and age, not a completely unusual sight. Arabs have, after all, shared a very close bond with the ship of the desert over the millennia, and it is the value of the ways of old, and the connections with nature that are so essential to our civilisation that Ahmed Hareb Al Mahrouqi wishes to share with us.

The 63-year-old began his journey from Adam on 9 December, and ended in the capital a week later, having hopefully spread his valuable message of community, sharing and cooperation, in the hopes that it will be passed on and spread a little bit more awareness in all of our lives.

The role of the individual and society aside, though, Ahmed is also thinking about the position of

Oman. The Sultanate's reputation as a warm and welcoming nation is well known, and he wants to share that warmth and spread this awareness among others.

"There is a lot of us must do to share the vision and mission of Oman with the world. Oman is going to expand its tourism offerings, so if we want to share this with the world, we must also make sure our heritage is seen by the public," he says. "When our Sultan came to the throne, His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik spoke of unity, dedication and unity to the country, and I believe that is the way we need to go forward."

Born in Tanzania, where many Omanis have ancestry and family ties, Ahmed was but a boy of three or four when his family moved to the Sultanate, making the journey by ship. It was in Oman that he understood the value of beasts of burden such as the camel to society, and has been dedicated to sharing that message since then.

This is far from the first expedition Ahmed has taken in this context: he began his excursions on camelback to spread awareness in 2014, when he successfully crossed the deserts of the Sharqiyah Sands before halting at Adam and then Barka.

His next journey, one that was equally, if not more arduous and testing, saw him walk all the way from the Sultan's palace in Muscat to the one in Salalah, traversing about a thousand kilometres, a journey that takes a little more than a week by foot, were he to walk continuously.

His longest and most circuitous route, though, came in 2016, when he crossed international borders to spread his message with his kinsmen in the United Arab Emirates.

"I went from Sur to Burj As Sahwa in Muscat, and from there, went to Dubai, Sharjah, Abu Dhabi, Al Ain, and ended my journey in Ibri, back in Oman," recalls Ahmed. "The main challenge you



FILE PHOTOS

the old markets that are alive even today," he says. "This is my first experience of travelling on camels – it is one that is completely different to hiking, my most common method of exploration."

"Walking with camels is completely different, compared to how I normally cover long distances," admits the young Omani. "While they are able to take long strides with just one easy step, I have to take many to be at the same pace as them: it makes for a difficult day."

Through the challenges they overcame, the trio learned much about themselves and how our ways of life have changed so much with the march of time. The experience of eating dinner in the lap of nature while observing a stunning sunset was an added bonus seldom found elsewhere.

Much like our predecessors, the group rose early in the morning, moving from their campsite at about 7:30 every day, covering about 30 kilometres on average. Throughout their journey, good folk, curious about their travels, joined them, often bringing with them food or water for them to last at least some way of the road ahead.

On day three of their expedition, they were joined by Omanis from the surrounding areas, as they made their way towards Nizwa.

"It was an awesome day!" he recalls. "One of them even brought us a whole goat as a treat for our dinner. Their presence really motivated us."

Ahmed Al Mahrouqi's expedition in keeping to the tried, trusted and tested ways of the old world is one that seems to show us the importance of communities working together, and of our shared experiences making for a richer, deeper understanding of the world around us. But this union of man and nature would not have been possible without his trusty steeds, who have steadfastly accompanied him on all his travels without as much as a grunt of discontent.

"I have my own camels," he says. "The male is named Rahhal, which in Arabic means traveller. If I call him, he responds instantly – he knows his name. The meaning of the name of the other camel – Luhderiya, she is female – is 'to cry' because the sounds she makes are quite high-pitched."

"These are my loyal animals who come with me on all of these journeys. I would not be able to do this without them."

- gautam@timesofoman.com

“

We visited many old villages, and there were older settlements inside these villages as well. Some of the oldest villages in the country are in places like Izki, Birkat Al Mouz and Manah.

need to overcome during such journeys is, of course, the heat and the sun. If you are not careful, you will have adverse health effects because of them."

There are, of course, other challenges – the wind, for example, which whips up thousands of tiny particles of sand, which feel like a swarm of microscopic insects stinging you all at once when they blow all over you – which need preparation and leave little room for underestimating the elements.

"I chose Adam as my starting destination, because near the

town is a village that is home to Harith Al Busaidi, who promoted the status of Oman 275 years ago," explains Ahmed. "I will be starting my journey from his home."

He adds: "We visited many old villages, and there were older settlements inside these villages as well. Some of the oldest villages in the country are in places like Izki, Birkat Al Mouz and Manah."

Joining Ahmed on his trip will be Rachel MacIver, a travel writer based out of Oman, but originally from Denmark, and hiking enthusiast Ahmed Al Jawhari. Like him, they too will be required to live life in the old way.

"We made our breakfast at our camp," says Ahmed. "When we stopped at our second camp for the day, we set up our mobile kitchen and cooked there. We made food for ourselves, and took tents to sleep in. This is the olden, golden way of travelling – we did not depend on anyone but ourselves. As for washing ourselves, we took bath wherever there was a well, or whenever we came across a falaj."

Keeping to the ways of old was the theme of the journey: Ahmed and his little band crossed the country on trade routes used by merchants who came to the country before the advent of cars. For Mohammed Al Jawhari, who is most at home among the country's mountains, this was a brand new experience.

"We passed through many locations important to our heritage, reliving the ancient trade routes our ancestors took, and visited



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ENVIRONMENT AUTHORITY STATEMENT

Statement on
ban of single-use
plastic bags

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Environment Authority has issued a statement regarding the implementation of banning the use of single-use plastic shopping bags.

A statement issued online by Environment Authority said, “In the manufacture of plastic products, many organic materials such as bisphenol and vinyl chloride increase the chances of miscarriage and reduce testosterone levels in

the body. Six days to start implementing the decision to ban the use of single-consumption plastic shopping bags No. 23/2020.” “According to a research study conducted by the Chemicals Department, plastic bags are made

of polyethylene which does not decompose and is a harmful substance that may cause some types of diseases,” the authority added. The plastic that is made within two minutes and used for a just 20 minutes, needs 400 years to de-

compose in nature. Only about 8 per cent of it reaches landfills and the rest is ends up in the air, on trees, beaches other open places and seas harming and killing wild animals including marine creatures, it pointed out.



Ministry of Social Development

Tender Announcement

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

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Ministry of Finance

Tender Announcement No. (6 /2020)

The Ministry of Finance has the pleasure to invite interested companies to quote for the following tender:

Tender Title	Document Fee	Purchase Document Deadline	Submission Deadline
Government Properties Insurance 2021/2022	R.O 125	Tuesday 5/1/2021	10:00 A.M Wednesday 3/2/2021

All Insurance companies who wish to bid are kindly requested to register through E-tendering system of The General Secretariat of the Tender Board, and obtain a valid registration certificate. To obtain the tender document and specifications, companies must pay the fees online through safe E-payment gateway in the following link <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>.

The bids must be submitted online via <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>, in addition to hard copies. E-tendering system will not accept any bid submitted after the deadline (Wednesday 3/2/2021).

All companies must attach a copy of the bank guarantee or certified cheque issued by a any bank in the Sultanate Of Oman. The value of the cheque must not be less than (1%) of the bidding price, and must be valid for (90) days from the date of the bid submission. The original bank guarantee must be submitted along with a hard copy of the quotation duly signed and stamped in red waxed sealed envelope addressed to the Secretary of the Internal Tender Committee/Financial Affairs Department/Ministry of Finance. The name and the number of the Tender should be written on the back side of the envelope.

For further queries or technical support, please contact us via telephone No. 24166670, or E-mail: etenderhd@mtc.gov.om.

Internal Tender Committee



AL TASNIM GROUP

SUB-CONTRACTORS REQUIRED URGENTLY

Al Tasnim an excellent grade multi-discipline contracting company in Oman wishes to engage sub-contractors (excluding materials) in all trades including MEP works in major building and civil engineering projects in Muscat and outstations including Nizwa, Salalah, Suwaiq, Khasab, Sohar and Duqm.

Interested companies and individuals are hereby invited to submit the information and preferred locations for undertaking sub-contract works to uditha.galapatha@altasnim.com within 07 days of this notice.

Al Tasnim will provide all details of subcontract works and commence the selection of sub-contractors after receipt of the information.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION
PLEASE CONTACT : +968 91984614, +968 98083560**

Invitation to Tender (Re-Tender)

Dhofar Power Company S.A.O.C (DPC) invites reputable Contractors for carrying out following works in Dhofar Region on turnkey basis:

Tender reference No.	Title of the tender
DPC/Tender/2020/114	Rectification Work of 33kV Network Damages due to Heavy Rain in 2020 (Zone – 3 & 1A) Phase – 01 Part - 2

Contractors participating in the tendering process shall be at least Grade - B registered electrical contractor with Distribution Code Review Panel (DCRP) as per above mentioned grade, Sultanate of Oman and should have performed similar jobs in Sultanate of Oman.

Apart from the above, the Contractors participating in the tendering process shall have Competent Electrical Person (CEP) certified by DPC and copy of the valid CEP certificate shall be submitted along with bid without which the bids will not be considered for evaluation. Further, Tenderers will be evaluated as per the HSE qualification criterion specified in the Tender documents.

The tender documents detailing the scope of work can be obtained from DPC's office by paying an amount of RO. 100/- each at the address provided below. The schedule for the tendering process is as below:

- Last Date for issue of tender documents : 3:00 PM 10th January 2021
- Last Date for submission of Proposals : 2:00 PM 17th January 2021

Tenderers are requested to note that the bids accompanied with Tender Bond (2% of the quoted bid price) shall only be considered for evaluation.

