

P12

OCA CHAMPIONSHIP BEGINS TOMORROW



P13

OMAN'S BE'AH WEIGHS BIOGAS PLANTS FOR POWER PRODUCTION



P18

REALITY MEETS HUMOUR IN THESE 2020 DRAWINGS



OMAN

E-LEARNING PLATFORM FOR HEALTH LAUNCHED

Oman Medical Specialty Board (OMSB) launched the National E-learning Platform for Health “Tebyan” under the auspices of Dr Ahmed bin Mohammed al Saeedi, Minister of Health, and Chairman of OMSB Board of Trustees. The launch of the E-learning platform comes in view of the importance of continuing the educational process in the field of medical education and its role in qualifying and preparing medical personnel, and the right of the health sector to receive education and its developments by using latest electronic technologies anywhere and anytime, from credible sources.

WORLD

EU EYES SPEEDY VACCINE APPROVAL

BRUSSELS: Europe’s drug regulator will not set a minimum level of efficacy for potential COVID-19 vaccines when considering them for approval, it said on Wednesday, taking a different approach to that of its US counterpart. Human studies need to demonstrate a convincing level of efficacy, but whether a shot would be considered acceptable for approval will be assessed case by case based on all available data on its safety and efficacy, the European Medicines Agency (EMA) said in an email.

Observer News on your WHATSAPP



To receive news updates from Oman Observer, WhatsApp your number to 96473232

INSIDE



PHILIPPINE ISLAND LEFT WITHOUT POWER AFTER DEADLY TYPHOON

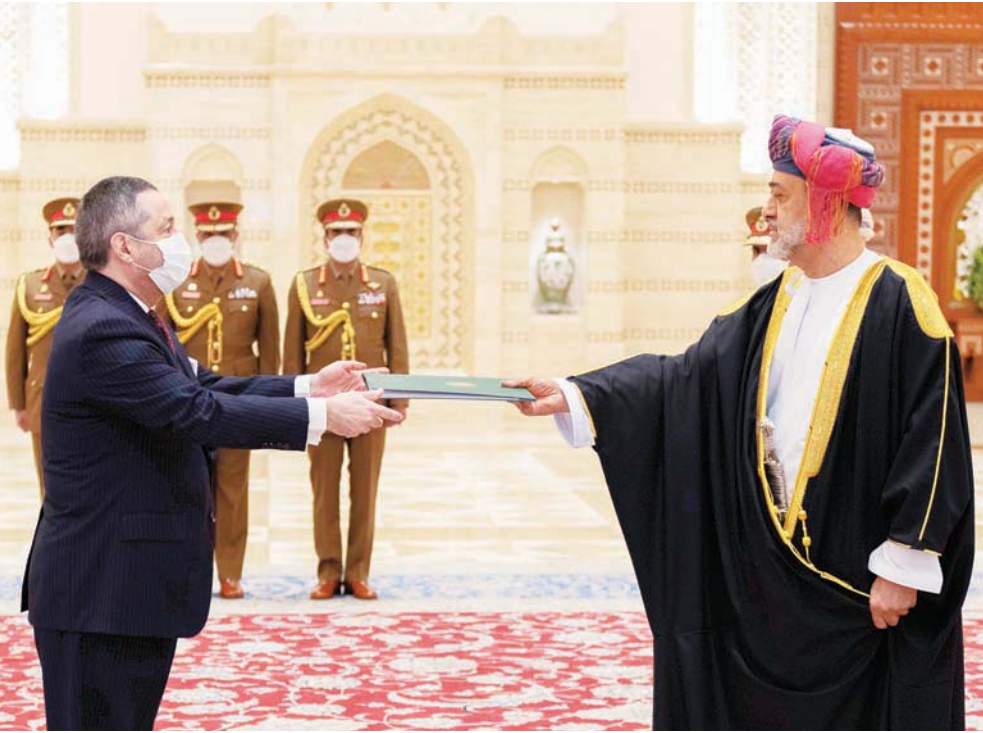
P7



KAMALA HARRIS INSPIRES WOMEN LEADERS IN HER ANCESTRAL VILLAGE

P9

HM receives credentials of ambassadors



MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq received separately at Al Barakah Palace on Wednesday morning credentials of a number of ambassadors of the sisterly and friendly countries accredited to the Sultanate.

His Majesty received credentials of the following ambassadors.

Jose Marcos, Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of President Dr Jair Bolsonaro of the Federative Republic of Brazil, accredited to the Sultanate.

Haji Sulaini bin Haji Said, Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah of Brunei Darussalam, accredited to the Sultanate.

Mohammed Ahmed Fahmi Ghoneim, Extraordinary and



Plenipotentiary Ambassador of President Abdel Fattah el Sisi of the Arab Republic of Egypt, accredited to the Sultanate.

Ayse Sozen Usluer, Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of the Republic of Turkey, accredited to the Sultanate.

Dr Tibor Szatmari, Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of President Janos Ader of the Republic of Hungary, accredited to the Sultanate.

Najmedin Muhametali, Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of President Kassym Jomart Tokayev of the Republic of Kazakhstan, accredited to the Sultanate.

Sheikh Jassim bin Abdulrahman

bin Mohammed al Thani, Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al Thani, Emir of the State of Qatar, accredited to the Sultanate.

Leslie M Tsou, Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of President Donald Trump of the United States of America (USA), accredited to the Sultanate.

During the side meetings with His Majesty the Sultan, the ambassadors conveyed greetings of leaders of their countries along with their best wishes of good health, happiness and long life to His Majesty the Sultan and the Omani people continuous progress and prosperity under the wise leadership of His Majesty.

TURN TO P2



Oman voted Middle East’s leading cultural destination

MUSCAT, NOV 4 YERU EBUEN

In the recently-concluded World Travel Awards, considered the Oscars of Travel, Oman won as the leading cultural and honeymoon destination in the Middle East.

This is the second time Oman has won the Leading Cultural Destination distinction, a followthrough of its 2019 win while it’s the first time that Oman got the distinction of the leading honeymoon destination.

The announcement was made on Wednesday, serving the WTA’s purpose of acknowledging,

rewarding and celebrating excellence across all sectors of the global travel and tourism industry.

Established in 1993, WTA is recognised globally as the ultimate hallmark of industry excellence. Winners were determined based on the number of votes received from travel industry experts as well as regular travel enthusiasts who registered on the WTA’s website.

In the airlines’ category, Oman Air won the Middle East’s Leading Airline — Business Class and Economy Class categories with the Wings of Oman by Oman Air the Leading Inflight Magazine for 2020.

White House race on knife edge as votes counted in key states

WASHINGTON: The excruciatingly close US presidential election hung in the balance on Wednesday, with a handful of closely contested states set to decide the outcome in the coming hours or days, even as President Donald Trump falsely claimed victory and made unsubstantiated allegations of electoral fraud.

Democratic challenger Joe Biden opened up narrow leads in Wisconsin and Michigan on Wednesday morning, according to Edison Research, as the two Midwestern battleground states that the Republican president won in 2016 continued to count mail-in ballots that surged amid the coronavirus pandemic.

Together with Nevada, another state where Biden held a small advantage with votes still left to be tallied, those states would deliver Biden the 270 votes needed in the state-by-state Electoral College to win the White House. But Trump still had a path to victory with those



Detroit election workers count absentee ballots at TCF Centre. - AFP

states officially undecided. Opinion polls had given Biden a strong lead nationwide for months, but had shown tighter races in battleground states, and the vote did not produce the overwhelming verdict against Trump that Democrats had wanted.

In the nationwide popular vote, Biden on Wednesday was comfortably ahead of Trump, with 2.6 million more votes. Trump won the 2016 election over Democrat Hillary Clinton after winning cru-

cial battleground states even though she drew about 3 million more votes nationwide.

Biden, 77, said in the early hours he was confident of winning once the votes are counted, and urged patience. “We feel good about where we are,” Biden said in his home state of Delaware. “We believe we’re on track to win this election.”

Trump, 74, appeared at the White House soon after to declare victory. DETAILS ON P8

His Majesty receives credentials of ambassadors



■ FROM PAGE 1

They also expressed their great honour and utmost delight to present their credentials before His Majesty the Sultan. They affirmed to exert their sincere efforts to promote relations of their countries with the Sultanate in various domains in a manner that serves the joint interests of the Omani people and their countries' peoples.

His Majesty the Sultan welcomed the ambassadors, expressing his thanks for their leaders' greetings and best wishes. His Majesty affirmed to them that they would receive all support from His Majesty, the Government and the Omani people to facilitate carrying out their duties.

The credentials' presentation ceremony was attended by the Minister of Interior, the Foreign Minister, the Head of the Royal Protocols, the Commander of the Royal Guard of Oman and the Military Aides to His Majesty the Sultan. — ONA



Register expat work permit online

SAMUEL KUTTY

@samkuttyvp

An online platform to register work contracts of foreign workers has been launched by the Ministry of Labour.

“Through the portal employers can register the work contract, which can also be seen and accepted by the employees”, said a statement from the ministry.

The new system, launched on Wednesday, also allows both the employer and employee to review the contract and make amendments, if required.

“Employers can also renew the work permit through the portal”, it said.

According to the statement, the new service can be availed after the arrival of the employee and completing the authorised change in the profession and receipt of the resident card.

“As part of ensuring the accuracy of the contract, the employee can access the contract of work service in Individuals Services using Oman PKI-enabled identity card or mobile number,” it said.

PKI (Public Key Infrastructure) is a national initiative aimed at providing a secure technology for information documentation and identification and authentication of users by

The new system, launched on Wednesday, also allows both the employer and employee to review the contract and make amendments, if required

using electronic ID.

According to the October bulletin of the National Centre for Statistics and Information, 1,449,406 expats were working in different sectors in the Sultanate till the end of September 2020 against 1,712,798 at the end of 2019.

A total of 263,392 workers of different nationalities left the Sultanate during the period from January to September 2020.

Proposal to set up fast tracking system in food, pharmaceutical sectors discussed

MUSCAT: Qais bin Mohammed al Youssef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, on Wednesday took part in the consultative meeting of the GCC Commerce Ministers and heads of GCC federations and chambers. The was held at GCC Supreme Council Advisory Board via video-conferencing.

The ministers discussed a range of issues of concern to the private sector in the GCC countries, including industrial integration in the health, medical, agricultural and foodstuff industries and support for investment in those industries, as well as in food security.



They also discussed a proposal to establish a fast tracking system for food and pharmaceutical products in the GCC countries,

in order to address various crises and epidemics, in addition to a mechanism or a Gulf system for VAT refunds.

This meeting is held annually in order to view and discuss issues of common interest to the GCC private sector. — ONA

Travel and tourism will not be the same post after COVID-19

KABEER YOUSUF

@kabeeryousef

Oman's hospitality and tourism sectors are poised for quantum leaps post COVID-19 provided digitalisation is implemented aggressively, according to experts.

Speaking to *Observer* in the background of the Tourism Tomorrow online conference, experts further suggested that digital transformation is the

need of the hour to emerge successfully from COVID-19.

“Tourism and travel sectors are affected worldwide and Oman is not any exception and the recovery is a process that needs an alignment of various factors of travel and tourism supported by digitalisation,” says Abdul Rahman al Balushi, a travel expert.

“Technology, including machine learning and artificial intelligence, and the digital

transformation of both operations and communications will drive optimisation.”

The reduced pollution during 2020 is likely to be immediately reversed once travel becomes more accessible, with environmental issues likely to be glossed over in a rush to feed the travel bug once more. Although 65 per cent of people are planning to travel in 6 months and half of them in the next 3 months, business travel may

take little more time to recover, according to the participants.

“Face to face interaction and meet and greet may suffer for some more time. Technological upgrade and digital transformation will be a necessity during the post-COVID era. However, technology shouldn't substitute the real to customer experience and authenticity,” says Rajan Jayaraman, Country Head of Kuwait Airways.

Meeting to mark UN Decision on Peace, Women held

MUSCAT: The Sultanate, represented by the Ministry of Social Development, participated in a meeting to mark the 20th anniversary of the adoption of the United Nations Security Council 1325 on ‘Women, Peace and Security in the Light of the COVID-19 Pandemic.’

The meeting aims at assessing the regional efforts made by the Arab countries to push forward the agenda of women, peace and security, in addition to launching regional deliberations on the progress made in responding to this agenda, as well as discussing the role of national plans to

implement this agenda in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Sultanate was represented by Laila bint Ahmed al Najjar, Minister of Social Development.

The Minister of Social Development affirmed that the Sultanate is keeping pace with the various international

obligations concerned with empowering women. She added that the Sultanate has boosted the rights of women at all levels and spared no efforts for that end, especially in light of the COVID-19 pandemic that the world is going through since the beginning of this year. — ONA

VACANCY FOR A MALE NURSE

Urgently required an experienced, relatively young male nurse to help and look after a senior citizen with mobility difficulties.

Please forward details with referenc to:

VARUNI DE SILVA, Mob: 99345108
Tel: 24692676, E-mail: asaltrading2012@hotmail.com

Eurasian dotterel, a rare winter visitor, spotted in Muscat



LIJU CHERIAN

@cherianmathiker

The Eurasian Dotterel, a small wader in the plover family of birds, was sighted near Muscat outskirts last week after a long gap.

Nature photographer Bavish Kizhakoodan Balan spotted this beautiful female bird while driving off the express highway beyond Al Seeb.

His initial look at the bird gave an idea of being something different. He then drove back from the roundabout and with a Canon 5DM4 and 500 mm captured it on frame.

A rare winter visitor to the

Sultanate, the bird is recorded as ‘vagrant’, with less than 10 records.

The ‘vagrant’ status is based on the number of records of each species and not the number of birds likely to be seen each time a species is recorded.

Accordingly, there are 139 species in Oman which are recorded under ‘vagrant’ status and Eurasian Dotterel being one of them.

It was last sighted in Sun Farms, Suhar, Al Batinah Governorate, in January 2012 by Dominic Mitchell and recorded in eBird.

eBird is an online database of bird observations providing

scientists, researchers and amateur naturalists with real-time data about bird distribution and abundance.

Belonging to the family of Charadrius under species morinellus, Eurasian Dotterel is known in Europe as just dotterel.

The small wader is a brown and black-streaked bird with a broad white eye-stripe and an orange-red chest band when in breeding plumage.

The female is more colourful than the male species and does not take part in nesting duties.

The male incubates the eggs and tends the chicks, while the female mates with several different males.

Tender Announcement

مدائن
madayn

The Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn) announces the following Tenders:

Tender Number	Tender Name	Last date of buying	Date of submission	Type of work	Register Degree	Fee (R.O)
7/2020/PEIE/HQ-7	MEDICAL FITNESS CENTER AT SAMAIL INDUSTRIAL CITY	18-11-2020	14-12-2020	Consulting	First and Second	150
8/2020/PEIE/HQ-8	CONSULTANCY SERVICES FOR DETAILED DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION SUPERVISION OF DEVELOPMENT OF INFRASTRUCTURE FACILITIES FOR NEW UPCOMING THUMRAIT INDUSTRIAL CITY AT DHOFAR GOVERNORATE	18-11-2020	14-12-2020	Consulting	First	150
9/2020/PEIE/HQ-9	E-MADAYN PLATFORM (INTEGRATED ERP PRODUCT IMPLEMENTATION)	18-11-2020	03-12-2020	Information Technology Services	Fourth and above	500

Interested Companies registered with Tender Board may obtain the Tender documents from the E-Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om> against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of document. Tenders should be submitted on line on given website. The Tenderer should enclose scan copy of Bank Guarantee issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman for the value of 1% of the Tender value validity for (90) days, and addressed to The Chairman of Tender Committee mentioned in above tenders.

1. **Tender Inquiry:** All correspondence pertaining to the TENDER Inquiry must be online at eTendering System.

2. **eTendering System Inquiry:** All correspondence pertaining to the eTendering System technical support must be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number: etenderhd@ita.gov.om and +968 24166670, 24166409 Note: Bid Submission will be online only.

