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SUN, SAND, SALT, SURF AND SEA... MISSING THE TIME AT THE BEACH

■ OMAN

KILLING OF IRANIAN SCIENTIST PLAYED

MUSCAT: Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, on Sunday made a phone call to Dr Mohammad Javad Zarif, Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran. During the phone conversation, Sayyid Badr extended the Sultanate's condolences on the killing of the Iranian scientist Mohsen Fakhrizadeh, and its condemnation of this act which contravenes the heavenly religions and the humanitarian and international laws. — ONA

ROP RESUMES TO ISSUE RESIDENCE VISAS

MUSCAT: The Royal Oman Police (ROP) has started issuing residency visas, according to official sources. Speaking to the *Observer*, a senior official from the Directorate-General of Passports and Residency confirmed that applications can be submitted online which will be processed in the same manner it used to be done during the pre-Covid period. “Applicants can submit their required documents online, on a fixed format and residence visas will be issued in the same manner”, the official said. The DG of Passports and Residency has already begun issuing express visas of 21 days validity and family visit visas online, from earlier this month.

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ETHIOPIA'S PM ABYI: FROM PEACE PRIZE TO AIR STRIKES

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DHOFAR CLINCH HISTORIC 9TH HM CUP CROWN

Dhofar were crowned HM Cup Football champions after beating Al Orouba 5-4 on penalties after a goalless draw in 120 minutes of playing time at the Rustaq Sports Complex on Sunday night. HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, was the chief guest at the match which was attended by other dignitaries and officials. The chief guest gave away the trophy to Dhofar captain, and gold medals to the players.

SEE SPORT PAGES

19,527 expats opt for exit scheme

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

Nearly 20,000 expatriates have decided to take benefit of the exit scheme announced by the government two weeks ago.

The Ministry of Labour has received 19,527 requests from expatriates, who wish to leave the country for good without paying any fines or fees, from the start of online registration from November 26.

Of these, 8,517 expatriates have left their jobs, 966 have no work permits and 463 of them had their work permits cancelled. A total of 9,581 work permits were still active, the ministry added.

Also, from the 19,527 requests, 164 were from those with family visas, 136 family joining visas, 418 visit visas, 34 tourist visas,



and 18,601 work visas and 174 with no documents.

Meanwhile, Bangladeshi Embassy said it has been trying to reach out to expatriates spread across the Sultanate to get registered for the outpass.

The Indian Embassy sources said that they have been receiving over 100 visitors who need help to complete the formalities.

The Ministry of Labour has yet to release the list of number of expatriates nationality wise.

Sultanate least exposed to terrorist attacks

SYDNEY: The Institute of Economics and Peace (IEP) has rated the Sultanate as the country that is least exposed to terrorist attacks in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region.

In its Global Terrorism Index 2020 report, the Australia-based institute said that the number of terrorism victims worldwide stood at 13,826 in 2019 and that 63 countries witnessed, at least, one terrorist attack last year, the least since 2013.

The worst-hit region of the world was the sub-Saharan zone in Africa which comprises seven out of 10 countries in the world that had the largest number of victims, according to the report.

The report indicated that North America and Western Europe countries saw a surge in number of victims, 89, in 2019,

Sultanate is rated as the country which is least exposed to terrorist attacks in the Middle East and North Africa region

IEP REPORT

an increase of 250 per cent since 2014.

The report also said that the number of people killed in terror attacks worldwide fell for the fifth consecutive year in 2019, with conflict still the main driver of terror but an increase of “far-right terrorism” seen in the West. — ONA

Beware of cyber threats in distance learning

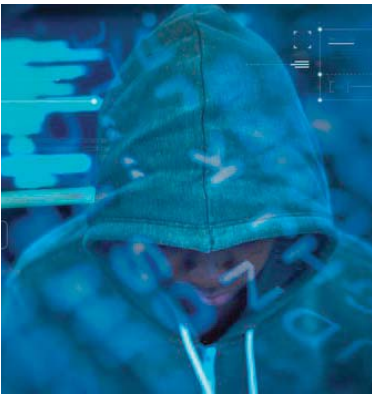
ZAINAB AL NASSRI
@zainabalnasseri

The Ministry of Education said that strengthening the protection system for cybersecurity is one of the most basic principles of distance learning.