Any Queries Please Contact: Phone 23232554 / 92772047; lawrances@dpcoman.nama.om / praveena@dpcoman.nama.om



Dhofar Power Company S.A.O.C
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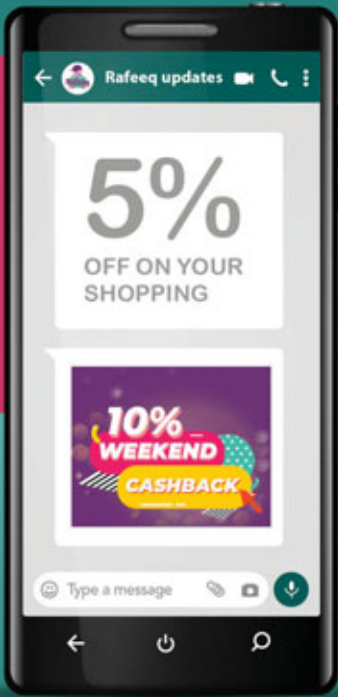




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FRENCH HEALTH MINISTRY

Mutated COVID variant reaches France

PARIS: France confirmed its first case of a new coronavirus variant that was recently identified in the UK, the French health ministry said in a statement. Experts believe the mutated version of the virus is around 70% more contagious.

The identification of this new variant, known as VOC-202012/01, prompted more than 50 countries to impose restrictions on travel to the UK.

The infected man arrived in France from London on December 19. He is asymptomatic and isolating at home in the central city of Tours.

In addition to the first case, laboratories are analyzing tests from several other people who may have the new variant, the statement said. France has recently imposed a blockade on people traveling from the UK in a bid to limit the spread.

Although the officials lifted the snap measure after two days, the move stranded thousands of drivers in Dover.



Some limits on travel Between the UK and France remain in place in a bid to stop the new variant from spreading.

Elsewhere in Europe

In Germany, the country's Association of Cities told people to lower expectations for the coronavirus

vaccine in the short term — a day before Germany's vaccination scheme is due to begin.

"It's a start, but the specter of the dangerous coronavirus isn't gone just yet," the association's president, Burkhard Jung, told the Funke Media Group in an interview. He added that mass vac-

cination was not yet feasible because there was "too little vaccine for that right now."

On Saturday, Germany recorded another 14,455 coronavirus cases and the death toll rose by 240 to 29,422.

The first 9,750 vaccine doses have arrived in Greece. They were transported into Greece across the Bulgarian border in the north. A video showed the van carrying them escorted by six police cars.

Vaccinations will begin at five Athens hospitals on Sunday. Health personnel and elderly residents of nursing homes are first in line to be vaccinated.

Asia

Mainland China recorded 20 new COVID-19 cases on Friday, up from 14 cases the previous day, the country's health authority said on Saturday.

The country's National Health Commission said in its daily bulletin that 12 of the new cases were imported and eight were locally transmitted. **bw**

BOMB BLAST

Vehicle explosion in US state an 'intentional act'

WASHINGTON: A vehicle exploded in the downtown area of the city of Nashville, Tennessee on Friday at around 6:30 a.m. local time (12:30 UTC).

Three people were injured in the blast. They were taken to hospital, but none of them were in critical condition.

Police are uncertain whether anyone was inside the RV at the moment of the blast.

Investigators found tissue that they "believe could be human remains," Police Chief John Drake said at a briefing.

"We will continue to examine that," Drake told reporters. "There are no fatalities we know of," he added.

The blast also caused widespread damage to buildings as well as telecoms outages due to a telecommunications office being effected.

The area was largely deserted at the time of the explosion, due to the early hour and the Christmas holiday, when most businesses

are closed.

"This appears to have been an intentional act. Law enforcement is closing downtown streets as investigation continues," the Metro Nashville Police Department said.

How did the events unfold?

Authorities responded to a report of shots fired on the scene, where they encountered a motor home, also known as a recreational vehicle or an RV. The RV was blaring a recording that said a potential bomb would detonate in 15 minutes.

This prompted the police to evacuate nearby buildings and call in a bomb squad.

"Shortly after that, the RV exploded," Drake said in a news conference.

Mayor John Cooper issued a state of emergency for the city — known as a hub for American country music — and a curfew for the area. **bw**



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SPORTS




CRICKET ROUND-UP

Ubaid, Sanuth star in Alpha victory; easy win for Sarco

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Arm Alpha rode on young Ubaid Ullah's fabulous 4 for 26 and Sanuth Ebrahim's solid 56 to beat Renaissance by 6 wickets in a Premier Division 50-over League clash at OC Turf 1 in Amerat on Friday.

Renaissance failed to capitalise on its decision to bat first, getting dismissed for a meagre 131 in the 41st over due largely to brilliant bowling by Ubaid and Ahmed Fayyaz Butt who picked up 3 for 21. Oman all-rounder Sufyan Mahmood topscored with a fighting 51.

Arm Alpha would have found chasing the small total a bit more difficult had it not been for Sanuth Ebrahim's defiant 56 that saw it home in the 31st over with six wickets in hand. None of the other top five batsmen could reach even 20. Rafi Ullah took two wickets.

Brief Scores (Premier Division 50 overs): Renaissance 131 all out



Sanuth Ebrahim of Arm Alpha

in 40.1 overs (Sufyan Mahmood 51 – 7x4, Fawad Ali 25 – 1x4, Ubaid Ullah 4-26, Ahmad Fayyaz Butt 3-21) lost to Arm Alpha 132 for 4 in 30.4 overs (Sanuth Mohamed 56 – 5x4, 1x6, Rafi Ullah 2-36) by 6 wickets.

Murad bats Sarco to victory Murad Khan's magnificent 88 off 59 powered Sarco to a comfortable 76-run win over Ernst & Young in a 50-over A Division League game at OC Turf 2 on Friday. Murad's sixes-laden knock

was the highlight of Sarco's 281 for 7 that also included 28 by Shahbaj Khan and 27 by Hafiz Zahid. Veterans Amir Hussain and Sultan Ahmed bagged two wickets each.

Ernst & Young failed to recover from 64 for 4 in the 16th over, getting bowled out for 205 in the 45th over.

Sultan Ahmed was its leading scorer with a fluent 51 while Farhan Afzal and Omar Sarfraz contributed 41 and 34 respectively. Ajay Menon and Guru Kotian were the pick of Sarco bowlers, taking three wickets each.

Brief Scores (A Division 50 overs): Sarco 281 for 7 in 50 overs (Murad Khan 88 – 7x4, 5x6, Shahbaj Khan 28 – 2x4, 2x6, Zahid Hafiz 27 – 3x4, 1x6, Amir Hussain 2- 48, Sultan Ahmed 2-47) beat Ernst & Young 205 all out in 44.4 overs (Sultan Ahmed 51 – 5x4, Farhan Afzal 41 – 2x4, 2x6, Ajay Menon 3-25, Guru Kotian 3-41, Dileepa Srilal 2-25, Sandip Patel 2-47) by 76 runs.

Arif, Ihsan help Orient win big

Yet another splendid hundred by Arif Hussain and Ihsan Khan's superb 6 for 41 helped Orient Travels/Gitacs to a big 134-run victory against LC Tech in a 30-over B Division match at Muscat Municipality ground 1 on Friday.

Apart from Arif's 100 off 65, Orient Travel's 239 for 7 included Rafique Al Balushi's vital 48 off 55. Rajesh Shetty and Noushad Haneefa took two wickets each. LC Tech failed to read Ihsan Khan's left-arm spin well, folding up for a dismal 105 in the 18th over. Gurvir Singh and Arif claimed two wickets each.

Brief Scores (B Division): Orient Travels/Gitacs 239 for 7 in 30 overs (Arif Hussain 100 – 15x4, Rafique Al Balushi 48 – 4x4, Rajesh Shetty 2-39, Noushad Haneefa 2-49) beat LC Tech 105 all out in 17.3 overs (Abdul Rauf 21 – 2x4, Rahul Rajeev 20 – 2x4, 1x6, Ihsan Khan 6-41, Gurvir Singh 2-14, Arif Hussain 2-27) by 134 runs.

Suhaib's ton lifts OCT Al Hail to victory

In another B Division game, a splendid 104 by Suhaib Abdul Ghani steered OCT Al Hail A to an exciting 5-wicket victory against PDO RC at Muscat Municipality ground 2. PDO failed to put a daunting total on the board, scoring 184 for 9 in 30 overs.

Adiya Sapra (49), Asadullah Asghar (42) and Nadeem Ahmed (41) were its main scorers. Nadhir Ghulam and Abdul Ghani bagged two wickets each. OCT Al Hail rode on Suhaib's terrific knock to chase the total down in the 29th over, scoring 188 for 5. Abdul Ghani batted well too for his 31 off 35.

Brief Scores (B Division): PDO RC 184 for 9 in 30 overs (Aditya Sapra 49 – 4x4, Asadullah Asghar 42 – 3x4, 1x6, Nadeem Ahmed 41 – 5x4, Nadhir Ghulam 2-26, Abdul Ghani Al Balushi 2-30, Hisham Shafi 2-35, Ismail Al Balushi 2-50) lost to Oct Al Hail A 188 for 5 in 28.4 overs by 5 wickets.

Bumrah and Ashwin steal the show to put Indian team on top

While Bumrah picked 4, off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin was once again in his elements as he picked 3 wickets



INDIA VS AUSTRALIA: While Shubman Gill came out with flying colours, having hit an unbeaten 38, Mayank Agarwal failed to stand up and get counted as he fell for a duck.

MELBOURNE: With the Indian bowlers once again stealing the show, it was a test of facing 11 overs of quality pace bowling for the batsmen in the closing stages of the opening day of the Boxing Day Test between India and Australia at the Melbourne Cricket Ground on Saturday.

While Shubman Gill came out with flying colours, having hit an unbeaten 38-ball 28, Mayank Agarwal failed to stand up and get counted as he fell for a duck.

At stumps, India's score read 36/1 with Gill batting on 28 and Cheteshwar Pujara giving him company on 7. The visitors trail by 159 runs with nine wickets in the bag. For Australia, it was Mitchell Starc who picked the lone wicket to finish the day with figures of 1/14 from four overs. Pat Cummins bowled without luck to finish wicketless despite bowling four fiery overs. But it was the In-

dian bowlers who once again showed why they are considered one of the best in the business at present.

With Tim Paine winning the toss and batting first at the MCG, the hosts would have thought of putting on a decent score on the board. But led by Jasprit Bumrah (4/56), the Indians made short work of the Australian batting as they finished their first essay on 195.