No Document can be accepted as Manual except Original Tender Bond. Scan Copy of Tender Bond needs to be attached in system and original needs to be deposited before Bid Opening.

Madayn is not bound to accept the lowest or any other Offer and has the right to cancel these tenders and the tenderers have no right to claim for any compensations.

madayn.om

@madaynoman
m t f y o



Where time stands still

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, NOV 4

The most amazing characteristic of the Wilayat of Bidbid is the hanging bridge over the valley connecting Muscat with wilayats of Al Dakhiliyah.

When we talk about Al Dakhiliyah, Bidbid comes up first as it is the gateway to the governorate.

Previously, the wilayat was located 70 km away from Muscat, but now they adjoin each other due to rapid urbanisation witnessed from both the areas.

The wilayat is famed for its picturesque wadi that divides its banks into two parts.

Bidbid borders Seeb on the north, Wadi Al Tayeen on the east, Samayil on the south and Eastern Al Hajar Mountains on the west.

Wadi Fanja often has running water especially after usual seasons of rain. Most of the residents and visitors enjoy lovely evenings, especially during weekends. The wadi is beautifully surrounded by date palms and other trees. The peaceful and tranquil place offers ambience for

a great day out.

What distinguishes the place is that it has springs that gush from the top of Al Hamri mountain. The area enfolds many aflaj that have become tourist destinations.

Among the main villages of the Wilayat is Fanja. It offers a unique mixture of old and new landmarks.

It comprises many ancient buildings like towers, castles and old houses built of mud on the mountains overlooking the wadi.

Many people from Fanja and the neighbouring villages come to Fanja's souq either as buyers or sellers and showcase a wonderful

collection of handicrafts that are locally made.

The souq exhibits antiques and household products as well as dried fish displayed in the yard of the souq.

It also includes artistic products made of wood such as decorated boxes, called 'Mandoos', in which the people used to keep clothes.

Pottery is also sold in the local market which is well-made and beautifully decorated with different shapes and colours.

As evidence to its rich heritage, the wilayat includes 40 towers scattered in different villages.

One of the most historic landmarks is Bidbid square castle that is located in the centre of the wilayat.

Bidbid Fort is a beautifully renovated example of Omani heritage. It was one of the first to be restored using local construction materials such as palm tree trunks, which are used to support parts of the fort's roof.

The Wilayat of Bidbid enjoys many government services like eight public schools, Sultan Qaboos Mosque adjacent to the public road, health centre and military and security apparatus.

Permission must for cutting into mountains, digging roads

SAMUEL KUTTY
@samkuttyvp

Cutting into mountains and digging roads without proper permission from Muscat Municipality is a punishable offence that will attract fines.

In its website, the civic body states, “Any activity that will harm the environment and spoil the urban character of the city is not permissible. Cutting into a mountain or carrying out digging work under roads need approval from the municipality.”

The statement, issued on the basis of its regulations (212/2017), warned that violators will have to pay a fine of RO 2,500.

“A fine of RO 500 will be added if any other provisions are violated. If the violation is not corrected within ten days, the licence of the contractor will be considered revoked,” it said.

While reaffirming its responsibility of providing protection to people from falling rocks and landslides, the municipality said, the work has to be carried out by an approved contractor, under the supervision of an accredited consultant in

accordance with the licence issued by the municipality.

“Within 30 days after receiving the application with all required documents, the municipality decides whether to grant permission or not,” it said.

The mechanism of obtaining licence for drilling asphalt roads will be in accordance with the location of the street and the nature of the soil and the service to be extended.

The regulations also stated that cutting into mountains or digging roads will not be allowed between sunset and sunrise. However, on Saturdays it can be carried out only after obtaining prior approval

The statement, issued on the basis of its regulations (212/2017), warned that violators will have to pay a fine of
RO 2,500

from the municipality,

Also the contractor, who is registered with Muscat Municipality, needs to take an undertaking that the applicant will carry out repair works if asphalted roads are damaged.

The contractor is obliged to provide a certified bank guarantee of RO 30,000 to the municipality for a period of two years in case of spiral digging under a main dual carriageway of two lanes; RO 7,500 will be added for every extra lane.

A consultant must submit a request to the municipality to remedy the situation if the work damages buildings around the project.

Since this type of excavation causes accumulation of debris, the municipality stated that a letter confirming the disposal of waste should be submitted when requesting the refund of the bank guarantee.

The consultant and the contractor, depending on the circumstances, will be liable for any incident caused by the work implemented and for the damages caused to individuals, public and private property during the implementation of the project.

Omani innovator for German event

MUSCAT: Young Omani innovator, Razan al Kalbani, has spread the Omani pride worldwide by being one of the 15 participants chosen to partake in the Innovation Week in Germany.

She will take part in a virtual event for her project ‘Breaking the Wall of Paint Absorbs X-rays’, which won first place in the Falling Walls Lab Competition 2020, organised by the Research and Innovation Sector of the Ministry of Higher Education, Scientific Research and Innovation.

The Innovation Week is held from November 2-6 with the participation of some of the leading German universities namely the University of Stuttgart, Karlsruhe Institute of Technology and



the RWTH Aachen University.

During the five-day period, participants can partake in various scientific activities and develop their innovative

projects with the accompaniment of groups of scientists specialised in their fields from the participating universities.

The event also includes training workshops on how to obtain research support, how to convert research ideas into new products and how to develop ideas and deal with challenges.

Moreover, there are also lectures on creating and establishing startups in the

right way, individual mentoring and networking opportunities to enrich the innovative capabilities of the participants as well as hosting the participants separately in one of the specialised technological institutes.

By the end of the week, the participants will give a presentation on their experience and how they developed their innovations based on their experiences.

Razan will also represent the Sultanate in the Falling Walls Lab Competition in Berlin on November 8 and attend the Falling Walls Conference the next day, after winning the first place in the Falling Walls Lab Competition at the national level.

Japanese Embassy fetes online contest winners



Bob Hoffman and Mohammed Ali Hilal receiving the award from Japanese Ambassador

MUSCAT: The Embassy of Japan in the Sultanate held an award ceremony for the winners of Japanese Illustration Online Competition on November 3. This was conducted through online applications which closed on September 30.

The winners were Mohammed Ali Hilal, who was awarded the Ambassador’s Prize and Bob

Hoffman.

Ambassador Kobayashi Toshinori expressed his appreciations to the winners for participating in the competition and congratulated them by handing over the Certificate of Commendation, the Ambassador’s Prize and the winning prizes to them.

As per the decisions by

the Supreme Committee on COVID-19, precautionary measures such as limiting the number of the attendees, wearing masks and keeping safe distance among the attendees were fully taken during the ceremony.

The press release appreciated all the applicants for the competition for their amazing works.

Muscat-Abu Dhabi Air Arabia service

MUSCAT: The recently formed Air Arabia-Abu Dhabi will operate regular flights from the UAE capital to Muscat.

Starting on November 16, Air Arabia has been granted permission to operate two weekly flights, the Civil Aviation Authority in Oman said.

The UAE Cabinet recently approved low-cost Air Arabia-Abu Dhabi as a national airline in a move that will boost the civil aviation sector in the country.

Etihad Airways and Air Arabia had

set up Abu Dhabi’s first low-cost airline to capitalise on growing demand for budget travel.

It will operate out of Abu Dhabi International Airport and is expected to help in Etihad’s turnaround plans, which began in 2017. The new airline, which received its operating certificate in April, is starting with two Airbus A320 aircraft from its hub at Abu Dhabi International Airport, and will follow the business model of Air Arabia.

Ministry of Social Development

www.mosd.gov.om

Tender Announcement

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

Tender No.	Tender Subject	Grade	Last date for obtainment of tender document	Last date for tender submission	Tender Document Price (non-refundable)
12/2020	Provision of Audio Aids for Persons with Hearing Disabilities	Excellent & One	Sunday 15-11-2020 02:00 PM	Wednesday 25-11-2020 10:00 AM	R.O. 25/=

- Specialized Companies, registered with the **Tender Board** may obtain the Tender documents at the Tender Board e-tendering digital portal link (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>). On **Thursday 5/11/2020**
- Tender shall be submitted in compliance with the technical specifications and terms along with a local bank warranty at (1%) of the tender value, valid ninety (90) days from the date of e-submission.
- The original (1%) bank warranty to be submitted at same day of submitting at tender box located in Directorate of Finance & Administration at MOSD HQ.
- For Inquiry, please contact through the e-tendering website (reg@tenderboard.gov.om) tel. (24402222 or 24166670)

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

www.mosd.gov.om

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

A major development company invites qualified bidders to quote for the following tender:

Tender Ref.	Tender Title	Collection of Tender Document	Deadline for Tender Document Collection	Deadline for Bids Submission	Fee of Tender Document (OMR)
GBC-04/2020	Provision of Security and Maintenance Services to camp facilities located near Barka	5 Nov 2020	10 Nov 2020 (03:00 pm)	25 Nov 2020 (13:30 Noon)	100/-

Tender Fee:
Prior to collection of the Tender Document interested bidders is required to deposit a non-refundable ‘Tender Fee’ into the Company’s bank account as per the below details:

A/C NO: 0050200 45438
Bank: Sohar International, Qurum Branch
Account Name: Grand Blue City Development SAOC
Currency: OMR
Amount: 100

A receipt confirming deposit and identifying the Bidder’ name and the Tender Reference and Tender Title must be presented, by hand or scanned and forwarded via email to the Point of Contact Email tender@gbc.om before the Deadline for Tender Document Collection.

Tender Collection:
Once the confirmation of payment of Tender Fee has been received, the Company may issue the Tender Documents by email, electronic hard drive or hard copy.

Should a Bidder be required to collect the documents from Company office then the Company shall inform the Bidder accordingly.

Tender Clarifications:
Bidder shall submit any inquiries, information or clarification regarding the Tender electronically to the Point of Contact Email: tender@gbc.om

Tender Submissions:
Bids shall be submitted electronically to a dedicated email address: tendersubmission@gbc.om no later than (1:30 p.m.) Oman Standard Time.

Notes:

- Any bid submitted after the specified date/time will result to bid disqualified.
- The Bid shall be valid for ninety (90) days from the last date of submission of the tender.
- The Company is not bound to accept the lowest offer or any other bids.



MPs pass bill to protect UK soldiers from prosecution

LONDON: British lawmakers adopted a bill to prevent “vexatious” prosecutions of military personnel and veterans over war crimes allegations.

The prosecution of British soldiers for alleged past crimes in Northern Ireland, and more recent conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, has dogged the military and government for years.

The legislation proposes measures to “reduce uncertainty arising from historical allegations and create a better legal framework to deal with claims from future overseas conflicts”, according to the defence ministry.

The House of Commons passed the Overseas Operations (Service Personnel and Veterans) Bill by 345 votes to 260. It now heads for debate in the House of Lords, the UK parliament’s unelected upper chamber.

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace told the Commons that the bill would deliver on the Conservative government’s 2019 election promise to protect service personnel and veterans from “vexatious claims and endless investigations”.

Veterans minister Johnny Mercer, a former army officer who served in Afghanistan, insisted the legislation “does not decriminalise torture” but strikes “an appropriate

balance between victims’ rights and access to justice”.

However, John Healey, defence spokesman for the main opposition Labour party, said the bill was “dishonest and damaging” as it would not prevent “baseless” investigations and could risk British troops getting hauled before the International Criminal Court.

The prosecution of British soldiers for alleged past crimes in Northern Ireland, Iraq and Afghanistan, has dogged the military and government

The legislation discourages the prosecution of current or former soldiers for alleged offences committed on overseas operations more than five years ago.

It raises the threshold prosecutors will use in deciding to pursue a case after five years to “exceptional”, and requires them to weigh the public interest and get consent from the attorney general before prosecuting.

The bill will restrict the discretion of courts to extend time limits for bringing civil claims for personal injuries, deaths and human rights act violations to a maximum of six years. — **AFP**

Israel destroys Palestinian village

TUBAS: Israel’s army has demolished the homes of nearly 80 Palestinians in the occupied West Bank, officials and witnesses said Wednesday, in a rare operation targeting an entire community at once.

Late Tuesday, Israeli bulldozers razed the village — including tents, sheds, portable toilets and solar panels — near Tubas in the Jordan Valley, according to an AFP photographer at the scene, who found dozens of people left homeless.

Palestinian prime minister Mohammed Shtayyeh accused Israeli troops of having “completely demolished the village of Homsa al-Baqia, leaving around 80 people homeless”.

The branch of Israel’s army responsible for civilian affairs in the West Bank, COGAT, said it had destroyed structures “built illegally in a firing zone (military training area) in the Jordan Valley”.

The Jordan Valley falls within



Palestinians stand next to their belongings after Israeli soldiers demolished their tents in an area east of the village of Tubas. — **AFP**

the West Bank’s “Area C” that is fully controlled by Israel’s army, which has occupied the West Bank since the 1967 Six Day war.

Under Israeli military law, Palestinians cannot build structures in the area without permits, which are typically refused, and demolitions are common.

Israeli rights group B’Tselem accused Israel in a statement of “deliberately creating a Kafkaesque reality that leaves

Palestinians almost no way to build legally”.

In a separate message to AFP, it said the late-night operation in Homsa al-Baqia was unusual given that so many homes were targeted at the same time. — **AFP**

Berlin’s new airport becomes fully operational

BERLIN: Berlin’s new airport came fully into operation on Wednesday when the first regular scheduled flight landed on the hub’s newly built southern runway.

The arrival of a Qatar Airways aircraft from the Qatari capital Doha marked the moment that the Willy Brandt Airport officially came into operation in accordance with the law.

Airport chief executive Engelbert Luetke Daldrup used the occasion to once again call for more long-haul flights to the airport.

“We finally have an airport that meets international standards,” he



Long-delayed Berlin’s new airport came fully into operation on Wednesday. — **AFP**

said on Wednesday after the Qatar Airways flight landed.

In addition to the current long-haul connections such as to the US, Singapore, China and Iran, Luetke Daldrup hoped other international airlines would fly to Berlin.

“The airport will provide an important base for the period after the pandemic,” said Luetke Daldrup. The airport’s main passenger terminal T1 opened on the weekend after a delay of nine years that had turned the airport into a source of embarrassment for the German capital. — **dpa**

US exits from Paris agreement to fight climate change

WASHINGTON/BRUSSELS: The United States formally exited the Paris Agreement on Wednesday, fulfilling an old promise by President Donald Trump to withdraw the world’s second-largest greenhouse gas emitter from the global pact to fight climate change.

But the outcome of the tight US election contest will determine for how long. Trump’s Democratic rival, Joe Biden, has promised to rejoin the agreement if elected. “The US withdrawal will leave a gap in our regime, and the global efforts to achieve the goals and ambitions of the

Paris Agreement,” said Patricia Espinosa, executive secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

The United States still remains a party to the UNFCCC. Espinosa said the body will be “ready to assist the US in any effort in order to rejoin the Paris Agreement.”

Trump first announced his intention to withdraw the United States from the pact in June 2017, arguing it would undermine the US economy. The administration formally served notice of the withdrawal to the United Nations on Nov. 4, 2019, which took one year to take effect.



A sign stressing the importance of climate change as a political issue is seen outside a polling station in Cornelius, North Carolina. — **Reuters**

The departure makes the United States the only country of 197 signatories to have withdrawn from the agreement, hashed out

in 2015. Current and former climate diplomats said the task of curbing global warming to safe levels would be tougher without the financial and diplomatic might of the United States. “This will be a lost opportunity for a collective global fight against climate change,” said Tanguy Gahouma-Bekale, chair of the African Group of Negotiators in global climate talks.

A US exit would also create a “significant shortfall” in global climate finances, Gahouma-Bekale said, pointing to an Obama-era pledge to contribute \$3 billion to a fund to help vulnerable

countries tackle climate change, of which only \$1 billion was delivered. “The challenge to close the global ambition gap becomes much, much harder in the short term,” said Thom Woodroffe, a former diplomat in UN climate talks, now a senior adviser at the Asia Society Policy Institute.