While Bumrah picked four, off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin was once again in his elements as he picked three wickets, including the all-important wicket of batting mainstay Steve Smith.

Australia got off to the worst possible start as Bumrah dismissed Joe Burns for a ten-ball duck in the fifth over. Marnus Labuschagne then joined Mathew Wade in the middle and the duo

tried to stitch the innings for the hosts as both batsmen saw off the early spell of Bumrah and Umesh Yadav.

However, Ashwin dismissed Wade (30) - caught brilliantly by Ravindra Jadeja. In his next over, Ashwin dismissed Smith for a duck to put visitors in the driving seat. With Australia in trouble on 38/3, Labuschagne and Travis Head played cautiously and took the team over the 100-run mark in the 38th over.

Head then picked the tempo and smashed Bumrah for back-to-back boundaries. But just when it looked like the duo would bring Australia back in the game, Bumrah spoiled the party for hosts. The Indian pacer dismissed Head (38) to end an 86-run stand for the fourth wicket.

Just before the concluding minutes of the second session,

debutant Mohammad Siraj dismissed Labuschagne, who was just two runs short of completing his half-century. Tim Paine and Cameron Green then took the field. Siraj struck again in the last session as Green (12) was given LBW, reducing Australia to 155/6.

The fall of wickets did not stop as Ashwin and Bumrah got hold of Paine and Mitchell Starc respectively, putting the hosts under pressure.

Pat Cummins and Nathan Lyon looked to make some quick runs by using the long handle to good effect, but the Indian bowlers kept applying the pressure and took their chances to ensure that the last three didn't manage to pile the agony on the Indians.

Brief Scores: Australia 195 (Labuschagne 48, Head 38; Bumrah 4/56); India 36/1 (Gill 28*; Starc 1/14) **ANI**

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE



Liverpool focused on the next game, not thinking about bagging title: Klopp

LIVERPOOL: Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp said that they are not thinking about challenging for the title at the moment and are only focused on the next game.

The Reds hold a four-point lead at the top in Premier League standings with their next match set to be played against West Brom on Sunday. "Honestly, we do not think about challenging [for] the title at the moment; honestly, not at all. I know is kind of boring but it is the truth because we do not understand it in a different way. We just try to make sure we are as competitive as possible in the next game," the club's official website quoted Klopp as saying.

"So, you win a game, which is great - the best feeling you can get. Then usually you play a few days later again. This time we didn't have that, that's true. The first time. Now we try to use that really to prepare for the next few

games, probably not for the rest of the season but for the next few games," he added.

Klopp's men have been involved in title races in each of the past two campaigns, following up their second-place finish in 2018-19 by topping the division with 99 points last season. The manager said his players want to win more but for that, they have to keep adding points to their tally.

"Being successful in the past can have different kinds of influence - have you had enough? Do you want more? These kinds of things," he said.

"My boys for sure did not have enough yet and want, for sure, more but that does not make it more likely. It just means we created so far a basis and we have to create much more of it to use it in the end. And so far, nothing really happened in this league," Klopp added. **ANI**

CRICKET

Rahane's field placements have all been spot on: Ponting

MELBOURNE: Former Australia skipper Ricky Ponting on Saturday praised the leadership skills of Ajinkya Rahane on the first day of the second Test against Australia here at the Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG).

Ponting's remarks came as India bundled out Australia for 195 in the first innings after being asked to bowl first. For the visitors, Jasprit Bumrah scalped four wickets while Ravichandran Ashwin took three wickets. "Rahane's captaincy has been brilliant so far. We were all a bit worried about how they were going to pick themselves up after Adelaide. I think they looked potentially better today under Rahane's leadership. Rahane's field placements, bowling changes have all been pretty much spot on. With captaincy, making bowling changes, and changing the field, you need guys to be able to execute well," cricket.com.au quoted Ponting as saying.



"Some of the wickets they got today, even Smith at leg slip early on, I think that was a set plan. Joe Burns' dismissal would have been exactly how they wanted it. Cam Green was set up today as well -- Siraj bowled some really good outswingers to him then bowled an inswinger back down the line that trapped him in front. I think there's been a lot of planning that's gone into it and Rahane should take a lot of credit for

that," added Ponting.

Ponting was Rahane's coach at Delhi Capitals in this year's Indian Premier League (IPL). Talking about Rahane, Ponting said: "We had him at Delhi this year (in the IPL). He's a very smart cricketer, he's a terrific bloke, works exceptionally hard on his own game but it just seems today the Indian boys have got right in behind him and they're working for each other which is always good to see." **ANI**

NZ VS PAKISTAN

Skipper Williamson steadies ship with fighting knock

TAURANGA: Skipper Kane Williamson hit a fighting unbeaten 94 and senior campaigner Ross Taylor scored 70 to help New Zealand survive the Pakistan bowling attack on the opening day of the Boxing Day Test here on Saturday.

New Zealand ended the day on a solid 222/3, courtesy Williamson's knock and a well made 42 by Henry Nicholls. With the hosts looking in a dismal position at 13/2, the Kiwi skipper stood up and got counted. For Pakistan, it was a one-man show as Shaheen Shah Afridi picked all the three wickets -- first dismissing the Kiwi openers and then sending back Taylor. Put in to bat first, New Zealand got off to the worst possible start as Shaheen removed Tom Latham in the opening over of the Test.

Riding high on confidence from his recent outing in international cricket, the pacer came back all



guns blazing and then dismissed Tom Blundell. The wicket-keeper batsman edged the ball to slips to leave his team in trouble during the first session.

However, Williamson and Taylor steadily batted through till lunch on the first day and had seemed to have recovered from the early blows. The second session fully belonged to the Kiwis as Pakistan went wicket-less to see

the duo bringing up their tenth hundred-plus stand in the longest format of the game. The duo put on a fighting 120-run stand for the third wicket to keep Pakistan bowlers at bay.

New Zealand lost Taylor at the start of the third session but Williamson and Nicholls ensured the Kiwis didn't suffer any more hiccups as they stitched an unbroken 89-run stand. **ANI**

BUSINESS SUMMIT 2020

Innovation and digitalisation will play a huge role in achieving the objectives of Oman's Vision 2040, while a favourable environment is a key to attracting talent for a knowledge-based society, speakers at the 11th edition of OER Business Summit 2020 affirmed.

MARKET BUSINESS & FINANCE



ECONOMY RECOVERING

The Indian economy is recovering faster than expected and may post positive growth in the third quarter of the current financial year, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said in its report on the state of the economy.

Sur Industrial City explores investment opportunities

The scheme aims at creating value-added projects and consequently link them to the needs of the major factories as part of the plan adopted by Sur Industrial City to promote circular economy and supply chain efficiency

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Sur Industrial City has concluded a project of exploring investment opportunities in the major industries operating in the industrial city.

This is in line with the efforts made by the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates – Madayn to localise investment projects and provide job opportunities for the national cadres.

Supported by Oman LNG, Oman India Fertiliser Company (Omifco) and Phoenix Power Company, this project aims at creating value-added projects and consequently link them to the needs of the major factories as part of the plan adopted by Sur Industrial City to promote circular economy and supply chain efficiency.



JOB OPPORTUNITIES: The project is in line with the efforts made by the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates – Madayn to localise investment projects and provide job opportunities for the national cadres. - Supplied picture

trial City to promote circular economy and supply chain efficiency.

Eng. Abdulqadir bin Salim Al Balushi, Director General of Sur Industrial City, stated that this project represents an output of a study that was carried out last year with the aim of boosting investment volume in the industrial city.

"It is worthwhile to mention that Oqood Business Development, a company incubated at Madayn's National Business Centre, implemented this project," Al Balushi noted, adding, "The promotional campaign of the investment op-

portunities in South Al Sharqiyah governorate will be launched by the beginning of next year in coordination with the concerned bodies."

He added that Sur Industrial City is planning to hold a meeting by the beginning of next year that will bring together representatives of major companies and owners of SMEs in the industrial city with the aim of enhancing effective communication channels between the two sides.

"It is significant to bring these sides together to contribute to the growth of the existing industries in

Sur Industrial City. In partnership with the major companies in Sur Industrial City, the focus will be placed on the localisation of sustainable projects that contributes to enhancing In-Country Value and capital turnover in the Sultanate," Al Balushi pointed out.

Investment opportunities

Several investment opportunities were announced earlier by Sur Industrial City to be developed by the private sector, which includes the establishment of workforce township, shipyard complex, and sewer-

age treatment plant. The projects are expected to enter the implementation phase by the beginning of 2021.

"More investment opportunities will be announced in 2021 for the private sector in health and hotel support services, and vehicle/truck maintenance centre," Al Balushi said.

Five-year plan

He emphasised that Madayn aims through its annual and five-year plans that are based on Oman Vision 2040 to support industrial in-



Abdulqadir bin Salim Al Balushi, Director-General of Sur Industrial City

novation projects and business incubators. "An initiative will be launched by Sur Industrial City in cooperation with a private company in the industrial city to establish a business incubator and offer the services of Industrial Innovation Centre at Sur Industrial City," Al Balushi informed.

Until the mid-2020, the total volume of investments in Sur Industrial City exceeded OMR2,045 billion, marking a growth rate of 0.67 per cent compared to the same period in 2019.

The number of the workforce at the industrial city increased to 4,111 noting an Omanisation rate of 49 per cent. The total number of localised projects reached 127 by mid-2020, and the total area of Sur Industrial City reached 36.1 million sqm, which makes it the largest industrial city in terms of area.

GOING DIGITAL

Dhofar Insurance Company launches online portal for health and life insurance



INSURANCE SERVICE: In the health insurance segment, Dhofar Insurance Company has partnered with leading healthcare providers in the Sultanate and globally. - Supplied picture

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Dhofar Insurance Company recently launched the online portal for issuing health and life insurance policies through its website.

The function was attended by Ahmed bin Ali Al-Maamari, Vice President of the Capital Market Authority for the Insurance Sector, and Majid Al-Toky, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Dhofar Insurance Company.

On this occasion, the CEO of Dhofar Insurance, Sunil Kohli, said, "We are happy to launch these new services, which make it easy for our valued customers to get medical and life insurance covers from the comfort of their homes and offices."