However, other major emitters have doubled down on climate action even without guarantees the US will follow suit. China, Japan and South Korea have all pledged in recent weeks to become carbon neutral - a commitment already made by the European Union. — **Reuters**

COPENHAGEN

Virus fears force government into isolation

Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen and two-thirds of Denmark’s government went into self-isolation on Wednesday after the justice minister tested positive for COVID-19, a cabinet statement said.

Thirteen of the 20 government members had isolated themselves by Wednesday and were working from home as the country suffers a new surge in cases.

Frederiksen, who attended a meeting with justice minister Nick Haekkerup on Friday, “is currently showing no symptoms



of COVID-19 and continues, as far as possible, her work with virtual meetings,” said the statement.

On Tuesday, a parliamentary session with the prime minister was postponed pending the results of the justice minister’s COVID-19 test. — **AFP**

VIENNA

Nationals from 7 countries among casualties

Two Austrians, one German and a North Macedonian were killed in the terrorist attack in Vienna on Monday, the city’s police department has reported. The 23 people who were injured were mostly Austrians but also included nationals from Germany, Slovakia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Luxembourg and Afghanistan. Three of them are still in intensive care, but in a stable condition, according to Vienna’s city hospitals.

Meanwhile, the Swiss authorities confirmed on Wednesday that two men arrested near Zurich were “obviously friends” of a gunman who killed four people in a shooting rampage in Vienna and said police were investigating the full extent of their relationship with him.

Swiss police arrested two men, aged 18 and 24, on Tuesday in the town of Winterthur, which has become a focus of concern about radicalism in recent years. Austrian police have arrested 14 people as they try to establish whether attacker Kujtim Fejzulai, 20, had any accomplices.

ADDIS ABABA

Military operation launched in Tigray

Heavy fighting broke out in Ethiopia’s Tigray region on Wednesday, diplomatic sources said, after the prime minister launched military operations in response to what he said was an attack on federal troops.

In September, Tigray held regional elections in defiance of the federal government, which called the vote “illegal”. The row has escalated in recent days with both sides accusing each other of plotting a military conflict.

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed’s



office said that early on Wednesday, the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF) tried to steal artillery and other equipment from federal forces stationed there. — **Reuters**

In brief

■ MUMBAI

POPULAR TV ANCHOR
ARRESTED IN
SUICIDE CASE

One of India's top television anchors Arnab Goswami was arrested on Wednesday in connection with a two-year-old case of suicide, a Mumbai Police official said. A team of policemen arrested Goswami, owner and chief editor of Republic TV, from his residence, senior police official Sachin Vazesaid.

Goswami has been charged with allegedly abetting the suicide of 53-year-old interior designer Anvay Naik and his mother in 2018. Naik's family has alleged that he took his life after Goswami failed to pay his fee for designing a studio. Goswami has denied the charge.

— dpa

■ TOKYO

NO TAXI RIDES
WITHOUT
FACE MASKS

The Japanese government decided on Wednesday to allow taxi drivers in Tokyo to reject passengers who refuse to wear face masks amid concerns about the COVID-19 pandemic.

Japan's Transport Ministry approved the measure, which was requested by 10 taxi operators in the capital; the move could be expanded to other prefectures as the country confirms hundreds of new coronavirus infections daily.

Taxi drivers complained that some passengers were speaking loudly without wearing face masks. The ministry said the measure could protect not only taxi drivers but also the next passengers who take the taxi.

— dpa

■ KABUL

STUDENTS VOW TO
CARRY ON AFTER
ATTACK

Stunned Kabul University students vowed to continue their education despite a brutal attack on their campus by the IS group that killed 24 people.

As the first funerals took place, many students returned to see the carnage left after Monday's assault, staging a rally and holding banners that read "Stop Killing Us".

Afghan security forces have been grappling with surging violence that has only worsened in recent months despite the government holding peace talks with the Taliban. — AFP

Hungarian minister tests positive
for virus on Southeast Asia tour

BANGKOK: Hungary's foreign minister tested positive for coronavirus in Thailand, the kingdom's health minister said Wednesday, a day after he jetted in from a meeting with Cambodian premier Hun Sen.

The confirmed case left the Cambodian strongman facing the prospect of a period in quarantine, as well as a test for the contagion.

Peter Szijarto flew into Phnom Penh on Tuesday for a one-day official visit to sign agreements on civil aviation, agriculture and water management, as well as reopening an embassy after a 25-year hiatus.

On Tuesday night, he arrived in Bangkok and was swiftly taken to hospital after testing positive for the virus on arrival.

The test "showed he has



Cambodia's Prime Minister Hun Sen (R) welcoming Hungary's Foreign Minister Peter Szijarto during a meeting at the Peace Palace in Phnom Penh. — AFP

COVID-19, but he didn't have any symptoms", Thailand's health minister Anutin Charnvirakul

told reporters, after he visited Szijarto at Bamrasnaradura Infectious Disease Institute on

Wednesday.

"His entourage all tested negative."

During his Cambodia visit, Szijarto was pictured with Hun Sen at a meeting where neither appeared to be socially distancing or wearing a mask.

He also met his Cambodian counterpart and shook hands with a coterie of other ministers.

All of those people would now be tested and quarantined, according to Phnom Penh's foreign ministry.

"The leaders and all officials who met and had direct contact with the delegation during the visit will be tested for COVID-19 and quarantined in accordance with the ministry of health's advice," Cambodia's Foreign Affairs Ministry said in a statement.

Szijarto's scheduled meetings in the Thai capital were cancelled, and an extra plane was ordered from Hungary to transport him home, separately from his staff.

The Hungarian embassy in Bangkok did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Hun Sen, a staunch ally of Beijing, spent the early weeks of the pandemic refusing to wear a mask or close Cambodia's borders to China.

But as cases surged across Europe and the US, the kingdom barred foreign tourists — though never those from the Chinese market — and Hun Sen changed his tune, urging the public to don masks.

The country has emerged mostly unscathed from the virus, registering fewer than 300 cases and no deaths. — AFP

■ RETURNING TO STUDIES



Indian Kashmiri students carrying their belongings line up as they return to their colleges in Pakistan at the India-Pakistan Attari-Wagah border post about 35 kms from Amritsar on Wednesday. — AFP

N Korea man crossed armed border

SEOUL: South Korea's military said on Wednesday it had taken into custody a North Korean man who crossed the heavily fortified border with North Korea in a potential defection to the South, prompting an urgent search operation.

The man was found about 9:50 a.m. on the eastern end of the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) dividing the two Koreas, the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) said, adding there was no unusual movement among North Korean troops.

"An investigation is planned to find out details about the man, including how he had come down and whether he wished to defect," the JCS said in a statement. The person was first spotted crossing barbed wire fences installed along the border at 7:26 p.m. on Tuesday (1026 GMT), the News1 agency reported, citing an unnamed military source.

The Yonhap news agency said that the military had issued a "jindotgae" anti-infiltration alert for the eastern border area, and that the man had expressed a willingness to defect.

The defence ministry declined to confirm those reports, citing an ongoing investigation. The



A South Korean soldier stands on the footbridge at the southern side of Panmunjom in the Demilitarized Zone on Wednesday. — AFP

operation came as South Korea on Wednesday restarted tours to the southern part of the DMZ, which has seen several armed clashes but also served as a venue for key inter-Korean events, including some of the most recent summits.

But the programme was suspended in October 2019 after an outbreak of deadly African swine fever broke out in North Korea, and then due to concerns about the novel coronavirus this year. Unification Minister Lee In-young, celebrating the tours' resumption, made no mention of the North Korean man but called

for free travel among all Koreans within the DMZ and recovery of inter-Korean hotlines severed amid strained ties.

"Re-establishing round-the-clock communication channels would be a basis for restoring inter-Korean relations," Lee, who oversees cross-border affairs, told a ceremony at the truce village of Panmunjom within the DMZ.

The latest case marked the first border crossing since a North Korean soldier defected to the South via the central DMZ in July 2019. In late 2018, another North Korean soldier defected via the eastern DMZ. — Reuters

Philippine island left without power after deadly typhoon

MANILA: It could take months to restore power to a Philippine island of 260,000 people devastated by the country's most powerful typhoon this year, the Red Cross said.

Eight towns on Catanduanes were cut off and an estimated 25,000 houses destroyed by Typhoon Goni, which was packing winds of 225 kilometres per hour when it slammed into the island on Sunday before sweeping across southern Luzon.

Robert Kaufman, country head for the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, said there are no telecoms services on the island and it could take months to restore power.

Emergency personnel were



Batangas residents clean their homes following flooding caused by typhoon Goni. — AFP

trying to reach eight towns that have been cut off by landslides, Kaufman said after a flying visit.

"Building after building, house after house... if it's not destroyed

it's damaged," Kaufman said.

"Many people, who were already hanging on by a thread, now their livelihood is really turned upside down and they will

need support."

Ferocious winds and torrential rain destroyed at least 25,000 homes on the island and damaged another 45,000, he said, but the numbers are expected to rise.

Goni came a week after Typhoon Molave roared through the same region, where resources had already been stretched by the coronavirus outbreak.

At least 19 people were killed by Goni as it crossed the Philippines, including five on Catanduanes and 13 in nearby Albay province on Luzon, Civil Defense said, revising down an earlier toll of 20.

The number of injured was 69 — the majority on Catanduanes.

"The situation is both heartbreaking and also hopeful," said Kaufman, who also inspected

the damage in Albay where volcanic mudslides buried scores of homes.

"There was a lot of devastation... but one thing that I saw is an incredibly resilient population."

Around 400,000 people were evacuated ahead of the typhoon which, Kaufman said, "saved lives".

Many are still displaced after around 100,000 houses in Goni's path were damaged or destroyed.

"They have a lot of experience with large-scale storms, with catastrophic typhoons... people knew to vacate the area and take shelter in evacuation centres."

Many of the deaths were people who had left shelters before the typhoon had passed, he said.

— AFP



Election workers counting absentee ballots in Detroit. — AFP

OUTCOME STILL IN LIMBO

Handful of states leave Biden, Trump scrambling to hit 270 electoral votes

WASHINGTON: The US presidential election hung in the balance on Wednesday, with a handful of close-fought states set to decide the outcome in the coming hours or days, even as Donald Trump falsely claimed victory and made unsubstantiated allegations of electoral fraud.

President Trump and his Democratic rival Joe Biden both still have possible paths to reach the needed 270 Electoral College votes to win the White House, as states keep counting mail-in ballots that surged amid the coronavirus pandemic.

Opinion polls had given Biden a strong lead nationwide for months, but they had shown closer races in battleground states, and the vote did not produce the stinging verdict against the Republican president that the Biden camp had hoped for.

Biden, 77, said in the early hours he was confident of winning once the votes are counted, and urged patience.

Trump, 74, appeared at the White House soon after to declare victory. “We were getting ready to win this election. Frankly, we did win this election,” he said, before launching an extraordinary attack on the electoral process by a sitting president.

“This is a major fraud on our nation. We want the law to be used in a proper manner. So we’ll be going to the US Supreme Court. We want all voting to stop.”

Trump provided no evidence to back up his claim of fraud and did not explain how he would fight the results at the Supreme Court, which does not hear direct challenges.

Voting concluded as scheduled on Tuesday night, but many states routinely take days to finish counting ballots. Huge numbers of people voted by mail because of the pandemic, making it likely the



A member of the ‘Democrats Abroad’ organisation holds a placard during a demonstration near the US Embassy in Berlin, urging US officials to count every vote before calling the current presidential election. — AFP

count will take longer than usual.

The next president will take on the raging disease, which has killed more than 231,000 people in the United States and left millions more jobless, amid a political climate marked by racial tensions and bitter polarisation.

The trio of “blue wall” states that unexpectedly sent Trump to the White House in 2016 — Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin — remained too close to call.

Biden held a slight lead in Nevada, where officials said they would not update the count until Thursday. Two Southern states, Georgia and North Carolina, were also still in play; Trump held leads in both. A win for Biden in either one would narrow Trump’s chances considerably.

Biden’s victory in Arizona — both Fox News and the Associated Press projected he would win the state — gave him multiple pathways

to the White House.

If he holds onto Nevada, he could secure the presidency by winning the Midwestern states of Wisconsin and Michigan, where he held narrow leads on Wednesday, even if he loses Pennsylvania. Trump’s most likely path goes through Pennsylvania; if he wins that state, he would secure re-election if he also held onto the Southern states and won at least one Midwestern state.

Officials in Michigan and Georgia said on Wednesday they expected the states to complete their counts by day’s end. World leaders were in limbo as they waited for clearer results, with most avoiding weighing in amid the uncertainty. In global markets, investors moved to price a greater chance of US policy gridlock. Biden leads 224 to 213 over Trump in the Electoral College vote count, according to Edison Research.

‘OUTRAGEOUS’

Biden’s hopes of a decisive early victory were dashed on Tuesday evening when Trump won the battlegrounds of Florida, Ohio and Texas. But the former vice-president said he was confident he could win by taking the three key Rust Belt states.

“We feel good about where we are,” Biden said in his home state of Delaware. “We believe we’re on track to win this election.”

During the final days of the campaign, Trump had suggested he would claim victory if ahead on election night and seek to halt the count of additional ballots.

“The president’s statement tonight about trying to shut down the counting of duly cast ballots was outrageous, unprecedented, and incorrect,” Biden’s campaign manager Jen O’Malley Dillon said in a statement.

Before his White House appearance, Trump slammed his opponent, saying in a tweet, “We are up BIG, but they are trying to STEAL the Election. We will never let them do it. Votes cannot be cast after the Polls are closed!” Twitter swiftly tagged the tweet as possibly misleading.]

“It’s not my place or Donald Trump’s place to declare the winner of this election. It’s the voters’ place,” Biden said on Twitter in response to the president.

It was not clear what Trump meant by saying he would ask the Supreme Court to halt “voting.”

The high court does not hear direct challenges but instead reviews cases that have worked their way up from lower courts. However, legal experts have said the election outcome could get bogged down in state-by-state litigation over a host of issues, including whether states can include late-arriving ballots that were mailed by Election Day. — Reuters

Decentralise duty of jobs creation

The current economic and health conditions had implications on all walks of life. It has also adversely affected job opportunities in the country.

The contraction of the economy has reduced employment avenues. However, self-employment and independent work appears to be a viable solution to the problem. It is possible through systematic steps to make the people of the country capable of working independently in all wilayats of the Sultanate of Oman. This is possible in all economic activities. For this purpose, commercial activities should begin in all wilayats of the country, managed by the walis and governors in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour and the Public Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises (riyada). There should be participation by members of Majlis Ashishura and Municipal councils and others from the wilayat.

While doing so expatriates should be replaced by locals. All wilayats should decide the opportunities where only citizens could be recruited. It is also important to develop skills among the job-seekers so that they can start their own independent work. This requires training and orientation. The government should start such steps. If we would realise its importance, we will develop our people who can compete in this area. They should also get financial and other support.



Ali Al Matani
alimatani2@gmail.com

IT IS UTMOST
IMPORTANT TO
TAKE MEASURES
SO THAT THE
CONCEPT
OF SELF-
EMPLOYMENT
BECOME
SUCCESSFUL IN
FUTURE

It is utmost important to take measures so that the concept of self-employment become successful in the Sultanate in future. It is necessary that people should not depend on jobs created by public and private sector. They should also realise that the idea of self-employment makes them sit in the driver's seat of the economy. This helps them realise that they can make money as much as they put in their efforts and as quickly as they can.

Previously, there has been focus on self-employment and independent work in the Sultanate. This was through wilayats and governorates as they know their people better. The local administration understands the strengths and weaknesses of the local people better. It is important that the government should decentralise responsibilities in these areas and use wilayats and governorates for the purpose. The local and national organisations concerned can help in this regard. In this form of job creation strategy, the governors and local administration could have more powers.

The current management of entrepreneurship by riyada, due to its modest capabilities and slow methods, does not match the current requirements. The entire work culture should be changed and there should be long-term planning to make

simple achievement in developing entrepreneurs.