"For more than three decades, our customers have been familiar with Dhofar Insurance Company being the leader in providing vari-



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ous types of insurance services and being at the forefront of the insurance industry in the Sultanate. The company provides a range of retail and corporate insurance products such as motor insurance, health insurance, life insurance commercial insurance, etc. The company has a proven track record in prompt and reliable claims settlement," Sunil Kohli added.

In the health insurance segment, the company has partnered with leading healthcare providers in the Sultanate and globally to meet the healthcare needs of policyholders. Individual health insurance is an ideal option for individuals and families," he opined.

Dhofar Insurance Life products suite includes covers for individuals, groups and credit life insurance.

Dhofar Insurance Company is one of the oldest and largest insurance companies operating in the Sultanate of Oman.

It has a network of more than 40 branches spread throughout the Sultanate. The branches cover the various regions of the Sultanate, including Khasab and the border areas with the UAE and Yemen.

These branches provide all insurance services by Omani staff. The company is committed to the Omanisation policy, where it has achieved close to 100 per cent Omanisation ratio in the branches.

COMMENTARY

Oil, electric vehicles and the environment: Driving climate change plans

Countries around the world are rightly racing to announce aggressive climate change plans. The energy transition resulting from these plans has driven excitement about and significant investment in, electric vehicles (EVs). These are seen as having a crucial role to play in reducing pollution and our dependence on oil.

Certainly, some of our appetite for oil stems from our cars. Passenger vehicles account for 25 per cent of global oil demand – or 25 million barrels per day (bpd). So EVs have a role to play in reducing this. But the global fleet of internal-combustion-engine (ICE) vehicles could potentially take decades to phase out. There are currently more than 1.4 billion ICE vehicles on the planet, with around 100 million new ones bought every year.

Governments can undoubtedly take steps to incentivise the adoption of EVs and have long-sought to do so. In 2009, the Obama administration ran the 'cash for clunkers' programme, which provided between \$3,500 and \$4,500 for trading in an older, less fuel-efficient car for a new higher-efficiency one. This proved so popular that its funding had to be tripled to nearly \$3 billion. Similar measures could help to accelerate the transition to EVs, but current incentive plans are mixed. Germany offers 9,000 EUR, the \$7,500 for the first 200,000 models sold while China has recently reduced incentives. Much more will be needed to incentivise widespread adoption, particularly given the relatively high price

point of many EVs.

EVs ability to impact oil demand will be limited in the short term. According to a 2019 Columbia University survey of all available EV projections, the great majority of analysis concludes that EV uptake will cause a decline in oil demand of less than 5 million bpd by 2040.[2] So while EVs are important, they are not going to eradicate our reliance on oil any time soon. They also have environmental costs of their own, both in electricity generation and in the extensive mining required to construct them.

Quite apart from cars, oil permeates our lives in many ways. Petrochemicals – the basis of plastics and many other everyday materials – account for 12 million bpd, and aviation and shipping for another 12 million bpd. Trucking uses 17 million bpd, power 5 million and buildings 8 million. Meanwhile, industrial uses account for 6 million bpd, and the combination of other smaller uses accounts for a further 17 million. So for oil demand to fall to zero, we would need to rid the Earth not only of all ICE cars, but also of trucks, ships, aeroplanes, and myriad industrial and petrochemical applications.

We are not, then, going to be able to stop using oil entirely in the next 40 years. That shouldn't prevent us from taking steps to reduce oil usage where we can. But we should also think very carefully about the investment decisions we make with regard to energy.

By Robert Minter, Investment Strategist, Aberdeen Standard Investments

MARKET

Innovation and digitalisation to drive Oman's Vision 2040

Under the topic "Vision 2040: Charting a roadmap to Blessed Renaissance 2.0," the OER Business Summit 2020 deliberated in detail the national economic priorities outlined in the vision document such as economic diversification and fiscal sustainability

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Innovation and digitalisation will play a huge role in achieving the objectives of Oman's Vision 2040, while a favourable environment is a key to attracting talent for a knowledge-based society, speakers at the 11th edition of OER Business Summit 2020, a flagship event by the Sultanate's premium business magazine, affirmed.

Talal bin Sulaiman Al Rahbi, Vice Chairman of The Implementation Follow Up Unit of Oman Vision 2040 was the chiefguest at the Summit, which was held under the auspices of Sheikh Salim bin Mustahail Al Mashani at Sheraton Oman.

In his keynote address, His Highness Dr Adham Turki Al Said, Assistant Professor of Economics at the College of Economics and Political Science in Sultan Qaboos University, CEO and Co-founder of The Firm for Business and Economic

Consulting stressed that achieving the strategic directions and goals of Oman Vision 2040 is not the responsibility of the government alone, the private sector will have a key role to play in realising it.

Vision 2040, he says also envisions the share of non-oil activities to grow significantly. Innovation and digitalisation are critical to achieving the objectives of Vision 2040. Overall, productivity has declined over the decade in Oman. The capacity to innovate is still weak and the country is still not doing enough for digitalisation, he says. One of the key elements of the Vision 2040 statement is to 'create wealth through economic diversification and private sector partnership.' In this backdrop, he says, the private sector should take up more responsible roles in catalysing growth. The target set for 2040 is very ambitious and it is essential to work together to reach

there, he avers.

Under the topic "Vision 2040: Charting a roadmap to Blessed Renaissance 2.0," the summit deliberated in detail the national economic priorities outlined in the vision document such as economic diversification and fiscal sustainability, enabling the private sector to drive a competitive economy that is integrated with the world economy and to create a dynamic labour market that is attractive to talent and responsive to demographic, economic, knowledge and technical changes. The summit also dwelt with challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Driving sustainability

The keynote address was followed by a fireside chat with His Highness Sayyid Tarik bin Shabib Al Said, Chairman, Renaissance Village Duqm (RSVD) and Director, Renaissance Services, who shared insights on driving sustainability, efficiency, innovation and also the expansion plans in RSVD. This was followed by an incisive presentation by Shahid Rasool, Deputy CEO, Ominvest, on "Economic and Business Competitiveness beyond the COVID Era," where he dwelt on the rapidly changing economic and business landscape, COVID implications, technology trends, global macroeconomy and major businesses across key sectors.

The presentation also addressed the long-term strategic issues and enablers (Oman Vision 2040), and also, immediate issues

facing Omani/GCC businesses.

Endorsement partners

The Special Economic Zone at Duqm and Oman Manufacturers Association were the endorsement partners of the summit, which was organised by UMS Events. Petroleum Development Oman (PDO), Ominvest, Port of Duqm, Renaissance Services and OQ were the Strategic Partners. Octal and GBM Oman were the Associate Partners. Dhofar Insurance was the Insurance Partner, Muscat Eye Laser Center, Dhofar International Development & Investment Holding Co (DIDIC), Al Tamman Indisil Ferrochrome, Drug Manufacturing Company and Q-Services were the Support Partners. RAB and Cornerstone were the Knowledge Partners; *Times of Oman*, *Al Shabiba* and *Alam Al Iktisaa*d, the Media Partners, while BusinessLiveME, the Online Media Partner. Photocentre was the Light and Sound Partner.

First panel session

The first panel session on the topic Economic roadmap to Vision 2040 deliberated on the strategic economic direction that Oman needs to pursue a well-diversified, sustainable and competitive economy that is based on knowledge and innovation and the challenges owing to the COVID-19 pandemic and ways in which these can be negotiated by businesses. Panellists at the session included Shaikh Aimen Al Hosni, CEO, Oman Airports, Anwar Al Jabri, CEO, Ja-

green Capital, Eddy Abboud, CEO, GBM Oman, Himansu Mohapatra, Group General Manager - Muscat Overseas Group, Reggy Vermeulen, CEO, Port of Duqm. Mayank Singh, Group Editor, UMS moderated the session.

Shaikh Aimen Al Hosni, says the pandemic severely impacted the leisure and travel industry in Oman. "With the travel restrictions being eased now and nationals of 103 countries getting exemption from entry visas for ten days in Oman, we see a ray of hope going forward," he says.

Anwar Al Jabri says the Ominvest Group was able to deliver a robust operational and financial performance during the first three quarters of 2020 despite the challenges presented by COVID-19. "We recorded impressive performance due to our strategic plans."

Eddy Abboud says driving efficiency and increased digitalisation is the need of the hour to realise the objectives of Vision 2040. Digitalisation is going to be a huge part of the progress we see in Oman over the coming years. "We need to stop putting obstacles and let the economy move ahead."

Himansu Mohapatra highlighted the need for lower rentals in Duqm to attract more investors.

Reggy Vermeulen highlighted the need for more FDI and increased private sector investments in Duqm. Logistics is a key sector of growth, he says and added that the private sector will play a pivotal role in the development of Duqm.

The summit also featured presentations by Venkatesh Palakkad, Principal Consultant and Business Head, RAB HR, Eng. Ahmed Al Dughaishi, Infrastructure Manager, Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) and Samiya Al Sharji, HR Business Partner, Petroleum Development Oman.

Second panel session

The second panel discussion deliberated on "Talent Development: A key enabler of organisational success in the post-COVID-19 world." Nurturing talent has been one of the key pillars of Oman's national vision for development. The discussion looked at Oman's talent development journey; building a talent development plan; Key drivers/enablers of a talent development plan; the key role of well-being and mental health during and post COVID-19 and calculating ROI on talent development projects. The panellists included Abdullah Al Rashdi, Lead Talent Elevator, OQ, Dr Khamis Al Muniri, Director General of Madayn Industrial Academy, Kamla Al Nadabi, HR Manager, Dhofar Insurance, Mutheer al Kalbani, Vice President & Head - Learning & Capability Development, Sohar International, Said Al Rashdi, CEO, Oman Manufacturers Association, Zuweina Al Minji, HR Business Partnering Manager, Petroleum Development Oman (PDO). The session was moderated by Venkatesh Palakkad.