If the governors and walis of 60 wilayats could have powers and should enjoy cooperation from the authorities and organisations concerned, they can do wonders in empowering people by self-employment and restricting the expatriate workers in certain sectors. For this, they would certainly need serious studies about the skills of the people of the country and the opportunities available for them.

Of course, such efforts will face obstacles from those who have interests in hidden trade. Some organisations will also create hurdles when they find that their areas of work are being encroached. Some will indulge in unnecessary criticism of this idea of work. But at all cost, employment of the youth of the country is above all considerations. They have to get jobs and replace expatriate workforce. They might need some skill development, training and support. This is necessary so that they can be successful in opting independent jobs and self-employment.

We hope that the government will study this idea of job creation and make the youth of the country employed as early as possible. The government should start study of the idea and carry out serious survey before going ahead with the economic empowerment of the people of the country.

BURNING PROBLEM

As Amazon blazes surge, firefighting proves a challenge

LUCAS LANDAU

In August, teacher Núbia Machado visited environment agency Ibama's office in Novo Progresso, in the Amazon state of Para, to seek help with a huge fire that had swept into her nearby farm the night before. The blaze already had roared through most of her 255 hectares (630 acres) of land, half of it a forest reserve as required by law.

Photos and videos recorded on her mobile phone suggested the fire had come from her neighbours' land. But environmental agency staff told Machado nothing could be done because the fire was on private land.

A local representative of PrevFogo, a federal system to prevent and fight forest fires, which Ibama coordinates, told her the agency's jurisdiction extended only to conservation and indigenous reserves and a few other situations, Machado said.

The representative suggested she and other farm owners get a group of friends together and try to put out the fire themselves. "How am I supposed to control a fire in the middle of the jungle?", an irritated Machado asked, noting she didn't have the manpower or equipment needed to do the job.



I left the Ibama office with my land on fire, with damage to the electricity supply and part of the fruit orchard

NÚBIA MACHADO
A teacher

"I left the Ibama office with my land on fire, with damage to the electricity supply and part of the fruit orchard, the forest reserve burning, and no results," she said. As a result, she had "nothing to do but wait and hope that they understand that the fire didn't start in our farm", she said. Ibama's press office did not respond

to repeated calls and e-mails for comment on Machado's case.

As Brazil's second-worst fire season in a decade flares across the Amazon this year, putting out blazes has proved a challenge. The Amazon city of Novo Progresso, for instance — where Machado lives — has no firefighting capacity. The nearest fire department is in Itaituba, more than 400 km away. That means that when blazes escape control, there can be little prospect of getting them put out before they turn into major threats.

On the night of August 10, as fire spread through Machado's farm, an employee living on the land - the only one there at the time - had to be rushed to the hospital with smoke inhalation, she said. Before leaving, he managed only to clear the area around the house, to try to protect it, she said. The fire, which swept through neighbouring farms and forest land as well, burned on for two weeks after her visit to the Ibama offices, Machado said. She wasn't only worried about her farm losses, she said.

Under the law, private landowners can be held responsible for damage fires do to forest reserves on private land. Adécio Piran, the Novo Progresso city environmental secretary, said this year his department had begun investigating more than two dozen cases where it suspected landowners had set fires to clear land, seen the blazes surge out of control, then filed police reports about fire damage to their land, "hoping not to be charged".

The city environmental department recorded more than 2,000 hectares of pasture land - and 250 acres of forest reserves — burned in the Novo Progresso municipal area between June and August this year.

—Thomson Reuters Foundation

AMERICA LADY

Kamala Harris inspires women leaders in her ancestral Indian village

ANURADHA NAGARAJ

More than 12,870 km from Washington, Indian women have been rooting for the "America lady" in the village of US vice-presidential candidate Kamala Harris's grandfather. As locals in Thulasendrapuram's temple held special prayers for a Democratic win in the November 3 election, 34-year-old M Umadevi — who was elected to the village council in December — said she related to Harris as a fellow woman politician.

"She is a daughter of our village," said Umadevi, who has a five-year-old son and sews clothes to support the income of her husband, a driver. "This must have been difficult and challenging for her. But anything new is like that. I feel both excited and nervous about my new role also." The village, located about 320 km south of the city of Chennai in the state of Tamil Nadu, is where Harris's maternal grandfather was born more than a century ago.

Harris was born in California to an Indian mother and a Jamaican father who both immigrated to the United States to study. She visited Thulasendrapuram when she was five and has talked about walking on Chennai beaches with her grandfather.

The former attorney general of California, 55-year-old Harris is the first black woman and first person of Indian descent nominated for national office by a major party - and only the fourth woman on a presidential ticket.

Umadevi said her priority as a member of the village council, representing some 200 mostly farming families, was to build a tarmac road.



A banner featuring US Democratic vice-presidential nominee Kamala Harris is seen pasted on a wall at a bus stop at the village of Thulasendrapuram, in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu. — Reuters

HARRIS WAS BORN
IN CALIFORNIA TO
AN INDIAN MOTHER
AND A JAMAICAN
FATHER WHO BOTH
IMMIGRATED TO
THE UNITED STATES
TO STUDY

"The first thing on my list is to make sure we have a proper road," she said in a phone interview. "It is in terrible shape and you can barely call it a road really. A good road will bring better fortune." Unlike Harris, who has a degree in law, Umadevi dropped out of school when she was 15 on her mother's decision. About 60 per cent of girls in India are educated but some states record a higher rate of over 90 per cent, according to India's last census data. In Thiruvavur district, where Thulasendrapuram is located, literacy level is more than 82 per cent, with district education officials

stating that all girls were enrolled in schools. Umadevi said education was key if the next generation of girls in the village were to become high achievers like Harris, whose smiling image is plastered on banners in the village wishing her electoral success.

"Today, all our girls study, even if it means going to high school that is a few kilometres away from the village," said Umadevi. "College is also far but many still go and get a degree," she said, adding that young people in the area still found it hard to get well-paid jobs.

—Thomson Reuters Foundation

HEAD OFFICE

Tel: 24649444, 24649450,
24649451, 24604563,
24699437
Fax: 24699643

SALALAH OFFICE

Tel: 23292633
Fax: 23293909

NIZWA OFFICE

Tel: 25411099
P.O. Box 955, P.C. 611

ADVERTISING

AL OMANEYA ADVERTISING &
PUBLIC RELATIONS, P.O. Box 3303, P.C.
112, Ruwi, Sultanate of Oman
Tel: SWITCHBOARD: 24649444,
24649430/24649437/24649401
Fax: 24649434

DISTRIBUTION AGENT

Al OMANEYA for Distribution &
Marketing, P.O. Box 974, P.C. 100,
Muscat, Sultanate of Oman
Tel: 24649351/24649360
Fax: 24649379

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY:

Ministry of Information
P.O. Box 974, Postal Code 100, Muscat,
Sultanate of Oman

sport



Liverpool's Portuguese striker Diogo Jota (R) scores a goal past Atalanta's Argentine defender Jose Luis Palomino during the Uefa Champions league match at the Atalanta stadium in Bergamo. – AFP

Liverpool, Bayern run riot

Real Madrid strike late to edge Inter; City cruise

PARIS: Diogo Jota scored a stunning hat-trick in Liverpool's 5-0 demolition of Atalanta in the Champions League on Tuesday, as holders Bayern Munich scored six and Real Madrid struck late to beat Inter Milan in a thriller.

On a prolific night across Europe which also saw a rampant Borussia Moenchengladbach hit six in Ukraine, the star individual performances came from Jota and Alassane Plea.

Portugal forward Jota joined Liverpool from Wolverhampton Wanderers in September and has wasted little time making an impact with seven goals from just five starts.

In Bergamo, against an Atalanta side who reached the quarterfinals last season, Jota was brought into the starting line-up in place of Roberto Firmino and required just 16 minutes to open the scoring.

Another emphatic finish allowed the 2019 Champions League winners to double their

lead before the break, and Mohamed Salah then broke away to get the third just after the restart.

Salah set up Sadio Mane for Liverpool's fourth before Jota got his hat-trick goal as the Premier League champions recorded their biggest win in Europe since beating Porto 5-0 away in February 2018.

"I'm playing in the best team of my career so far. I don't know if it's the best moment of my career but obviously scoring goals is my way of playing football," Jota told BT Sport.

With three wins from three, Liverpool are well on course to top Group D, with Ajax and Atalanta both five points back.

Ajax won 2-1 away to Midtjylland in Denmark, as Brazilian youngster Antony opened the scoring in the first minute and Dusan Tadic netted from an indirect free-kick inside the box soon after. Anders Dreyer got one back for the hosts, who

Uefa Champions League results on Tuesday		
Group A At Moscow Lokomotiv Moscow (RUS) 1 (Anton Miranchuk 25-pen) Atletico Madrid (ESP) 1 (Gimenez 18) At Salzburg Salzburg (AUT) 2 (Berisha 4, Okugawa 66) Bayern Munich (GER) 6 (Lewandowski 21-pen, 88, Kristensen-og 40, Boateng 79, Sane 83, Lucas 90+1)		Inter Milan (ITA) 2 (Martinez 35, Perisic 68)
Group B At Kiev Shakhtar Donetsk (UKR) 0 Borussia Moenchengladbach (GER) 6 (Plea 8, 26, 78, Bondar 17-og, Bensebaini 44, Stindl 65) At Madrid Real Madrid (ESP) 3 (Benzema 25, Ramos 33, Rodrygo 80)		Group C At Manchester Manchester City (ENG) 3 (Torres 12, Gabriel Jesus 81, Cancelo 90) Olympiakos (GRE) 0 At Porto Porto (POR) 3 (Marega 4, Oliveira 28-pen, Dias 69) Marseille (FRA) 0
		Group D At Herning Midtjylland (DEN) 1 (Dreyer 18) Ajax (NED) 2 (Antony 1, Tadic 13) At Bergamo Atalanta (ITA) 0 Liverpool (ENG) 5 (Jota 16, 33, 54, Salah 47, Mane 49)

remain pointless.

French forward Plea had earlier scored a hat-trick as Gladbach claimed a stunning 6-0 victory over Shakhtar Donetsk in Kiev, the German side's biggest European triumph since their 1970s heyday.

The unfortunate Valeriy Bondar scored an own goal, with Ramy Bensebaini and Lars Stindl also scoring as Gladbach went top of Group B, a point clear of Shakhtar and Real Madrid.

Gladbach coach Marco Rose said: "Six-nil is extraordinary. We did a lot right today — not to say almost everything."

RODRYGO POWERS REAL

Real, the 13-time European champions, ran out 3-2 winners in a dramatic encounter with Inter behind closed doors at the Alfredo di Stefano Stadium, as Vinicius Junior set up his fellow Brazilian substitute Rodrygo to lash in the decisive goal 10 minutes from time.

Karim Benzema had put the

hosts ahead and Sergio Ramos headed in his 100th Madrid goal in the 33rd minute, but Lautaro Martinez pulled one back shortly after. Inter were missing the injured Romelu Lukaku..

BAYERN MAKE IT 14 WINS

Reigning champions Bayern have now won a record-extending 14 consecutive Champions League games after a 6-2 victory against Salzburg in Austria.

German forward Mergim Berisha gave Salzburg an early lead only for Robert Lewandowski to level from the penalty spot, and a Rasmus Kristensen own goal put Bayern ahead before the break.

Meanwhile, Marseille's 3-0 loss away to Porto saw them equal Anderlecht's record of 12 consecutive Champions League defeats.

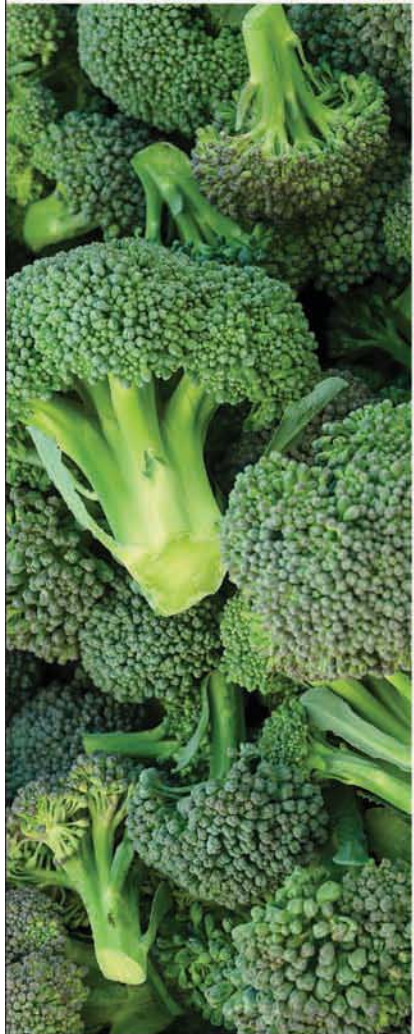
Manchester City are firmly in control of Group C after Pep Guardiola's side eased past Olympiakos 3-0, with Ferran Torres, Gabriel Jesus and Joao Cancelo netting. — AFP

NOW OPEN!

LULU E-COMMERCE & LOGISTICS OMAN

luluhypermarket.com

World class online shopping experience,
now at your finger tips.



Lulu's expansive new facility, the E-commerce & Logistics Centre is redefining online shopping. From everyday grocery, fresh food, dairy products to trending electronics like mobiles, laptops, tablets, smartphones, mobile accessories, in-vogue fashion clothing & accessories; from furniture to large & small appliances, home furnishings, toys and household products, we got them all covered.



Shopping made easy



Scan QR Code
to get the App



Online shopping with a new
confidence

- Unbeatable infrastructure - 125,000 Sq. ft. facility
- Expansive fleet of temperature controlled vehicles for delivery
- Epic selection
- Safe and secure payment gateway

Experience the Lulu Advantage

- Great deals and super value

Shop on the go by visiting
www.luluhypermarket.com or
by downloading the
Lulu Shopping app

HYPERMARKETS.
SUPERMARKETS.
DEPARTMENT STORES.

Lulu
Where the world comes to shop
safely!



OCA Championship begins tomorrow

ANUROOP
ATHIPARAMBATH
MUSCAT, NOV 4

The Oman national cycling championship 2020-21, organised by Oman Cycling Association (OCA), will begin at Al Amerat on Friday.

The OCA Championship, which runs for a total of 641 km, consists of eight races – six road races, one individual time trial and one team time trial.

All the races are one-day events with separate prizes on each day.

The general classification leader in Open category will get the Omantel red jersey, general classification leader in Under-23 category will win the Bank Nizwa white jersey and general classification leader in Over 40 category will bag the Bank Sohar green jersey.

This year's event will be competed by Ahli Sidab A and B teams, Al Rustaq, Al Shabab, Sur, Izki, North Road Oman, Gulf Cycles, Arsen Endurance/Diver Store, Nizwa, Brothers Team, Capital Team, Ibri and Royal Army of Oman.

OCA President Saif al Rashdi said he is happy that they were able to stage the competition despite the pandemic situation.

"This edition of championship was delayed due to the COVID-19 situation. We were waiting for the Supreme Committee decision to allow the sports competitions to begin. However, the event will be organised in full implementation of precautionary measures stipulated by the government authorities," Al Rashdi told the *Observer* during a press conference to unveil the details of the championship.

The OCA president hoped the cycling races will see good competition.

"The event is open for the



OCA President Saif al Rashdi (left) and OCA officials unveil top three jerseys for the championship. – Pictures/Mohammed Mahjoub

nationals and residents of Oman. We will witness professional competition among the cyclists," he added.

The championship will start with a team time trial race at Al Amerat Police Station at 7.20 am. The race will run for 45 km from Al Amerat to Al Salil and back to Al Amerat.

Out of the eight races, women can compete in five races.

PRIZE MONEY

The OCA championship offers a total prize money of RO 8,635.

In Open category, the winner gets RO 600, second place is RO 500 and third place finisher will get RO 400.

In the general team

classification, the first place team gets RO 800, while second gets RO 600 and third place team gets RO 400.

In the above 40 category, the top three winners will get RO 350, RO 250 and RO 150 respectively.

In the Under-23 section, the top three winners will get RO 300, RO 200 and RO 100 respectively.

Women will get separate cash awards in each of the five races they are entitled to participate. Cash prizes of RO 40, RO 30 and RO 20 will be awarded to the top three women riders respectively.

For the youth category riders, this will be RO 20, RO 15 and RO 10 respectively in each of their five races.

RACE ITINERARY

- Race 1 (Nov 6)**
45 km (Team time trial)
Al Amerat - Al Salil - Al Amerat
- Race 2 (Nov 20)**
18 km (Individual time trial)
Al Batinah Coastal Road
- Race 3 (Nov 27)**
90 km (road race - 15 laps)
Halban
- Race 4 (Dec 18)**
98 km (road race - 10 laps)
The Wave - Airport
- Race 5 (Jan 1, 2021)**
123 km (road race - 3 laps)
Nizwa
- Race 6 (Jan 22)**
87 km (road race)
Qurayat - Al Salil - Daghmar - Qurayat
- Race 7 (Feb 5)**
96 km (road race)
Wakan - Wadi Mistal
- Race 8 (March 26)**
84 km (road race - 15 laps)
PACA

TEAMS

1. Nizwa Club
2. Sur Club
3. Al Shabab Club
4. Izki Team
5. Rustaq Club
6. Arsen Endurance/Diver Store
7. North Road Oman
8. Brothers Team
9. Capital Team
10. Royal Army of Oman
11. Ahli Sidab - A
12. Ahli Sidab - B
13. Gulf Cycles
14. Ibri Club

business

MUSCAT
STOCK
MARKET

3,535.97

CRUDE
OIL PRICE

Oman Crude \$ 40.13

Brent Crude \$ 40.62

Light Crude \$ 38.52

follow us @oman_biz

www.omanobserver.om

editor@omanobserver.om

#It'sYourTurn

To get a chance to win with 50th National Day Prizes

Open Savings Account today!

Guaranteed prizes for every branch

• Bigger prizes • More winners

Be a winner with BankDhofar Savings Account

For more information

www.bankdhofar.com/en-GB/Saving_Account.aspx

*Terms & conditions apply

the best bank for you 24781111 www.bankdhofar.com

Global investors keep powder dry as US election gets tight

HONG KONG: Global investors in Asia are sticking with bets on China's recovery and holding off on major portfolio changes as early results show a tight US presidential election.

"I don't think you'd be buying anything if the result's uncertain, because you have a binary outcome," said Matt Sherwood, head of investment strategy at Perpetual in Sydney, which manages A\$29 billion (\$21 billion) in assets.

"And if you start positioning your portfolio towards one outcome, then you could get your portfolio on the wrong foot."

For weeks, market moves had indicated investors were betting on a "Blue Wave" by which Biden wins the White House and Democrats control both houses of Congress.

That was expected to bring big stimulus spending along with higher yields on the government debt to pay for it, while foreign investors reckoned on freer trade and a weaker dollar directing capital to emerging markets.

Yet as results came in during Asian trade on Wednesday, bonds rallied and the dollar soared amid the uncertainty. Fund managers outside the United States, meanwhile, said they were sticking with investments that could withstand any electoral outcome.

"Should the election result become highly contentious, leading to notable market weaknesses, we are buyers rather than sellers," said James Leung, head of multi-asset, Asia Pacific, at global fund manager Barings.

"Asia has also been our preferred region before the election and the outcome of such should not materially alter the region's economic recovery. We remain constructive on the region on a medium-term outlook."

Asia's equity markets were steady or gainers, though most currencies fell against the rising dollar. — Reuters



Oman's be'ah weighs biogas plants for power production

Feasibility study finalised by be'ah envisions the establishment of biogas plants at Sultan Qaboos University (SQU), the municipal landfill in Barka, and a complex belonging to the Omani Agriculture Association

CONRAD PRABHU
@conradprabhu

Oman Environmental Services Holding Company (be'ah), which oversees the management of the solid waste sector in the Sultanate, says it sees the potential for electricity production from biogas harnessed from organic waste presently being disposed of in municipal landfills.

Small-scale biogas plants based on this concept are planned in at least three locations in Muscat and South Al Batinah governorates, according to a key official of the state-run entity.

Zainab bint Ali Abdulkhaliq, who heads the Energy Recovery section in the company's Business Development Department, said a feasibility study finalised by be'ah envisions the

Anaerobic digestion is a biological technology used for biogas production as an alternative source of energy. Biogas then can be used for electricity production or to be upgraded to a biofuel.

ZAINAB ALI ABDULKHALIQ
Head, Energy Recovery Section - be'ah

establishment of biogas plants at Sultan Qaboos University (SQU), the municipal landfill in Barka, and facilities designated by the Omani Agriculture Association.

In a recent article published by the Anglo-Omani Society, a London-based charitable organisation committed to advancing Omani-British relations, the energy recovery specialist said the organic waste targeted as feedstock for the proposed biogas plants is essentially biological waste mixed with other household waste streams.

"Anaerobic digestion is a biological technology used for biogas production as an alternative source of energy. Biogas then can be used for electricity production or to be upgraded to a biofuel. A

Build Operate Transfer (BOT) business model is to be adopted for commissioning the biogas plant," she stated in the article.

Significantly, the proposal for biogas plants is among a raft of initiatives being weighed by be'ah in support of its strategy to divert waste away from landfills and into recycling and energy conversion schemes in line with internationally accepted circular economy and resource management principles.

Notable is the company's proposal for procuring a large-scale Waste to Energy project designed to treat around 4,000 tonnes per day of municipal solid waste to generate at least 140 MW/day of electricity.

The feedstock will account for more than 60 per cent of the solid

waste currently being landfilled.

"This project on its own will meet one of be'ah's core strategic goals in terms of value recovery, besides creating additional economic and social benefits including job creation and attraction of foreign direct investments into the country. This project will be tendered in 2021 following a BOT model," the article noted.

Similarly, fish waste currently being disposed of in landfills – a practice that poses potential public health and environmental risks – is proposed to be processed into organic liquid fertilisers and other products as a substitute to chemical fertilisers.

According to be'ah, an Omani SME specialising in fish waste management and recycling has sought permission to establish a plant based on New Zealand technology to convert fish waste into commercially valuable fertiliser.

"Be'ah's main objective with this project is to encourage local production (ICV), value recovery, promote private sector participation, adopt best disposal practices and finally promote environmental protection and public health and safety," the report added.

Saudi Arabia to ease restrictions on foreign workers

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia said on Wednesday it will ease key restrictions on millions of foreign workers, as part of plans to reform its labour policy.

The ministry of human resources and social development said that from March 14, expatriates will no longer need their employers' permission to change jobs, travel or leave Saudi Arabia — home to some 10 million foreigners.

"This initiative will improve and increase the efficiency of the work environment," the ministry said in a statement carried by the official Saudi Press Agency.

"The exit and re-entry visa reforms allow expatriate workers to travel... without the employer's approval after submitting a request, (and) the employer will be notified electronically of their departure," it said.

Sattam al Harbi, a deputy minister at the ministry, said the reforms will abolish "runaway" reports against foreign workers who do not report for duty, which effectively renders them criminals at risk of being jailed and deported.

"These changes are not small changes — it's huge," Al Harbi told Bloomberg News in an interview on Wednesday. "We aim to achieve more inclusion for Saudis, attract talent, improve the working conditions, make Saudi Arabia's labour market more dynamic and productive." — AFP

STAKES SALE

Australian firm completes divestment of copper projects in Oman

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, NOV 4

Australian mining resources development firm Savannah Resources plc has announced that it has completed the sale of its stakes in the Block 4 and Block 5 copper projects in Oman to Force Commodities Ltd, a mining firm listed on the Australian Stock Exchange.

As part of the sale, Savannah will receive 50 million new fully paid ordinary shares issued by Force (deemed issue price of 1 Australian cent per Force share) giving Savannah a 4.9 per cent stake in Force after 4 million shares are used to settle some transaction costs.

Savannah will also receive preferential payment of \$3.5 million

(Australian) in cash from an existing loan out of cash flow generated from production on Block 5. Furthermore, Savannah shall receive payment of a 1.0 per cent net smelter royalty on any future metal sales (from Block 4 and/or Block 5).

In return, Savannah has transferred 100 per cent ownership of Savannah Resources BV, which holds Savannah's interests in the Projects, to Force. Blocks 4 and 5 cover an area of over 1,000 sq kilometres spanning the copper-rich Semail Ophiolite region.

The belt is known to host clusters of moderate to high-grade copper deposits associated with gold and other metallurgical ores, according to experts.

Prior to its divestment Savannah



held a 65 per cent interest in Block 5 via its shareholding in Al Fairuz Mining, and a 51 per cent stake in Block 4 via its shareholding in Al Thuraya Mining.

Located within easy access of the

Port of Sohar, Block 5 has a current Indicated and Inferred Mineral Resource of 1.7 metric tonnes (Mt) at 2.2 per cent copper (Cu), split between the Mahab 4 deposit (1.51Mt at a grade of 2.1 per cent Cu) and

As part of the sale, Savannah will receive 50 million new fully paid ordinary shares issued by Force (deemed issue price of 1 Australian cent per Force share) giving Savannah a 4.9 per cent stake in Force after 4 million shares are used to settle some transaction costs

the Maqail South deposit (0.16Mt at a grade of 3.8 per cent copper). The Mahab 4 deposit also includes a high-grade zone of 0.5Mt at 4.5 per cent Cu.

Mining licenses for the development of the blocks are still

awaited from the Ministry of Energy and Minerals.

David Archer, Savannah's CEO commented: "We have now concluded the sale of our Projects in Oman to Force, which we first announced in September. The strategic review we initiated last year looked at a number of options regarding Savannah's ongoing participation in the projects.

It concluded that an appropriately structured divestment, which allowed Savannah to retain an interest in the projects' long term economic success, represented the best outcome available to us. The transaction gives Savannah a meaningful shareholding in Force as well as the potential for cash payments from any future production from the projects."



Are family businesses under threat?

The number of family businesses in the region has declined in recent years following a trend seen among the younger generations to pursue careers and livelihoods of their choice. The new generation has a preference for jobs in large governmental and commercial institutions, investing in the stock exchange, trading in commodities or venturing into finance or other businesses.

These young people see their futures in business opportunities of their own choosing, independent of the companies owned by their families over generations.

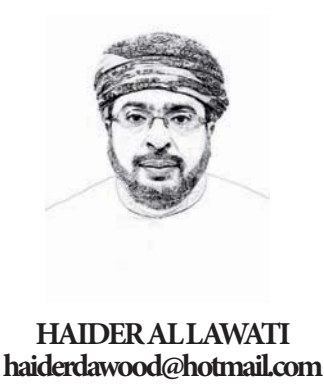
In pursuing their own career

paths, they see the opportunity to earn substantially more than what may be gained from staying in the family business, due to regulatory constraints or other limitations.

As is well-known, many family businesses in the region predate the advent of the hydrocarbon industry. Some of them continue to thrive in their respective sectors.

However, the number of new family-owned companies in the region is shrinking. Commercial records indicate that most family businesses are registered under the name of one person — even if the founder may have since been deceased.

It is not unusual to find, in some instances, members of the



HAIDER ALLAWATI
haiderdawood@hotmail.com

AS IS WELL-KNOWN, MANY FAMILY BUSINESSES IN THE REGION PREDATE THE ADVENT OF THE HYDROCARBON INDUSTRY. SOME OF THEM CONTINUE TO THRIVE IN THEIR RESPECTIVE SECTORS

family moving away from the business and relinquishing their stakes in the company.

The outlook for family-owned businesses was shared by a Gulf expert participating in an online forum hosted as part of the Majlis Al khonji series recently.

According to the expert, family-owned companies will continue to thrive in the region because of a favourable business environment that is conducive for the start-up of such companies.

Furthermore, family owned companies can be set up with minimal upfront investments or costs. Decision-making is relatively quick and most such businesses are set up in the close proximity of the family home.

The real challenge for family-owned companies is business continuity, and the adoption of professional expertise and modern business practices. Such companies operate today in several fields, including food stores, real estate, restaurants, warehousing, entertainment, basic transportation, building management, small enterprises, and so on.

These companies are distinguished by their tendency not to borrow, but in all cases their members must show professionalism, dedication and diligence.

Today, there are many challenges facing these companies, according to the expert. Larger businesses risk being stunted if they fail to employ

professionals or formulate appropriate operational strategies. In-fighting within the family, stemming from envy and rivalry, can also threaten its growth.

Disharmony between family members, poor communication and monopolisation of control can also sound the death knell for such businesses.

There are several things that family businesses need to keep in mind to ensure their viability and success.

In addition to a sound business strategy, it is advisable for such companies to recruit qualified professionals from outside the family to provide prudent guidance and unbiased advice on key matters.

FUNDAMENTAL TOOL

Madayn Academy studies HR performance of industrial cities

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, NOV 4

Madayn Industrial Academy has implemented a series of training programmes for the employees of the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn) and the companies and factories investing in Madayn's industrial cities during 2020, says Dr Khamis bin Said al Muniri, Director General of Madayn Industrial Academy.

Al Muniri informed that the academy has carried out several studies and consultations during 2020, which included a study analysis on human resources performance that targeted all the employees of Madayn's head office, industrial cities, Knowledge Oasis Muscat and Al Mazunah Free Zone, and another study analysis on the operational cost



for the units and the industrial cities of Madayn.

"The human resources performance analysis adopted descriptive method where interviews were taken as the fundamental tool through asking direct questions, followed by analysis, discussion, and drawing out results.

In fact, these interviews play a pivotal role in facilitating interactive discussions, analysis and interpretation of the employees' answers," Al Muniri said, adding: "Moreover, a dedicated form to the human resources analysis was prepared by the supervising committee and was used in this study. Document

analysis was also employed for the tasks of the directorates and departments, job descriptions, and employees' data."

Madayn, represented by the academy, has signed this year a number of agreements that support the role and objectives of the academy.

Of these agreements, a cooperation programme was signed with the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation to develop joint plans that link the outputs of higher education institutions with the investing companies in the industrial cities of Madayn.

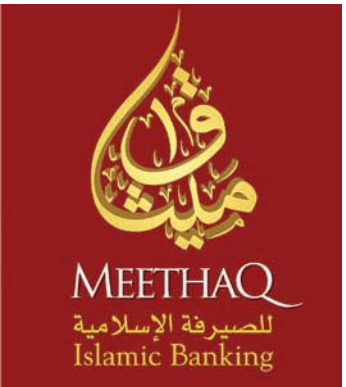
The agreement aspires to strengthen integration between the current and future development plans of the industrial cities and the fields of higher education, scientific research and innovation, as well

as develop the curricula of higher education institutions regarding the various specialisations that are linked with the industrial needs of the sector and the companies in the industrial cities.

Another agreement was signed with Amazon for Environment and Sustainability to provide a healthy environment in Madayn's industrial cities. This agreement comes in line with Madayn's efforts to support entrepreneurs and Small and Medium Enterprises.

Through this agreement, consultations will be carried out in the field of identifying and measuring air pollution in the industrial cities, presenting scientific solutions to the investors to address the various environmental effects caused by pollution, and ensure a healthy work environment within these industrial cities.

Hibati to celebrate 50th National Day with Special Draw



MUSCAT: Meethaq Islamic Banking from Bank Muscat has begun the countdown to conduct a special Hibati draw to celebrate the Sultanate's 50th National Day on November 18, 2020. Fifty lucky winners will win prizes of RO 1,000 each during the special draw. All that a customer needs to do is maintain a minimum weekly balance of RO 100 in their Hibati account from November 8-14, 2020 to be eligible.

Meethaq is committed to promoting a healthy savings habit in Oman and has been growing from strength to strength by helping customers realise their aspirations since its launch in 2013. The Hibati Savings account is based on the unrestricted Mudarabah contract.

The cash prizes offered under Hibati's 2020 prize draw scheme are 'Hiba' (gift) from Meethaq to its customers and are paid out of Mudarib's (shareholders') own sources.