ECONOMY

Thai central bank holds policy rate steady

BANGKOK: The Bank of Thailand (BOT), the country's central bank maintained the policy rate at a low level amid efforts to support economic recovery but lowered its economic growth forecast for

2021. The BOT's monetary policy committee held the policy rate unchanged at 0.5 per cent, saying the economy continued to recover but downside risks and uncertainties remained high in the period ahead.

"The committee voted to maintain the policy rate at this meeting to preserve the limited policy space to act at the appropriate and most effective timing," according to a statement on the BOT website. - *Xinhua*

POSITIVE GROWTH

Indian economy recovering faster than expected: RBI

MUMBAI: The Indian economy is recovering faster than expected and may post positive growth in the third quarter of the current financial year, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said in its report on the state of the economy.

"Indian economy is pulling out of COVID-19's deep abyss and is refracting at a pace that beats most predictions," said the report.

Economic conditions continued to improve through November on the back of the uptick in agriculture and manufacturing activity. Financial conditions embodied in interest rates are perhaps at their easiest in decades.

"Although there are headwinds, steadfast efforts by all stakeholders could put India on a faster growth trajectory."



RBI governor Shaktikanta Das.

The report said growth impulses that have emerged augur well for the revitalisation of the economy. Policy stimulus by the government and the RBI are intended to nurture these growth sprouts to greater strength.

Efforts are underway to ensure a calibrated unlocking of the

economy with cognisance and caution about the virus.

"While we remain vigilant, we must now turn to alleviate the scars left by the pandemic and revive the economy. The horizon has lighted up with the spate of positive news on the vaccines, and a steady rise in recoveries." - *ANI*

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BUSINESS ACTIVITY

Asian firms pick up confidence amid COVID-19 vaccines rollout

BEIJING: Asian firms see a rebound in their business confidence as COVID-19 vaccines start rolling out and business activity pick up in the region, a Thomson Reuters/INSEAD survey showed.

The outlook for Asian companies in the next six months tracked by the Thomson Reuters/INSEAD Asian Business Sentiment Index rose to 62 this quarter from 53 in the previous quarter, according to the survey.

The latest number of 101 firms across 11 Asia-Pacific countries, which was conducted between December 4-18, was the highest since the fourth quarter of 2019, the survey indicated.

"There's a sense of optimism going forward. Things are getting better but they are getting better with still a dose of uncertainty," said Antonio Fatas, Singapore-based economics professor at global business school INSEAD.

A quarter of the companies in the survey were most concerned about businesses shedding jobs, which would bite into consumption, it said.

Still, half of the respondents underscored the possible scarcity of vaccines in parts of the world at least in the initial stage as their biggest risk. - *Xinhua*

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Part time accountant with more than 12 yrs experience in different financial sectors.Good working knowledge of ERP softwares & advanced excel.Can do audit & certification & consultancy work. Contact 94197499. Email ma.abdul1988@gmail.com

Indian, Male working as Senior Accountant over 16 years of experience in Accounts looking for a Job Contact: 95851920,78258270

Available 31 years Oman experienced Data Entry Operator in English/Hindi/Marathi & knowledge of Accounting. Contact +968 92720543

Part time accountant having 13 yrs experience upto finalization seeking job. Contact 79102100

Pakistani diploma holder looking for part time or cashier job with valid DL. Contact 94110965

10+ Experience in Finance upto Finalisation, Bank Facilities, LC, Credit Recoveries. Contact 96239126

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CONNECT

JOB WANTED

QUALITY MANAGER
Indian, Quality Manager, 18 years exp 4.3 years at Abu Dhabi, looking for top/senior management position in quality. Coordinating RFQ to Mass production, Time, Resource & Quality planning, Process design, Project execution, etc. Available to join shortly.
Contact: 91-9952022345, venkatavaradu@rediffmail.com

Chemical Engineer
with over 5 years of experience in Oman Industry looking for a suitable position.
Email: mehdikassen@yahoo.com GSM: 93823132

SENIOR CORPORATE AND RETAIL BANKER
With over 30 years experience in Credit Management, Relationship Management, Credit Administration, Operations Management and Recoveries/ IFRS9 Provisioning Methodologies seeks suitable placement.
Email: DolphinOcean367@gmail.com

SR. Manager/GM/VP (Plant)
Indian Male, with more than 23 years exp. in repair/ maint/deployment/logistic/procurement of Vehicles/Heavy construction equipment in a large reputed construction industry seeks suitable placement in senior management level. NOC available.
Contact: 79198709

Project Manager/Engineer Structural/Civil Engineer
with 14 years of experience (8 years in USA and 4 years in Oman) in PEB, RCC, Pipeline, Offshore, and Marine structures and have Master degree from USA. Seeking for placement as Project Engineer or Manager.
Please contact me on +968-93368626 Irfan.sanjari.syed@gmail.com

ELECTRICAL MANAGER
Graduate Electrical Engineer & MBA (Project Management) with 28 years' experience in Industrial Projects & Maintenance looking for senior role. NOC Available and can join immediately.
Contact: 968-94029112 Email: sakhthiveljothi@gmail.com

HSE Eng/Advisor, Msc Env & NEBOSH IGC with 10 years
extensive construction, safety exp. Immediately available with NOC.
Contact 95193937

Execution Architect/ Finishing Manager
36, Male in design/ execution at consultancy & contracting with 13 Work experience in Hotel/Office/ Airport/ retail in Construction/Interior fit-out Space seeking Suitable placement. Knowledge on CAD/ MS office/ Planning/ Tendering/ Estimation. D/L and NOC available immediately.
Contact: 78371040; architdesign2020@gmail.com

FINANCE MANAGER
Group-Finance Manager, 19 years' experience in Strategic planning, Finance, Accounting, Income tax, VAT etc. Qualified CPA, CMA, CIA. Looking for Senior management position in finance/ internal audit. Available to join shortly.
Contact 92148608 / soji_ansu@yahoo.com

OMANI HR/PRO
Omani, 15 yrs experience, PRO, Relation development, Labour & Crime law, HR & Time Management. Fluent in English, Arabic & Hindi seeks Part Time job.
Contact 97264447

Chief Accountant MBA
Indian Male With 16 Years' Experience in all aspects of Accounting. NOC & Oman DL Available, seeks Suitable placement.
Contact: 97741485 Email: stm.crg@gmail.com

PURCHASE + STORES + ADMINISTRATION
Indian Male 10+ yrs experience in Oman (Currently available in Oman). Experience in Engineering / Construction, Manufacturing, Trading Concern & Structural Steel Projects. Materials Management with administrative skills. Looking for suitable placement and ready to join immediately with D/L & NOC.
Contact: 78235621/bsda@gmail.com

Smart Indian, excellent English, Research & Technical Writing Skills, Double Masters (Finance, Journalism & Mass Communication), Arabic Speaker, 17years Oman experience in Airport Project, Hospital, Media, EPC seeks role in Admin/HR/Projects/Corporate & Marketing Communications/Operations/Customer Relations/Role in Chairman/CEO Office. Immediate joining. NOC.
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BTECH IN ELECTRICAL AND ELECTRONICS ENGINEERING *(EEE)* WITH 3 YEARS EXPERIENCES DIPLOMA IN PLC & SCADA. NOC, Oman Valid Driving License Looking for a suitable Job. **Contact 78227500 Email: muhdfahiz007@gmail.com**

ADMINISTRATION
Indian, Male, having bachelor's degree looking for position in Office Administration/ Document Control, total 22 years of experience, 19 years in Oman with Oman driving licence. NOC available.
Contact No. 99757759

MicroMasters in Supply Chain Management, B-Tech in Mechanical Engineering 3 years industry experience as a Sales Engineer, Valid Oman DL.
Contact: 99137115 Email: adimurali7@gmail.com

CIVIL ENGINEER
16+ Years Experience In Site Supervision, Structural Engineering, ETABS, STAAD, ROADS, BRIDGES, Project manager, INDUSTRIAL. WORKED WITH SOHAR ALUMINIUM AND OCC. WITH ALL SAFETY Training & KNOWLEDGE. Available Noc & Valid Driving License.
Call or Wts app 98333185

CIVIL MANAGER
Indian with 23 years experience in construction and project management with reputed companies and government organisations. D/L and local release available.
CONTACT: 97236220

FINANCE
Indian, Group-Finance Manager, 19 years' world class experience in Strategic planning, Finance, Accounting etc. Multiple Professional qualifications in Accounting and audit. Looking for Top/Senior management position in finance/ internal audit. Available to join shortly.
Contact 99455353

EXPERIENCED IN MATERIAL MANAGEMENT
(MATERIAL COORDINATION, CONTROL PRO-CUREMENT, LOGISTICS, INVENTORY CONTROL) PLUS , MARKETING, NEED PLACEMENT D/L, NOC AVAILABLE. (MBA - International Business + Diploma in Materials Management).
GSM: 95491377, psjanesh@gmail.com

GM / NSM / Head Of Sales
Male 49 – Proven Business Manager with exceptional sales management skills. Chartered Institute of Marketing - UK, MBA in Marketing, 15+ years of FMCG sales & business management experience in GCC & OMAN. NOC/DL available.
Email: sljobseeker72@gmail.com Contact: 96223114

I T
BCA Graduate looking for placement in suitable IT company, having Oman Driving License. Presently on family joining visa.
Contact on 93339660 for further details

Omani DL holder Indian from Kerala
looking for a job in F M C G sector. 12 year experience in Oman. Speak Arabic, English, Hindi and Malayalam. Work experience in all over Oman.
Interested please Contact 94022634

JOB WANTED

ADMIN/HR
Indian Male 43.y.o seeking a suitable opportunity in Admin/Mktg/Ops Noc & D/L available. PH. 98274545
Indian male with 21 years' experience in Oman seeks job for HR/Admin. Contact 95425764
Indian male, 13yrs Oman Experience in Stores, Purchase, Operation, Admin. D/L.Immediate joining. # 78363835
Indian Male seeking Admin/HR Job having 23 years of experience in Oman with Valid DL and NOC available - Contact: 99578192
Indian female with 10 yrs experience in payroll, executive secretarial, general admin/HR with valid D/L, looking for suitable placement. Contact 96441865. Email reteeqeul779@gmail.com
Omani Male 35 yrs old, looking for a PRO job. Has experience 14 yrs in the same field. Contact 92049106, 95422144
Indian Female 10 years' experience in Muscat, for the post of Sales Coordinator, Secretary or Office cum Commercial Assistant. Contact 97914340, 92369044. E-mail: bmnair27@yahoo.com
Indian Male, MBA, BCOM having 6 years Gulf & 4 years India experience in HR / ADMIN & Purchase looking for suitable placement. Contact 97914340, 92369044. Email: sampathrajkv@gmail.com
Indian female 29. Experience in telemarketing/secretarial/office admin work. On family visa. Ready to join ASAP. Muscat. 93605361
Smart Indian, Excellent English, Masters, Arabic speaker, 17years Oman experience including Airport Project, Hospital, Media, EPC. Immediate. Contact 99283938
Indian Male having 17 yrs+ experience in real Estate, sales & marketing, management & ability to set new Business. # 99368876, 98720178. Email connecthasin@gmail.com

DRIVER
Driver with Car. Contact 94087980
Looking for driving job with Car. 6 yrs experience. Contact 96176918
Looking for job in driving, with 5 yrs experience. Contact 96189448
Driver need job with own Car. Contact 94087980
Driver, Electrician, plumber looking for job. Contact 96750080
Looking Heavy driver job. Contact 91703829
Looking for driving job, 8 yrs experience. Contact 79352646

IT
Indian Post Graduate with 21 years experience in Oracle SQL, PL/SQL, Forms, Reports, DBA, IT Manager, Orion ERP, Sage ERP with Accounts Knowledge and NOC. Contact 95398567 / 78141598 / anasd2k@gmail.com
IT sales and support. 5 years experience with IT network and hardware, BSc. Networking, Oman D/L. Contact 97060076
Mobile app developer - MCA graduate with 5 years exp in Mobile App development. Interested can contact below. Contact 96879202545

MANAGER
Indian, Finance Manager 20Yrs Experience, Trade finance - MIS - Budget - Planning - Auditing - Finalisation - Banking: 90473368, devan801@gmail.com
Smart Indian Manager, Excellent English, Arabic Speaker, 17years Oman experience, seeks Corporate Communication/Operations/Management/Administration/HR/Suitable Role. Immediate. 99283938.
Accounts/Finance Manager 29 years experienced, worked with reputed groups, expert in cashflow & Credit management, arranging loans, budgeting, Internal and external auditing etc. Contact: 98803439
General Manger/ Sr. Manager Role, Indian Professional (BE, MBA, PMP, FIDIC) with 25 years experience into Civil and Infrastructure Constructions And Project Management. NOC available. Contact 94634053

ENGINEER
M/48, PM Civil Engineer, Indian 28 yrs exp (18 yrs in Oman) with consultants/client seeks placement. contact 92370274
Project engineer experienced in aluminium Industry with valid Oman DL, seeks job. Contact 79500069
Indian 22/Male, B.Tech (Comp. Science) from SRM University, Chennai, Interned at Uniq Technology, Chennai as an Android App developer is looking for an immediate placement. # 95495877
HVAC engineer with 1 year Experience seeks job. Contact 79027224
Mechanical engineer of Car diagnostic and maintenance with experience three years. Contact 93521100
Civil Engineer with 17 years experience in construction field and site supervision for bridges, infrastructure-projects and buildings with overseas consulting companies. Contact 96292267
Site and Planning Coordinator -12+ years Oman exp - Oil and Gas sector-knowledge of PDO rules and specifications, - work experience with large projects, multi-cultural teams, and MS Office. Contact - moinuiddins18@yahoo.com / 0091-7032030093.
Indian Female Structural Engineer (B-Tech Civil), 18 Years Gulf Experience is seeking for suitable placement. Having valid visa and driving license. Ready to join Immediately with necessary documents. Contact: 79858363.
Indian Civil QA/QC Engineer, Inspector (BE Civil, PDO approved, QMS Auditor, Oman Driving licence, NOC) with 10 years of experience looking for new job. 96359447, +919901059827
Facility engineer. (BE) 12 years exper. in electrical or maint. engineer field, valid Oman DL. Seeking facility or maint. engineer job. Contact 94493654 or syamsk2255@gmail.com
Senior Planner for Infra projects highway and buildings (B.Tech.Civil with 17 yrs Exp) Immediate join. local transfer -NOC. Contact : 91170802. Email: vrvtammu@gmail.com
Civil engineer Quantity surveyor, 14+ years experience in infrastructure, Road & Building Projects, Oman DL, Gulf experience 12 years NOC available. Contact-97552659. Email shafic1983@gmail.com
Sri Lanka male QS Having 6 years Experience and looking for a suitable job in Oman and ready to join Immediately contact 79473123
Electrical engineer, experience 12 year in Oman. Contact 98148034
B.Tech Civil Engineer with 10+ yrs experience valid Oman DL, looking for suitable position. Available for immediate join. NOC available. Contact 79023001

ENGINEER
Project/Civil engineer with 8 yrs experience in construction projects, gulf experience & DL available. Contact 97906770
Looking for a job for the post of Electrical Engineer with B.Tech and 15 years exp in Oman. NOC and Release available. Contact 92254336. Email ameen1667@gmail.com
B.E civil engineer having 12 plus years of Oman experience in building construction looking for a suitable position. Contact: 72132426
B.E Civil Engineer having Oman experience looking for false ceiling sub contracting jobs plus building maintenance works. Contact: 79882467
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Mechatronics engineer fresher, Indian available to join immediately. Contact 94058298. Email : nihad-nasser8@gmail.com
Lab Technician QC (civil engineering) seeks a job. Contact 97797448/



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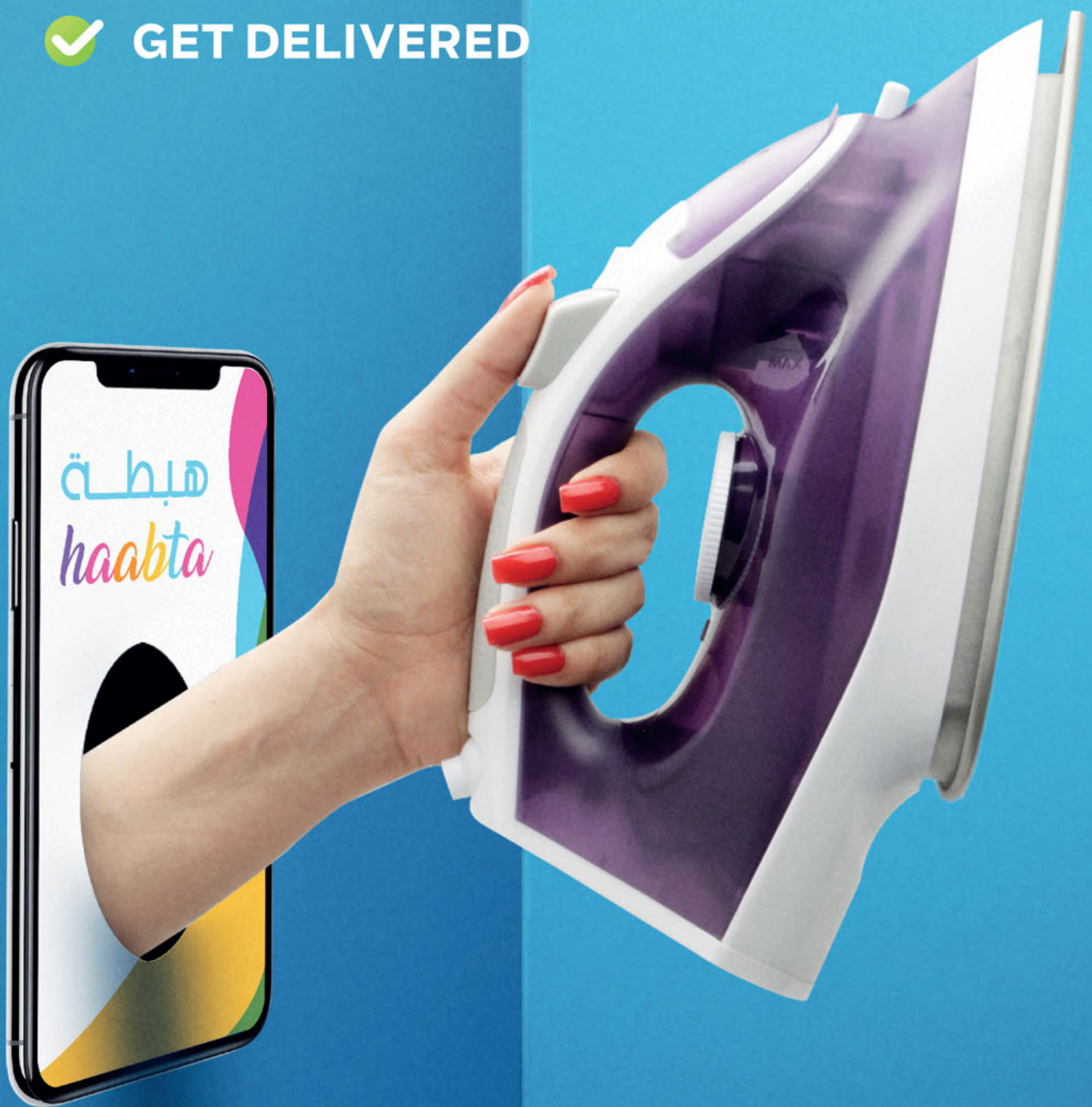
MISCELLANEOUS
Plumbing, painting maintenance works. Contact 96191837, 98937266
Electrician, plumber & A/C Service, L.Driver (D/L) Contact 95308363

PURCHASE/PROCUREMENT
Diploma civil Indian male 26 yrs 5 yrs oman exp, NOC ready, sales/procurement/stores. E.mail vijju.asp7777@gmail.com, GSM/WA 00918712330030
Senior Procurement Engineer, M.tech-Civil, Looking for a job, NOC Available, Immediate Joining, Indian Male, 38yrs, have over 16+ years UAE & Oman experience. E. syed-kamaalsaba@yahoo.com, Watsapp +96871144578, GSM +917766019519
Indian/Male(29)/MBA/6 years' experience in procurement and sales coordination with valid Oman D/L. Available for immediate joining. Contact: 92536194

MISCELLANEOUS (FOC)
Finance Manager, 28 years Oman experienced worked with reputed groups, Managing Cashflow, MIS, Budget, Forecast etc. Contact 968-98803439 (Call/Whatsapp)

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Kia’s spectacular SUVs: Built to encourage you to go the distance

For those looking to enjoy the most of every journey with a difference, can opt to get closer to a Kia SUV



MUSCAT: Kia has earned a huge reputation for its range of vehicles that have stirred the industry towards manufacturing vehicles that enhance user experiences. Right from the design to advancements in features and technology, Kia has led the way to offer owners experiences that are pure value-for-money.