The cash prizes are in addition to the profit share of Investment Account Holders (IAHs) in the General Mudarabah Pool as per the declared profit-sharing weightages. With prizes including 100 weekly prizes of RO 100 each and 10 monthly prizes of RO 1,000 each, Meethaq's Hibati offers one of the biggest Shari'a-compliant cash prize schemes in Oman.

Recently 10 special prizes of RO 1,000 each were given away on the occasion of the Omani Women's Day in October.

Also mega prizes for the Hafawa segment are given away every quarter which include 6 prizes of RO 5,000 each and 5 prizes of RO 10,000 each for customers every quarter. A massive total of over RO 1 million will be given away to 5,424 winners in 2020.

PRESS RELEASES

BE A GUARANTEED GOLD WINNER WITH MALABAR GOLD & DIAMONDS

In a run up to the festive season, Malabar Gold & Diamonds, one among the largest jewellery retailers globally with a strong retail network of over 250 outlets spread across 10 countries, has announced attractive in-store offers to lure customers.

The latest campaign from the brand gives customers the opportunity to win assured gold coins on purchase of gold and diamond jewellery. As part of the festive season, Malabar Gold & Diamonds has also unveiled the Festive Jewellery collection, featuring the most eye-catching and unique trends in gold, diamond and precious gem jewellery, bound to captivate jewellery lovers at the best price.

An 'Exclusive Jewellery Collection' has also been launched, which features unique and one-of-a-kind pieces, that was once adorned by the royals and is sure to make you look splendid at special occasions.

The latest offer announced by Malabar Gold & Diamonds gives customers unmatched opportunities to win gold coins for their gold or diamond jewellery purchases.



OMAN ARAB BANK PARTNERS WITH DAA FOR WORLD FOOD DAY



Oman Arab Bank has partnered with Dar Al Atta'a again this year to commemorate World Food Day which took place on October 16, 2020. The World Food Day campaign is an annual food drive that sees individuals and entities such as OAB donate food items to those in need.

Commenting on the importance of this initiative, Hilal al Siyabi, Head of Corporate Communications at OAB, said, "Now, more than ever, it is crucial to support each other and lend a hand to those in need and that's what makes World Food Day so important. We are grateful to the team at Dar Al Atta'a for coordinating and partnering with us for this important cause once again. The staff at Oman Arab Bank have been doing their part by donating food to help make a difference."

Oman Arab Bank has participated in and initiated a number of charity initiatives since the start of the year, all of which underline its dedication to sustainability, which remains a fundamental pillar in the Bank's operational strategy.

SOHAR INTERNATIONAL UNVEILS SOHAR YOUTH PROPOSITION

Driven by its vision to become a world-class Omani services company, Sohar International has unveiled its newest proposition, Sohar Youth.

The new account type is in line with Sohar International's commitment towards creating a generation of financially responsible future business leaders in the country, and caters to the ever-changing lifestyles of today's young consumer. The proposition will offer the youth segment a wide range of financial solutions across multiple stages of their personal and professional lives.

On launching the proposition, Khalil al Hedaifi, Chief Retail Banking Officer at Sohar International, said, "The fast-paced evolving world that today's young generation lives in, makes it challenging for them to step back and plan the future for themselves. Sohar International's newly developed Youth proposition is part of the bank's strategy to ensure that being a service-oriented organisation, we cater to the smallest of financial needs of the consumer, thereby encouraging them to plan ahead and adopt prudent financial practices."



HYUNDAI OFFERS EXCEPTIONAL PRICES ON ALL MODELS FOR A LIMITED PERIOD

The recently launched promotion by OTE- Hyundai, offers exceptional prices on the entire model line-up of Hyundai models, prices starting as low as RO 3,888 on Grand i10, along with an attractive cash-as-gift ranging from RO 1712 to RO 5606 and a manufacturer warranty of up to 5 years / 100,000 kms — one of the best in the industry.

The promotion will be valid only for a limited period and the elements may vary for different models; exact details can be checked out at any of the Hyundai showrooms closer to you.

As part of the on-going promotion, the popular model Elantra is now available at RO 5999 onwards and price of the bold styled SUV Tucson starts from RO 6999, after adjusting the cash-as-gift amount.

With such attractive prices, this is indeed the best time to buy your favourite Hyundai! Hyundai's model line-up features a bold design and each loaded with a wide range of cutting-edge safety technologies.





Indian rupee at over 2-month low

NEW DELHI: The Indian rupee weakened to its lowest level since late August on Wednesday, tracking a decline in other emerging market currencies. — **Reuters**



Philippines exports grew in Sept

MANILA: Philippine exports grew 2.2 per cent in September from a year earlier, the first monthly rise since February, as the government gradually reopened the economy. — **Reuters**



Subaru raises profit outlook

TOKYO: Subaru Corp raised its operating profit forecast on Wednesday by more than a third to \$1.05 billion because US vehicle sales rebounded more than it expected. — **Reuters**

China's dramatic suspension of Ant listing to hurt business outlook and valuation

The move to suspend Ant's IPO was seen as a stunning rebuke for billionaire Jack Ma, a former English teacher who built Alibaba Group Holding Ltd and affiliate Ant into two of China's biggest success stories

HONG KONG: China's shock suspension of Ant Group's record \$37 billion listing in a last-minute regulatory ambush looks set to hit the financial technology giant's growth prospects and cut into its valuation.

The move to suspend Ant's IPO was seen as a stunning rebuke for billionaire Jack Ma, a former English teacher who built Alibaba Group Holding Ltd and affiliate Ant into two of China's biggest success stories.

Ant's enormous heft and Ma's recent criticism of global financial regulations, however, put him on a collision course with China's top regulators.

That said, analysts and investors expect the dual Hong Kong and Shanghai listing to be delayed and not completely derailed. "Ant's business is likely to be restricted by new financial regulations.

As a result, the relaunched IPO price will most likely be lowered," said Andrew Collier, managing director of Orient Capital



Ant Group Chairman Eric Jing speaks at the fifth World Internet Conference in Wuzhen, China, in this file photo. — **Reuters**

Research.

The Tuesday decision by the Shanghai stock exchange to suspend the listing followed a meeting between China's financial regulators and Ant executives, including Ma, who were told the company's lucrative online lending business would face tighter scrutiny, sources said.

The exact nature of the regulators' concerns and just how long a suspension might last is not known. The Shanghai bourse described the meeting as a material event that could cause Ant to be disqualified from listing.

Ant said in a filing on Wednesday it would maintain close communication with regulatory authorities and the Hong Kong and Shanghai bourses on the progress of its IPO and listing and would disclose information in a timely manner.

The move by regulators has been interpreted as an effort to cut Ma down to size after he made a speech at an event last month attended by Chinese regulators that criticised the financial and regulatory system as stifling innovation.

Regulators have, however,

also become uncomfortable with banks increasingly using micro-lenders or third-party technology platforms such as Ant for underwriting loans amid fears of rising defaults and a deterioration in asset quality in a pandemic-hit economy.

State media on Wednesday also described the move as necessary and in the public interest. "The basic message of Chinese regulators' intervention in the Ant IPO is that this de-risking agenda is still the top priority.

No innovation is so important that it can be allowed to create

financial instability," said Andrew Batson at Gavekal Research. Batson added Ant would "almost certainly" return to the market at some point, but it might have to make substantial changes to its internal organisation and business model to meet regulatory requirements.

Analysts pointed to a consultation paper issued by the People's Bank of China and the China Banking and Insurance Regulatory Commission on Monday that recommends the tightening of regulations for online micro-lending companies — which in retrospect foreshadowed the regulators' move against Ant.

Iris Tan, a senior equity analyst at Morningstar, said she thought regulators were aiming to level the playing field for fintech players and traditional financial institutions and that she expects Ant will be required to have more registered capital for its consumer credit business.

But few people were willing to hazard a guess as to just how long the delay might last or how far Ant's valuation could fall. Its listing had been set to value Ant at \$315 billion, which would have made it Asia's fifth most valuable firm and worth more than the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China, the world's biggest bank by assets. — **Reuters**

BMW reports higher third quarter profit



BMW CEO Oliver Zipse speaks in Frankfurt, in this file photo. — **AFP**

FRANKFURT: German luxury carmaker BMW said on Wednesday that its third quarter net profit grew, beating expectations, as demand recovered from the crippling lockdowns of the early months of the coronavirus pandemic.

The Munich-based company posted a net profit of 1.8 billion euros, up from 1.5 billion euros in the same period last year as it "recovered from the previously massive impact of the pandemic," BMW said.

Sales were down 1.4 per cent to 26.3 billion euros. Analysts had predicted third quarter net profit of 1.5 billion euros on sales at 26.1 billion euros, according to the FactSet financial information service.

BMW suffered its first loss in 10 years in the Q2 as the health crisis shuttered showrooms, closed factories and ravaged demand but the auto market then bounced back strongly as restrictions were eased. — **Reuters**

Oil prices increase as US stockpiles shrink

TOKYO: Oil rose nearly 2 per cent early on Wednesday after industry data showed crude inventories in the United States dropped sharply, but analysts said uncertainty had crept into the market amid growing suspense over the result of the US presidential election.

West Texas Intermediate was up 71 cents, or 1.9 per

cent, at \$38.37 a barrel by 01:57 GMT, having gained more than \$1 earlier in the day. Brent crude was up 64 cents, or 1.6 per cent, at \$40.35.

Oil prices dropped more than 10 per cent last week with rising coronavirus cases around the world and more restrictions on movement hitting demand prospects.

— **Reuters**

Dutch government approves KLM bailout plan

THE HAGUE: The Dutch government approved a multi-billion-euro coronavirus bailout for struggling airline KLM after pilots agreed a five-year pay cut deal.

Finance Minister Wopke Hoekstra on Saturday dramatically suspended plans to rescue the beleaguered Dutch arm of Air France-KLM after unions refused to budge. But after KLM announced that the pilots' union had backed down, the government said it was now ready to sign off on the 3.4-billion-euro (\$3.9-billion) state aid injection.



KLM aircraft are parked at the tarmac of Schiphol airport in Amsterdam. — **AFP**

"Intensive consultations" between KLM and the unions led to a

"positive outcome", Hoekstra and Infrastructure Minister Cora van

Nieuwenhuizen said in a letter to parliament.

"The cabinet can therefore agree to its restructuring plan and has since confirmed this to the KLM management board," they wrote. KLM chief executive Pieter Elbers had earlier announced the deal with the pilots' union, hailing it as an "important step" for the airline's survival.

"The past few days have been incredibly intensive for everyone, with great pressure on the company, negative impact on reputation and internal divisions," he said. — **AFP**

■ UPBEAT OUTLOOK

India's services activity grows in October for first time in 8 months



Workers assemble motorcycles inside a factory in Oragadam, Tamil Nadu. — **AFP**

BENGALURU: Activity in India's dominant services industry, expanded for the first time in eight months in October as demand surged, but pandemic-hit firms continued to cut jobs, a private survey showed on Wednesday.

The findings, coupled with a similar survey on Monday which found Indian manufacturing growth expanded at its fastest pace in over a decade, suggest a recovery in Asia's third-largest economy is under way.

The Nikkei/IHS Markit Services Purchasing Managers'



It's encouraging to see the Indian service sector joining its manufacturing counterpart and posting a recovery in economic conditions from the steep deteriorations

POLLYANNA DE LIMA
IHS Associate Director

Index climbed to 54.1 in October from September's 49.8.

It was the highest reading since February and comfortably above the 50-mark separating growth from contraction.

"It's encouraging to see the Indian service sector joining its manufacturing counterpart and posting a recovery in economic conditions from the steep deteriorations caused by the COVID-19 pandemic earlier in the year," Pollyanna De Lima, economics associate director at IHS Markit, said in a release.

"Service providers signalled

solid expansions in new work and business activity during October. They were also more upbeat about the outlook, though hopes of output growth in the year ahead were pinned on a COVID-19 vaccine."

A sub-index tracking overall demand showed it expanded for the first time since February but new export business remained firmly in contraction territory as restrictions imposed across the world due to the COVID-19 pandemic hammered foreign demand. — **Reuters**

WJ Towell Group Company

Quality car rentals at competitive prices.

Muscat 9014 6672, 9679 0684
Sohar 9731 6218 Salalah 9429 9325
www.orbit-oman.com

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

أوربت ORBIT
Car Rental & Lease

Classifieds

OMAN DAILY Observer

For Advertisements
Please Contact with our Team:

Head Office
Mohd Al Rashdi 99841230 m.alrashdi@yahoo.com
Ali Al Maashari 99639264 ali.almashari@omandaily.net

Salalah Office
Bakht Al Shihri 9998577 bakht.omanadaily@gmail.com

Nizwa Office
Abdullah Al Ahri 99420094 rizwafco@omandaily.net

Subar Office
Musaam Al Saidi 99420138 soharadaily@outlook.com

THURSDAY NOVEMBER 5, 2020 RABEE AL AWWAL 19, 1442 AH

OMAN DAILY Observer

Classified Section

Mohammed al Rashdi: 99841230
m.alrashdi86@yahoo.com

Ali al Maashari: 99639264
ali.almashari@omandaily.om

Saada al Rashdi
95919344

94501166
24649593
24649595

FOR RENT

NEW family flats in Darsait near the beach, 5 bedrooms, hall with AC, 4 bathrooms, balcony with sea view, RO 450 per month. Contact: 99315986.

FLAT for rent. 98403020

SOUTH Al Ghubra flat in villa on the first floor, 3 rooms + 3 toilets + majlis + family room and dining room with balcony very nice view, the house all with AC, RO 400. 96559696.

flats in Mumtaz, Al Khuwair and Al Ghubrah, 2BHK and 1 BHK. 99341138/ 90991079.

2 BEDROOM flat Al Khuwair. 99322344.

FOR rent in Salalah, north Auqadain. Call 91711118.

FLATS for rent in Al Khuwair, Al Hail, Wadi Kabir, Al Falaj, MBD and Muttrah. 99119699/ 95250300/ 24813002

ONE bedroom flat at Darsait near Medical RO 170/-. Two BHK Al Khuwair RO 300/-. Athaiba behind Zubair RO 300/-. 24790449, Fax: 24790559

NEW apartment for rent, one room, 2 toilets, kitchen and dining. Location, Al Khoudh Market, Red Taj building, 7th floor. Per month rent RO 190/-. 92838118

WELL maintained 1&2 BHK and office space/ store available at Rex Road. Contact 92227165

SHOWROOM and flats FLATS for rent near Diwan Zafraniya area end of Muttrah Corniche close to (Muscat Shiva Temple), family, bachelor. Contact 99083071, 99323015.

FLAT for rent at Al Khuwair 33, 4 bedrooms, majlis, 2 halls, kitchen and store. 99383446

NEW penthouse, N Ghubra — 2 bedroom + 3 toilets + 1 maid room with toilet and 1 big hall 99370300.

NEW apartment in Ruwi near church consists of 2 rooms with its facilities. Contact. 94664635, 95850345.

1BHK & 2 bhk flats for rent at Ruwi and Al Khoudh. 93994402, 93994403, 24834644.

3 BHK Flat & studio flat in central Ruwi & 2 BHK in Medinat Al Ilam. Call 99238012/ 24704994.

SIT. VACANT

URGENT requirement, Marble grounding expert 2 nos. External glass cleaner - 2 nos. Visa available. Mobile: 95175645, 97468796

REQUIRE HSE Officer, Full time/on Contract Qualifications: NEBOSH, IOSH & DCRP Trainings (HSE Induction, ESR, first aid AHA, Safety leadership for managers, Incident & Accident Investigation, Risk Assessment & Fire Warden). Send your CV @ email: alsuhico@gmail.com GSM: 79004121, 79004123, 99348493, 99337587

Medical Jobs
NEEDED to private clinic:
1- Indian nurse
2- Indian GP doctors
3- Indian male pharmacist
Mobile and WhatsApp: 95440765.

Duct Man/ Fabricator
URGENTLY required for Duct Factory
Duct Men/ Fabricator
With minimum 4 years Oman experience. Contact: 98901648.