For those looking to enjoy the most of every journey with a difference, can opt to get closer to a Kia SUV. Kia’s spectacular range of SUVs is built to encourage you to go the distance and discover something new. Be it build quality, ground clearance, space, design, features, safety and technology. Kia SUVs make a fine choice for customers wanting more out of their journey.

In Oman, Kia’s SUV range includes the peppy and exciting Kia Sportage, the tough and impressive Kia Sorento, all-weather SUV Kia Telluride and the newly introduced Kia Seltos.

Kia Sportage
Kia Sportage is the perfect fit for adventure-seeking young families and explorers. It is available with 1.6-litre GDi Euro4, 130 hp engine producing 16.4 kg.m. Torque. The engine is paired to a 6-speed automatic transmission. It adopts a series of Kia’s latest advanced driving assistance and infotainment systems, building on its reputation for high occupant safety and high-tech convenience. The Sportage is also available with 2.0L, 153 hp & 2.4L, 182 hp engine options.

Kia Sorento
The Kia Sorento is ideal for families who seek a mix of work and adventure in one package. The Sorento has a solid legacy of hard-working, all-weather practicality forged in the great outdoors. Now with even more refined styling, its resourcefulness proves just as appealing on the most sophisticated city streets. The Sorento is powered by a 3.5L

276hp engine that is paired to an 8-speed automatic transmission. To power your journeys the Sorento is equipped with the Drive Mode select to make every drive fun and thoroughly engaging.

Kia Telluride
The Kia Telluride makes an aesthetic statement for the Kia brand as a bold, all-new luxury SUV with impressive advanced technology, focusing particular attention on the experience and comfort of second-row occupants. Long, wide and tall the Telluride is a thorough full-size eight-passenger SUV that one can rely on for city driving or weekend getaways. The Telluride is equipped to be capable in a variety of driving conditions and provide a driving experience that is enjoyable and confidence-inspiring. Among the many factors that contribute to the Telluride’s composed ride and performance are the Atkinson Cycle LAMBDA II 3.8L GDI engine that

produces 291 hp and 262 lb. ft. of torque. For exciting performance, the engine is paired to an 8-speed automatic transmission. The Telluride offers owners the choice of dial their level of thrill with the available drive modes – Smart, Eco, Sport and Comfort. Each uses different settings for powertrain, drivetrain and steering effort mapping to provide the desired driving experience.

Kia Seltos
The new Kia Seltos brings sophistication, assertiveness and cutting-edge technology and safety features to compact SUV segment. The Seltos is characterized by distinctive design details, lending the compact SUV a sporty and aggressive look. It combines forward-looking technical features, class-leading space and a suite of world-class safety features, and is powered by a highly-efficient Smartstream petrol engine.

The Seltos offers distinct-

ive exterior design details - It is equipped with intricate and sharply designed full LED headlights and taillights, providing the car with a commanding and confident presence on the road. For daytime driving, the car also has LED daytime running lights and rear lamps, and 3D multi-layer indicators to make it clear exactly where the Seltos is heading. For driving in foggy conditions, the car is also equipped with LED fog lights.

The interior of the Seltos is impressive. The cabin is characterised by broad, sweeping shapes and highly technical details and is equipped with a range of technologies to maximise convenience, connectivity and ease of use.

To minimise driver eye movement, displays are positioned at only slight angles from one another, and the road ahead. But it’s not just about the driver. This interior is designed to entertain everyone inside in true comfort.

Powering the Seltos is a 1.6-litre

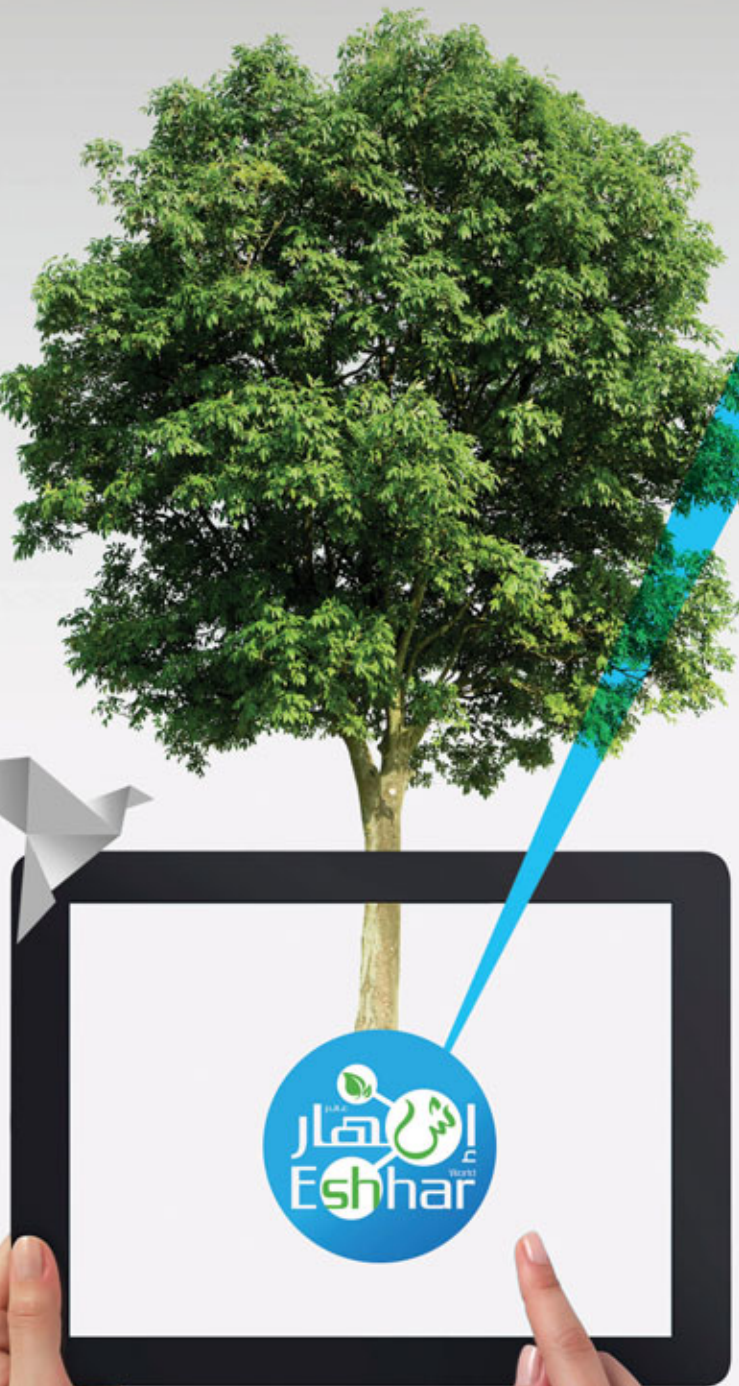
gasoline engine producing 121 HP paired to a six-speed automatic transmission (6AT). To further elevate the driving experience, the Seltos is equipped with a Drive Mode Select system that lets drivers adapt the car to their preferred style or the road conditions. Drivers can choose from ‘Normal’, ‘Eco’ and ‘Sport’ mode. The Eco mode is tuned to maximize vehicle range by using fuel-saving measures, while Sport mode increases responses from the steering and electric motor to maximize the dynamic driving feel of the car. Normal mode provides a careful balance between the two.

The Seltos is a technologically advanced and refined compact SUV equipped with a range of advanced features. They include a Smart Key with Button Start, Auto Cruise Control, Terrain Mode System (Snow, Mud, Sand), Electronic Stability Program (ESP), 1.6 Litre MPI Engine, 6-speed Automatic Transmission, 16” Alloy Wheels.

In terms of safety, it has a high proportion of Advanced High-Strength Steel components, the rigid bodyshell reduces road vibrations and enhances occupant safety in the event of a collision.

The Seltos is fitted with dual airbags, as well as a suite of electronic vehicle safety systems. These include Kia’s Vehicle Stability Management system as standard, incorporating traction control and electronic stability program. It also includes Anti-lock Braking System, a Traction Control System as well as front and rear parking sensors, for assistance when parking.

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Offer on Nissan X-Trail

Built for real family adventures, Nissan X-Trail is a popular SUV with the latest technologies, yet still has the traditional benefits of a

CROSSOVER

MUSCAT: Nissan Oman, from the house of Suhail Bahwan Automobiles (SBA), has announced a special offer on Nissan X-Trail, the highly customer-centric SUV.

Built for real family adventures, Nissan X-Trail is a popular SUV with the latest technologies, yet still has the traditional benefits of a crossover. Nissan X-Trail delivers an "Excellent" GSO rated mileage of 15.1km/litre. This mileage is obtained under laboratory test conditions conducted by GSO for the 2.5L SV variant.

As part of the offer, Nissan



Oman is extending 0 per cent interest up to three years on Nissan X-Trail. Other interest slabs include 1.99 per cent for 4 years or 2.49 per cent for 5 years or 2.99 per cent for six years. As part of the special offer, Nissan Oman is also offering periodic maintenance service, cash gift, free registration and free insurance. The special promotion will be available till January 16, 2021.

A senior official of Nissan Oman, from the house of Suhail Bahwan Automobiles (SBA), said, "We are delighted to offer these special benefits to Nissan X-Trail customers who aspire to own the vehicle. This offer is designed to be flexible and customers can choose special inter-

est rates as per their convenience."