WE are urgently for AC & Auto electrician (car electrician) who can join immediately. Contact: 99677756.

SIT. WANTED

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

BUYING

AL Awsad Modern llc, electronic and furniture used. 99834373.

We buy used and broken cars which have instalments in cash. 90202090.

MANPOWER

MANPOWER from Philippines. Whatsapp: 91206344.

SIT. WANTED

Experienced Electrical Engineer looking for a job. Contact 91766740, 79285656.

LADY Indian English teacher with over 25 year experience, currently seeks full time position in colleges or training institutions. Responsibilities in English language teaching or soft skills trainer with preference for aviation sector. Possess valid Omani driving license. Contact GSM 92541510

33 years, Indian, female having MBA in finance looking for position of accountant, having 8 years of experience in Muscat as accountant. NOC available. Contact No: 79161458.

MECHANICAL engineer. 21, Indian male currently in Oman looking to work at any engineering field. Contact 96511338. Email: rkdhanush11@gmail.com

I NEED a driver job, urgent, with NOC paper. My name: Masum Billah. 968 94991705.

YOUNG experienced Pakistani driver with Omani light vehicle driving licence seeks suitable opening. Speaks Arabic, Hindi, English and familiar with interior and Muscat areas. Contact GSM 95856719.

FINANCE Manager/ CFO. Indian Chartered Accountant and Cost Accountant with 25 years of experience in Trade Finance, MIS, Budget, Planning, Strategy, PROJECTS, Procurement, Admin, seeks suitable placement. Contact. 99884291 / 99741875 Email vipul70@gmail.com

ACC AVAILABLE

SINGLE room with attached bathroom and air-condition for executive bachelor, non-cooking, Wadi Kabir/ Al Falaj/ Ruwi High Street area. Contact 99657906

WANTED

WANTED scraps HMS1 & HMS2 scrap all kind of copper scrap. Connect us: 90765659.

FOR SALE/RENT

COLD store in Al Seeb for lease or sale. Contact: 94272979, 96252664.

NEW 3 storey villas for sale/rents Wadi Kabir/Al Khuwair), (Shops/offices for rent/ Al Khuwair) (Flats for rent/Wadi Kabir). 96596348.

PEST CONTROL OMAN CO. L.L.C.

Supply of Pesticides, Gel (crocroches), Public Health chemicals, Agriculture chemicals, Snake repellent, Rodent baits and other insect repellent from UK & USA

PROFESSIONALS in Pest Control Service, Bedbug Treatment, Rodent Treatment, Snake Treatment and Termite Treatment [Pre & Post Construction]

Tel: 24787606, 24787503
Direct Line: 24786077
GSM: 99382355, 99172309
pcomctom@omantel.net.om
P.O. Box 565, Al Wadi Al Kabir 117, Sultanate of Oman

SITUATION WANTED

A Graduate Civil Engineer having 25+ years of rich experience in Oman and GCC in lead roles is looking for a suitable placement. Visa available.

Contact mob: 78391432. Email: mohamedpmc2020@gmail.com

SIT. WANTED

CIVIL engineer/QS engineer, 11 years in UAE, freelance & Oman driving licence available, looking for full-time or part-time job 97299165.

SALES/Marketing/ retail executive BMS in Marketing. 6 years experience. Contact 93920174. Rehankadri91@hotmail.com

RENT A CAR

abc RENT A CAR

SPECIAL Rates on New Cars & 4 WDs RENTING & LEASING

Tours and Airport Transfer

Tel: 24582663
GSM: 95859497,
Fax: 24582664,
abcrent@omantel.net.om

Buttercup Rent A Car AMAZING OFFERS

○ Rent a car for 10 days and get an extra free day.
○ Rent for one month and get 5 days free.

All the cars are 2016 brand new special prices for public departments, companies and long-term contracts. ☎972494490.

LUXURIOUS Toyota bus 2016, air-conditioned, 30 passengers, offered for daily/monthly/annually, Muscat. Contact: 98080609, 96316269.

ANNOUNCEMENT

Announcement of Capital Reduction

In accordance with the provisions of Article 150 of the Commercial Companies Law. The company **The Unlimited Extension of Services LLC**, which is registered with the Commercial Registration No **1178083**, hereby announces that it is going to reduce its capital from Omani Rials **100,000.000** to **25,000.000**. Whoever has any objection to the foregoing shall present the reasons for such objection to the Secretariat of Commercial Registry at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and

SERVICES

A LEGAL translation office needs **Marketeers**. Contact E-mail: oman4n@gmail.com

1. AC maintenance and servicing.
2. Fridge, washing machine and dish washer repairing.
3. Painting and cleaning services.
4. Electrical, plumbing and carpentry work 97014234, 99447257, 24290686.

ORIENT Trading llc, Shampooing, sofa, carpet, floor polishing. Old house repairing. 99834373.

AL SUMRI AC maintenance. We are ready to repair and install all types of Air-Conditioner within Muscat Governorate. 94301888.

Investment Promotion within 30 days from the date hereof.

Announcement of Capital Reduction

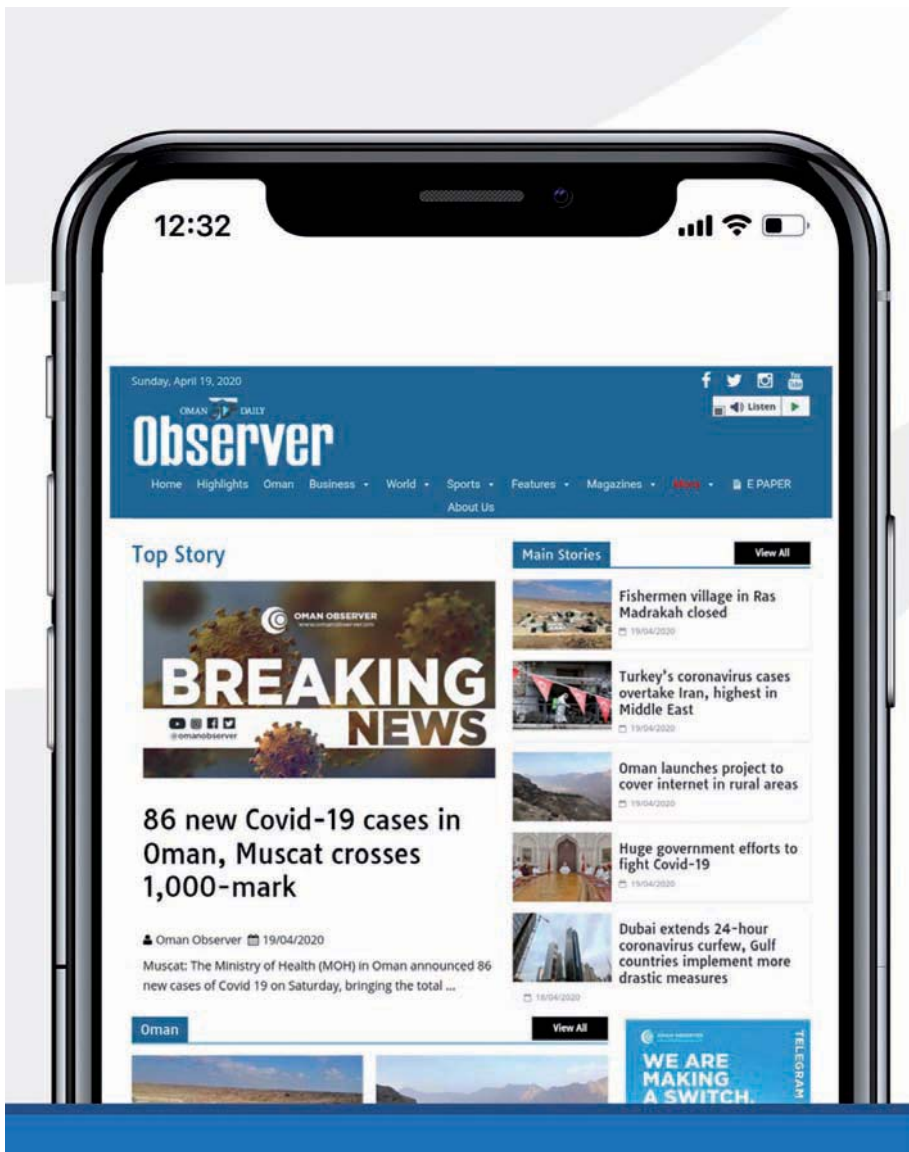
In accordance with the provisions of Article 150 of the Commercial Companies Law. The company **Bronze Celebrity Ray LLC**, which is registered with the Commercial Registration No **1237560**, hereby announces that it is going to reduce its capital from Omani Rials **250,000.000** to **3,000.000**. Whoever has any objection to the foregoing shall present the reasons for such objection to the Secretariat of Commercial Registry at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion within 30 days from the date hereof.

RAWASI Al Majd Modern Trading and Contracting - announces its registration with the Commercial Registry Secretariat at the Ministry of Trade and Industry under No 1162541 announces that it is transferring its legal form from a joint liability company to a Limited Partnership in accordance with Article No (30 of the Commercial Companies Law 18/2019 and its amendments and on all anyone who objects to this must submit the reasons for his objection to the Commercial Registry Secretariat at the Ministry of Trade and Industry within a period of one month from the date of the publication of this announcement.

SITUATION VACANT

Required the following for immediate appointment for an Omani family in Muscat
1. Female nurse (full time)
2. Homecare Female nurse (full time)

Send CV to Email:
saajaaj@omantel.net.om
Mobile No. 00968 99320239



features

    follow us @omanobserver | www.omanobserver.om | observerfeatures@gmail.com

Reality meets humour in these 2020 drawings

Local artist, Wafa Basheer, is one of the budding artists who is trying to find humour from the dark times we are experiencing caused by the pandemic. Through several of her pieces, she is documenting and making her personal commentary about real life events through surrealist paintings... **P18**

INSIDE STORIES

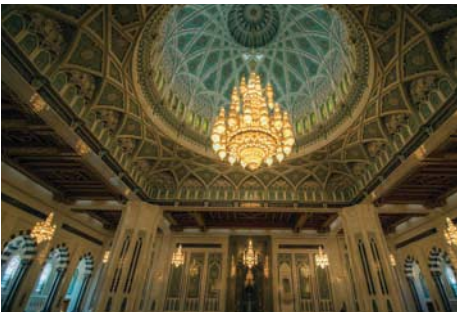
HEALTH & WELLNESS



VIRTUAL MEETINGS, REAL MINDS AND ZOOM FATIGUE

Tisha, a schoolteacher, just finished her online class and fell asleep immediately in her drawing-room, which has been her makeshift teaching office for the past six months... **Story on Page P20**

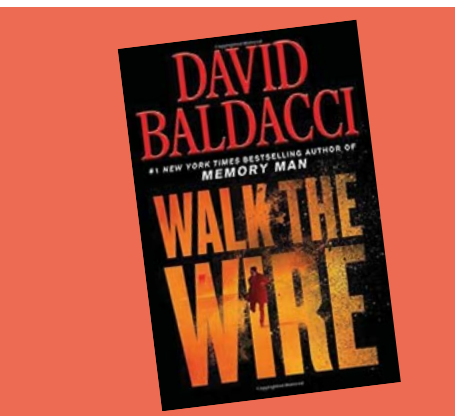
LOCAL TRENDS



FIVE THINGS YOU MIGHT NOT KNOW ABOUT SULTAN QABOOS GRAND MOSQUE

Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque is Oman's largest and grandest mosque, centrally located in the heart of Muscat with extensive manicured gardens, fountains and long, elegant walkways... **Story on Page 19**

READ



WALK THE WIRE

BY DAVID BALDACCI

The sixth book in the Memory Man series. Decker and Jamison investigate a murder in a North Dakota town in a fracking boom.

ENTERTAINMENT



'BABY SHARK' BECOMES MOST-WATCHED YOUTUBE VIDEO

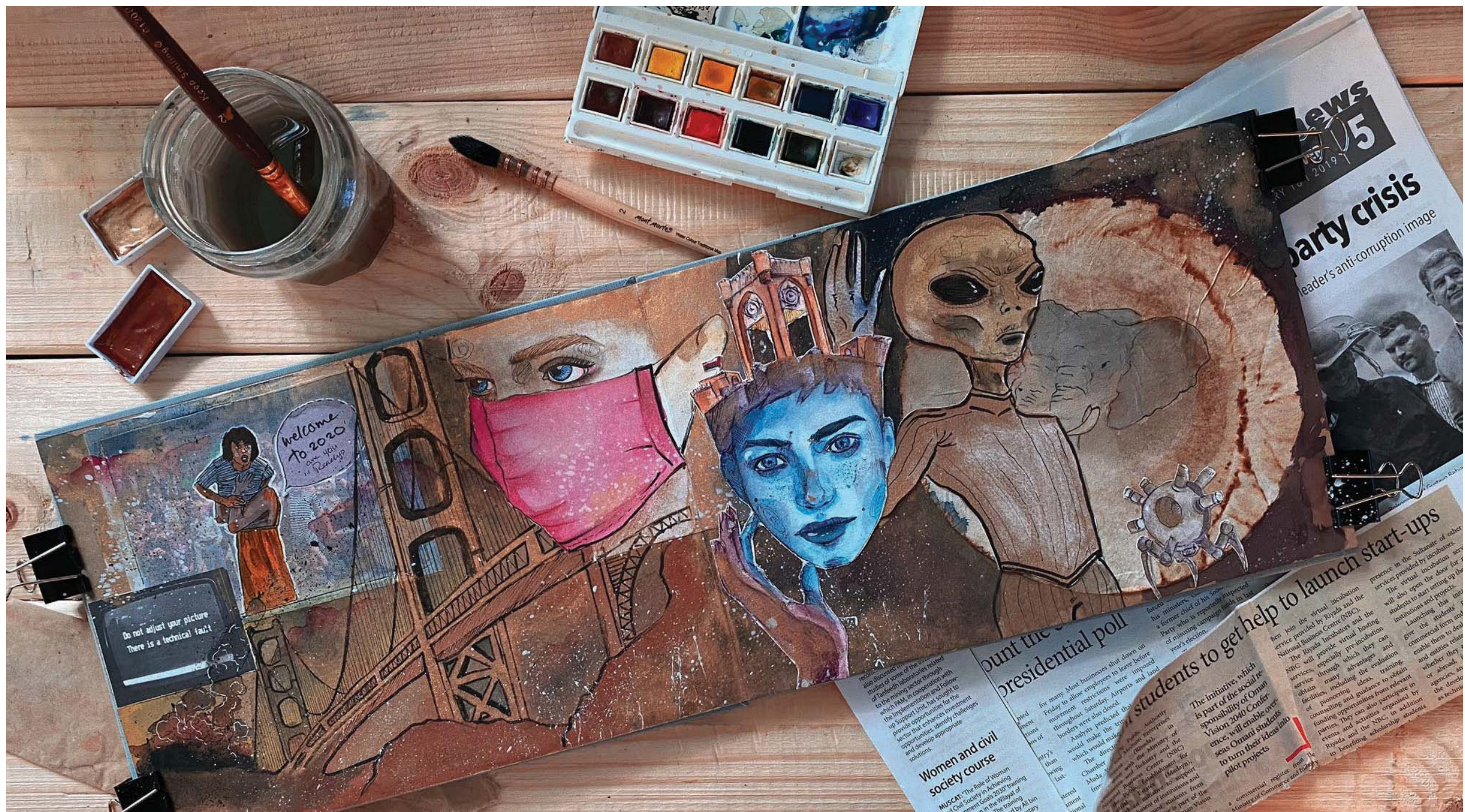
The wildly infectious and relentlessly repetitive children's song "Baby Shark" became the most-watched YouTube video on Monday, with more than seven billion plays... **Story on Page 19**

CELEBRATE



PROJECT MANAGEMENT DAY

Project Management Day first came about in 2004 as a way of honouring people who greatly contribute to achieving company goals. Project managers after all make sure that things move smoothly in different industries and even the government sector. Take the time to say thank you today or bring them out for a cup of coffee.