Special rate of interest is available on Nissan X-Trail. On select MY19/MY20 stocks of X-Trail, customers can get 0 per cent up to three years or 1.99 per cent for four years or 2.49 per cent for five years or 2.99 per cent for six years. For all tenures beyond six years, normal interest rates will apply for the full tenure of the loan. This rate is applicable for individual purchase with private registration only and is subject to finance/credit approval. Customers can opt for only one of the interest rate options. EMIs will be highest for 0 per cent for three years scheme. This offer is valid till stocks of this unit last. This benefit will be applicable for financing

through select finance companies only. Customers purchasing in cash, LPO, a credit will not be eligible for special interest rate benefit. Terms and conditions apply.

Customers can avail low starting EMI rate of OMR180 on Nissan X-Trail. These EMIs are calculated basis 2.99 per cent rate of interest for six years loan tenure and the special interest rates are applicable on select stocks of these models.

Nissan X-Trail customers can enjoy free insurance in Oman and UAE for the first year for private registration.

Customers of Nissan X-Trail can enjoy free periodic maintenance service package for three years/60,000km. This offer is valid for 10,000km service intervals.

Under the special promotion, customers can avail assured cash gift of OMR3,100 on Nissan X-Trail.

Nissan patrons can enjoy free registration on Nissan X-Trail for the first year.

Nissan X-Trail offers muscular styling, solid capabilities, next-level technologies, comfort and flexibility. Nissan X-Trail has earned a stamp of approval across the globe. With its strengthened qualities and advanced technologies, the Nissan X-Trail is taking care of diversified requirements of customers in Oman.

QADROON CONFERENCE



Grand Millennium Muscat supports programme to provide job opportunities

MUSCAT: Committed to supporting and helping those in need, Grand Millennium Muscat and Millennium Executive Apartments Muscat have joined hands with ASSAS Muscat as a gold sponsor in the Qadroon Conference held on December 21 at Crystal Ballroom.

The event was attended by Saeed bin Sultan bin Yarub Al Busaidi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth for Culture. It has been announced the second edition of the Qadroon International Forum and Exhibition which will be held next year during September.

This programme aims to provide job opportunities, scholar-

ships and training opportunities for people in line with the Oman 2040 vision.

"We are always on the lookout for new opportunities to help and support those who are in need and with the help of ASSAS Muscat, Grand Millennium Muscat and Millennium Executive Apartments will continue to join any possible effort to make a difference in the lives of our community. It's the least we can do to show our love and respect for people, and we home to foster values of love and respect with such activities," Luca Medda, Cluster General Manager, Grand Millennium Muscat and Millennium Executive Apartments Muscat.

LUXURY EXPERIENCE

INFINITI's premium models available for test drive

MUSCAT: Offering customers an introduction to a truly exceptional luxury experience, INFINITI Oman, from the house of Suhail Bahwan Automobiles, has lined up a range of INFINITI's premium models for a test drive.

Customers looking for a new vehicle but finding it difficult to make a decision can book one of INFINITI premium models for a test drive. The models on the test drive line up are INFINITI Q30, INFINITI Q50 3.0T, INFINITI Q70, INFINITI QX50, INFINITI QX60, INFINITI

QX70 and INFINITI QX80.

A senior spokesperson at INFINITI Oman said, "Delivering a genuinely extraordinary luxury experience — from the moment a customer walks in the door, throughout the entire ownership cycle — is our top priority. Offering our premium models for test drives to potential buyers/customers is part of this process. We would like to reiterate that INFINITI Oman will forever remain committed to providing premium vehicles and quality service to its customers.

The INFINITI test drive vehicle line-up delivers a rewarding driving experience with a variety of innovative powertrain option. We would like to remind that vehicles for test drives are subject to availability and terms and conditions."

INFINITI makes it a priority to ensure that each model will stand the test of time, offering lasting value and quality. With performance as a priority, all INFINITI models are fitted with smart technologies that adapt to the needs of customers.

INFINITI Q30 (2.0T), the lux-

ury compact crossover, offers a complete technology package that augments the car's driving experience while providing supreme safety to all occupants.

INFINITI Q50 (3.0T V6) represents dynamic and bold styling. INFINITI Q50 comes with the most advanced technological features like intelligent cruise control with full speed range, lane departure warning and prevention, forward emergency braking and backup collision intervention.

INFINITI Q70 (3.7L V6) per-

formance luxury sedan which embodies the essence of all things INFINITI — style, performance, luxury, craftsmanship and technology.

INFINITI QX50 offers a suite of advanced technology, unrivalled interior space, stunning exterior design. It is powered by a VC-Turbo engine, the world's first variable compression ratio engine, which provides the power of a V6 and the efficiency of a four-cylinder.

INFINITI QX60 3.5L V6, a luxury crossover, is a versatile three-row, seven-passenger vehicle.

INFINITI QX70 (3.7L V6), an original sport-crossover, is designed to empower. With its sports car-inspired silhouette, the INFINITI QX70 leaves an impression that is both, instantaneous and unforgettable.

INFINITI QX80 5.6L V8 is a premium vehicle that is designed and engineered to allow customers to travel everywhere in luxury. The INFINITI QX80 has a refined and spacious cabin featuring high-quality materials, a hand-crafted finish and advanced drive-assist technologies.

SCIENCE FAIR



Science Project Contest organised

MUSCAT: Muscat Science Fest, the science and technology arm of the Indian Social Club Kerala Wing, organised a science fair, called Science Project Contest - 2020 (SPC 2020) and an exhibition & competition of science projects for the students in Oman through the online platform on December 18 and 19.

Dr Felix Bast, a renowned scientist and member of the Indian Antarctic Exploration Team and Assistant Professor at the Central University of Punjab inaugurated the Science Fair. Indian Social Club Oman Chairman Dr Satish Nambiar, Indian Social Club Cultural and Entertainment Secretary and Observer to Kerala Wing Saji Abraham and Indian Schools BOD former Chairman Wilson George, were congratulated the participants. As part of the event, there were two webinars, webinar on "Life in Space" narrated by ISRO former Scientist PM Siddharthan and BARC Scientist and Chairman of BARC Safety Council K Jayarajan delivered a speech on

the topic 'Nuclear Radiation and Its Applications'.

Nitin Senthilnathan of Indian School Al Ghubra won the first prize for the best project. Saha-na Sandesh Kumar and Pavanaj Sandesh Kumar of Indian School Darsait came second while Anupama Rajreddy of Indian School Muladda bagged the third prize. Safa Amin and Amaan Amin from Indian School Sur also bagged the prize for the project that attracted the most visitors.

In the past, these events were part of the Indian Community Festival organised by Kerala Wing every year. The two-day science fair was attended by about 5,000 people this year. The event, which was conducted using the TouchQ online platform, has been receiving a very good response from visitors. The organisers said that such events will be organised on a large scale in the future as well.

Purushottam Kanji Exchange, Oman's first money exchange group, was the presenter of the event. Abeer Hospital was the main sponsor of the event.

OPINION

Improving higher education system in Oman

MUSCAT: It is well known that the health of the nation and its higher education system go hand in hand. And so, with the pressing need to diversify the economy, Oman has no choice but to closely monitor and constantly improve on its higher education system.

High on the list of immediate concerns is how to balance a university's resources to serve both research and undergraduate studies? Is there a way to do justice to both at the same time? What is the purpose of undergraduate education? Is it about building student character? Is it about preparing job-ready graduates? Is it about nurturing the souls and minds of young students?

We must admit that universities are probably the only institutions that have defied the law of evolution over the second millennium. Most universities today continue to operate very much like the universities of the past, where students in large numbers are crowded into closed halls to listen passively to their professors.

Why we grade student work? Ask professors about the thing they dislike (not to say, hate) most about their job, and you would almost unanimously get a reply related to grading student work. On one hand; for most professors, grading is tiring and frustrating, and it is one of those things they wish they didn't have to do. On the other hand, most professors know very well that grading is an integral



part of the student's learning process; and when done correctly, it provides important feedback that the student can then use to better reflect on their true learning.

What is the purpose of grading? That is, why we grade student work in the first place. For one thing, everyone, including parents, seems to agree that unless professors give exams and assign grades, students won't take their studies seriously. And for another, conscientious professors use exams as a vehicle to provide important and sometimes personalised feedback, which helps them and their students to reflect on their teaching and learning, respectively. The problem is that there is so much subjectivity on the part of professors in the way they teach their courses and the ways they make and grade their exams. And unfortunately, this status quo seems to be acceptable by everyone includ-

ing deans and vice-chancellors.

This being the case, students are left with no objective guidelines as to what to expect from a course. The natural result of this is a 4-way classification of professors by students as being good and hard, good and easy, bad and hard, or bad and easy. To make matters worse, students tend to focus their attention on their grades more so than their learning, and as a result, most students tend to favour a bad but easy professor over a good but hard one.

In the minds of many employers, though without any supporting data, the quality of university graduates in the last two decades is not a match to the quality of graduates from the second millennium. Most significant, that kind of criticism is no longer limited to voices from outside academia. The recent books by Harry Lewis, a former dean of Harvard College, and Derek Bo, a former president of Harvard University, confirm those views. How can universities do better? Probably it is high time to go back to the advice of University of Chicago physicist Frank Richter when he called to 'create a culture in which teaching matters'.

Why we haven't been able to teach critical thinking successfully? While everyone in the academic world agrees that critical thinking is one of the oldest and most agreed-upon purposes of undergraduate education, somehow universities don't seem to get

it right when it comes to teaching students how to think critically.

Universities and sustainable development

There have recently been several conferences in Oman and elsewhere discussing the role of a university in the 21st century and the changes that a university must undergo to meet the challenges brought along by the fourth industrial revolution.

A common belief implicit in the themes of those conferences is that universities are under attack from many constituencies and that universities have no choice but to adapt to the changes brought about by new technologies.

Questions thrown at universities nowadays include "What universities do for us?", "Can universities explain their impact on society?", "Can universities demonstrate their direct impact on the economy?", and "Are universities providing advice to governments to make the right decisions about issues that matter most in today's world?" I believe that a roadmap to answering many of these questions can be found in the sustainable development goals (SDG) adopted by the united nations in 2015.

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