Reality meets humour in these 2020 drawings

BY RUQAYA AL KINDI

The year 2020 is, in many ways, both literally and metaphorically an epic year. While it caused a lot of distress and losses in the world, people still managed to spread humour through conversations, comments and drawings about the events that are going on. It could be these people's way of lightening up the situation and ease the complications triggered by this pandemic. Not surprising, even artists, too, are getting inspiration from pop culture and whatever is happening around them, they are getting inspiration that fuels their passion.

Local artist Wafa Basheer has joined the wagon and has found a way of creating her commentary through art. Mixing humour and sarcasm, she believes that this is a great way of getting rid of the burdens brought about by the latest happenings.

As an artist, Wafa has turned to surrealism to convey how she feels about the situation. The mixture of reality and imagination proved to be an engaging way to convey her message.

"My art is quite varied. I included the bushfires of Australia. I have one piece where I imagined that the Al Sahwah Tower found her in

Muscat is being controlled by aliens. It's a playful way of making a commentary about some wild speculations going around," she shared laughing.

The humour of her pieces is inspired by real-life events that are wreaking havoc to different lives from across the world. She even tackled the closure of borders and the isolation of people due to the outbreak of the virus.

"This one piece I have, the bridge denotes communication and connection, and this symbol is generally recognised in literature and art. In my paint, it is a symbol of the connection of the lands that have been closed due to the ban," she shared.

"This painting is one of the latest artwork I created to represent the reality around me, inspired by people's conversations and concerns," she said.

"Everything can inspire me; the good and the bad, nature, events, sounds, images, literally everything," she explained.

She started drawing early in age as any other child who finds a pen.

"I believe in art as a tool of conservation for history and civilisations. It is just like writing something to document it. It is a documentation of events in a splendid way where you enjoy watching and at the same time you learn."

"I find myself in art, and somehow art is good at containing my thoughts and feelings. The outcome always makes people



As an artist, Wafa has turned to surrealism to convey how she feels about the situation. The mixture of reality and imagination proved to be an engaging way to convey her message.

appreciate colours," she added. "Women" is one of Wafa's preferred topics and this led to a single-colour abstract series and calligraphy. It is about the features of local Arab women.

"Here I tried to draw figures of women like me. I wanted to immortalise who we are and what we look like through these pieces and having art pieces that represent a particular group of people help the topic of representation and diversity. It's a way of honouring my origin," she shared.

She called one of her other painting "Give me a hug".

"I painted it in oil colours and what this shows is the desperation of people for life. The characters here have become colourless, pale or

cold hearted," she noted.

"It is hard for me to do art for money, but I do it sometimes. It is, therefore, mostly a hobby and passion more than a career that brings money. I have bigger plans that won't harm the pure message of art," she explained.

She added that she likes to make her artwork pieces with a special feeling, and let people who really appreciate them own or acquire them; people who could read them and those who are open with their thoughts and feelings.

"I always have something to say in the form of art because I want to leave something behind when I'm no longer here. Art could live forever," she expressed.



find us on
TWITTER
Scan the QR Code or follow us on
www.twitter.com/omanobserver

OMANDAILYOBSERVER
THURSDAY | NOVEMBER 5 | 2020

19

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



damnaddicted • Follow



nomad.asian • Follow
Oman



pauldekuijer • Follow
Wahiba Sands



SHARE A SLICE OF YOUR LIFE

We select three photos daily for our Instagram Top Picks of the Day. The rules are simple. Follow us on Instagram. Upload your photos. Tag us and use **#OmanObserver** and **#BeAnObserver**.

LOCAL TRENDS

Get full stories online at www.omanobserver.com

ENTERTAINMENT

Five Things You Might Not Know About Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque

BY TITASH CHAKRABORTY

Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque is Oman's largest and grandest mosque, centrally located in the heart of Muscat with extensive manicured gardens, fountains and long, elegant walkways. The Grand Mosque was inaugurated by the late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos himself on 4 May 2001, as a gift to the nation to celebrate his third decade in power.

In 1993, A competition was hosted for architects to design a mosque that combined modern with traditional architecture. The winning drawing then in six years and seven months to build, featuring a mix of Islamic, Middle Eastern and Omani architectural styles and was built using 30,000 tonnes of pink sandstone imported from India, as well as local granite and white marble.



IT'S OMAN'S TALLEST STRUCTURE

Oman's architectural style favours low-rise, whitewashed buildings that celebrate the country's history through elaborate latticework, intricate mosaics and ornate carvings of flowers and this continued into the architectural aesthetic of the mosque.

Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque is the country's tallest structure, with an imposing 90 metre minaret. The mosque has four further minarets, and together the five towers symbolise the five pillars of Islam.

IT IS THE COUNTRY'S LARGEST MOSQUE

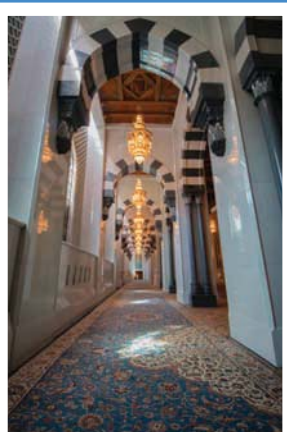
This mosque is Oman's largest. It has the capacity for 20,000 worshippers, with 6,500 in the main musalla prayer hall, 750 in the women's musalla and a further 8,000 in the outer paved grounds, plus additional space in the interior courtyard and along the passageways.

ONCE THE WORLD'S LARGEST CHANDELIER

The enormous Italian-manufactured chandelier was once the world's largest, this 24-carat gold-plated chandelier is trimmed with 600,000 Swarovski crystals and 1,122 bulbs. It is located at the centre of the men's prayer hall and is surrounded by 34 smaller versions found across the mosque.

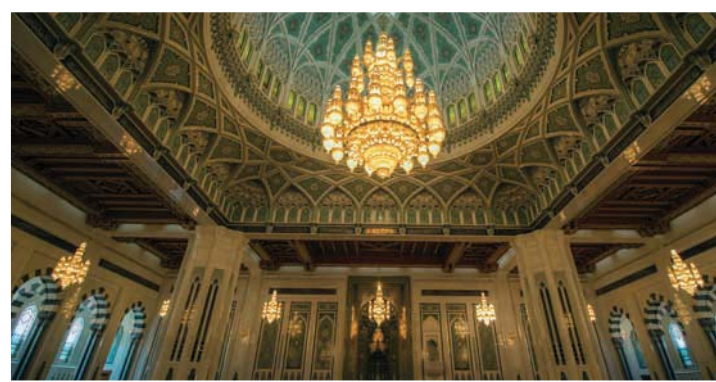
IT HAS A 21-TONNE HAND-LOOMED PRAYER CARPET

The mosque also features a hand-loomed prayer carpet within the main musalla. It took 600 Iranian women four years to complete the 21-tonne carpet, which consists of 1.7 million knots and features 28 natural vegetable dyes.



THE LIBRARY AS A CULTURAL LANDMARK AND CENTRE OF LEARNING

The double-storey Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque library is a cultural landmark that's representative of Oman's contemporary renaissance inspired by the late Sultan. More than 23,342 books on the topics of Islamic culture, natural science, fine arts, philosophy and psychology are found within its six sections, which also includes a children's section. The collection of predominantly Arabic and English books grows larger each year.



Virtual tours of the mosque, either with or without a VR headset, can be taken at www.sultanqaboos-grandmosque.com.

'Baby Shark' becomes most-watched YouTube video



THE WILDLY infectious and relentlessly repetitive children's song "Baby Shark" became the most-watched YouTube video on Monday, with more than seven billion plays.

The bane of parents and teachers worldwide, the South Korea-produced song has gone from the realm of children's YouTube to a global viral sensation, with a catchy and addictive melody buoyed by a hypnotically colourful video.

"Baby Shark Dance", the English-language version of the song, clocked up over seven billion views on YouTube at around 04:00 GMT on Monday, dethroning

charts, reaching the number 32 spot on the Billboard Hot 100 in January 2019.

It has picked up plenty of adult fans along its way to global viral fame: the Washington Nationals baseball team took it up as an anthem and went on to win the World Series last year, prompting the White House to play the tune during the celebrations.

One US town played the song on a loop, while another, Florida's West Palm Beach, used the melody to try to discourage homeless people from congregating in a public area.

It has also been pressed into anti-pandemic service,



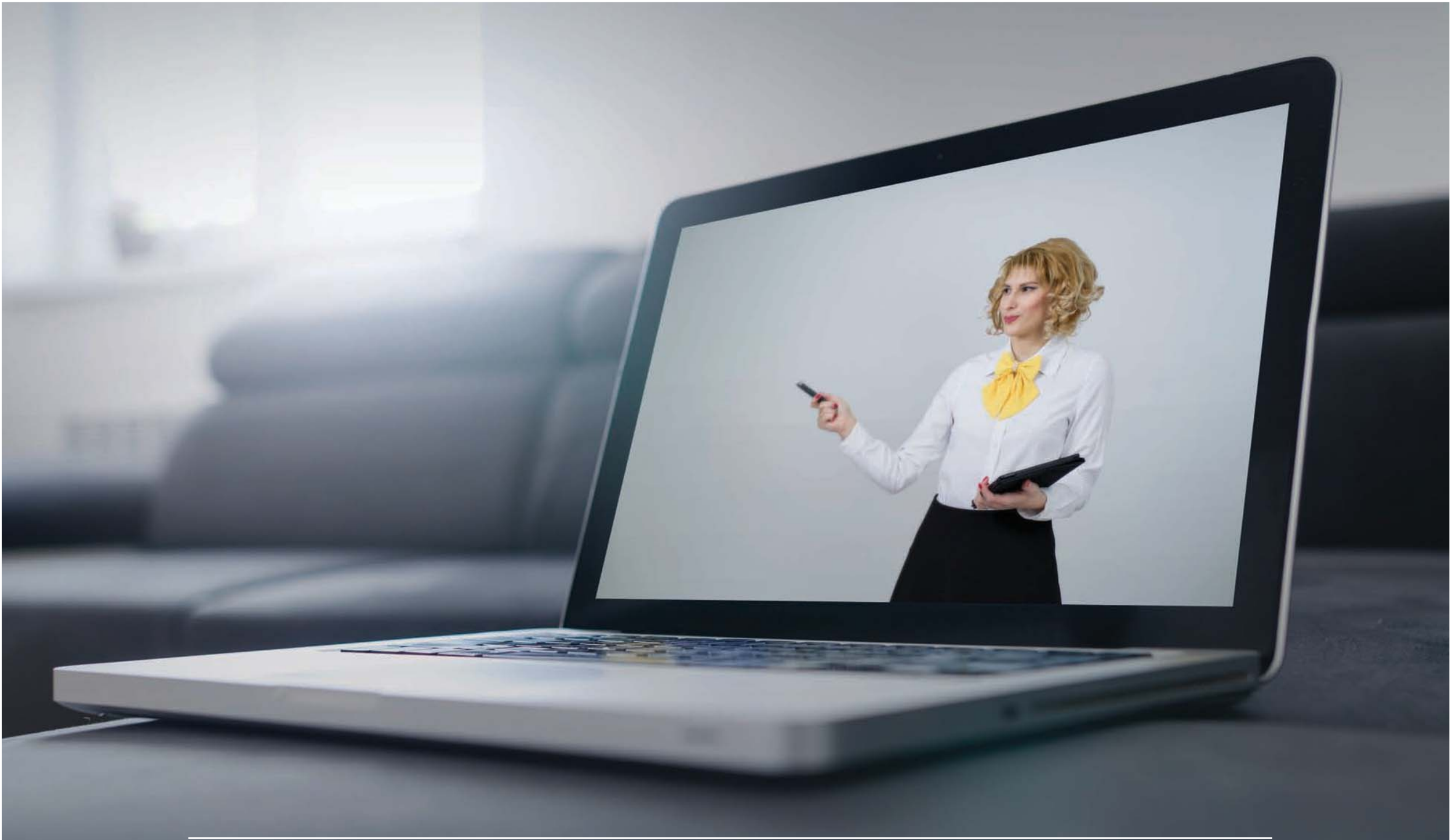
Luis Fonsi and Daddy Yankee's "Despacito" as the most-watched video on the platform.

The ubiquitous children's song and earworm, first uploaded to YouTube in June 2016, is a remix of an American campfire song by the Seoul-based production company Pinkfong.

Its YouTube success paved its route into the global music

with a coronavirus-themed version, "Wash Your Hands", teaching children the importance of personal hygiene.

Two of the last four tracks to hold the most-played record on YouTube are South Korean — rapper Psy's megahit "Gangnam Style" held the title for more than three years until it was dethroned by Wiz Khalifa's "See You Again". —AFP



Virtual meetings, real minds and Zoom fatigue

DR SIVA KUMAR
doctsh@gmail.com

Tisha, a schoolteacher, just finished her online class and fell asleep immediately in her drawing-room, which has been her makeshift teaching office for the past six months. She used to handle her classes of people full of emotions through conversational nuance and empathy. Not only did her live classes go online because of COVID-19 but also her department reviews, parents' meetings and even her ladies club and family gatherings, all zooming her off into virtual space.

Like Tisha, most of us are often meeting virtually and are ourselves feeling like a little box on a screen. Expressing ourselves through this small box can make us really tired. No matter what we're using, whether it's Google Meet, Skype or Teams, if used inappropriately, it can result in exhaustion that is now termed Zoom Fatigue.

Psychologists demonstrate that behind every successful in-person conversation, there are several non-verbal cues that occur, such as sharp intake of breath, leaning forward, handshakes and most importantly, eye contact. Establishing eye contact during a video call is extremely difficult as one has to look back and forth between webcam and screen. If the other person is also trying for similar eye-contact, the situation may really worsen leading to all four eyes rolling independently!

And you can forget about eye contact during gallery view when all



meeting participants appear on the screen. To keep at least one eye on everyone during such meetings one has to be either a sunflower starfish (24 eyeballs at the end of its movable legs) or a monarch butterfly (they have 12,000 eyes!).

If we still try viewing those little boxes with our lone pair of compound eyes, the prolonged split in attention can confuse our brain's central vision with unfamiliar, surplus and meaningless stimuli. This can make our brain overwhelmingly tired, making us look like a Zoombie.

On the other hand, missing gestures during human interaction can mean listeners get an incomplete picture of what is being conveyed, forcing them to pay sustained and intense attention to what is being spoken. Therefore, virtual interactions are hard for the brain.

There occurred a fundamental change in daily life as a result of COVID-19; strict separation measures

profoundly resonated with the new social distancing culture, and everyone was looking for a safe way to continue work. As we are living in the most technologically advanced and well-connected time in human history, video call applications quickly became a panacea.

At a time when coronavirus is making people feeling anxious, scientists have quickly found ways of using video call applications effectively with less exhaustion. They advise:

1. Don't multi-task: Although it may seem to save time in the short-term, multi-tasking will exhaust your brain. It has been found out through research that multi-tasking may reduce your productive time by 40%.

2. Take periodic breaks: Taking micro-breaks of 10 to 15 seconds every ten minutes and mini-breaks of 3 to 5 minutes every thirty minutes not only will give your body a rest but will improve your performance by reducing discomfort.

3. Avoid on-screen stimuli: Research has shown that most users spend time gazing at their own faces or looking at other users' background furniture, plants and wallpaper, or trying to work out what books are on their shelves. When our brain tries to process all of this, we end up with mental fatigue. The best solution is to either sit in front of a plain background or turn off the video.

4. Keep your social sessions optional: Keeping them as opt-in ensures that people don't participate unwillingly.

5. If possible, switch to phone calls or email: Decisions can be quickly made over the phone or by email, rather than by video calls.

6. Switch off video: While attending a meeting with people outside of your organisation, make sure to switch off the camera.

At first glance, these tips could seem difficult but following them will certainly prevent you from experiencing Zoom Fatigue. The new normal is, of course, tiring, but if used wisely, we can safely continue our routines.

Someone posted the following conversation on social media:

BOSS:
AGAIN, THIS IS A
ZOOM CONFERENCE.

ME:
THIS SHOW IS BORING.