Cyber-attacks are on the rise in the past years before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Distance education system

increased these risks as teachers and students entered the school network through a variety of devices, giving the opportunity for hackers to tamper with these devices and penetrate them.

When teachers use technical tools that have not been formally sanctioned in their geographic region, they will act as a loophole through which their personal



information will be stolen, the ministry said in a release.

However, information specialists clarify that cybersecurity is a source of concern due to increase in the number of people registered in the system remotely, as well as some users log in with their personal accounts instead of using devices provided by employers.

For this, cybersecurity priorities should include several points, including special controls for downloading and installing, preventing hackers and infiltration, checking malware, securing control of entry and exit processes, and applying two factor authentication for logging in.

TURN TO P3



Foreign Minister receives Bahraini counterpart

MUSCAT: Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, received at the ministry's headquarters on Sunday Dr Abdullah bin Rashid al Zayani, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the sisterly Kingdom of Bahrain.

The two sides discussed the fraternal relations between the

two brotherly countries and means of enhancing them, besides touching on issues of common concern to serve interests of the region's countries.

The meeting was attended by Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali al Harthy, Under-Secretary of the Foreign Ministry for Diplomatic Affairs, Dr Abdullah bin Hamad al

Badi and Head of the Minister's Office Department, whilst it was attended from the Bahraini side by Shaikh Abdullah bin Ahmed al Khalifa, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for International Affairs, and Dr Juma bin Ahmed al Kaabi, ambassador of Bahrain to the Sultanate. — ONA

■ 3 HELD IN DRUG CASE



MUSCAT: The Directorate-General for Combating Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances in cooperation with Al Buraimi Governorate Police Command, arrested three expats for smuggling and trafficking drugs and recovered 10 kg of crystal meth from them. The arrests were made following a series of monitoring and operations by the anti-drug unit of the Royal Oman Police. The police said the case is being processed.

ROP resumes issuing resident visas for expats

KABEER YOUSUF
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The Royal Oman Police (ROP) has resumed issuing residence visa also known as employment visa which was temporarily suspended due to the pandemic.

Speaking to the *Observer*, a senior official from the Directorate General of Passports and Residency confirmed that the applications for the same can be submitted online which will be processed in the same manner it used to be in the pre-COVID period.

"Applicants can submit their required documents online, in the fixed format and residence visas will be issued in the same manner, it used to be before it was stopped," the official said.

The Directorate General of Passports and Residency had already begun to issue express visas of 21-day validity and family visit visas online, from earlier this month.

The ROP had stopped issuing visas in March this year after the country imposed measures



“Applicants can submit their required documents online, in the fixed format and residence visas will be issued in the same manner, it used to be before it was stopped

against the spread of COVID-19.

These visas can be had from the ROP provided the applicant meets with the necessary requirements.

"One can go through the website and apply for the same," the source further said.

The directorate had earlier extended the validity of the expired visas as flights were stopped and later given opportunity for over-stayers to renew them online.

Construction of Rusayl-Bidbid road well under way

MUSCAT: Construction work is well under way at the expansion of the Al Rusayl-Bidbid road, with the implementation rate currently at 20 per cent. The project is expected to be completed by the end of 2022.

The construction company is currently cutting the side of the hill adjoining the road at Al Amqat and Al Jafnayn areas, as well as preparing the groundwork for the two additional lanes on both directions.

The 27-km road stretches out from Al Rusayl-Nizwa junction on Muscat Expressway to Al Sharqiyah Expressway junction in the Wilayat of Bidbid.

The work involves rehabilitation of the existing pavement layers to absorb the increasing traffic and boosting the road's capacity to four lanes, constructing pedestrian bridges, expanding the existing bridges at



Wadi Fanja and Wadi Al Jafnayn, building two new junctions at Ghala and Saih Al Ahmar as well as building new viaducts and protection facilities.

Hotels report drop in occupancy, revenue

MUSCAT: The total revenues of Omani hotels in the three-to-five-star category fell by 60.2 per cent to RO 70.70 million until the end of October 2020 compared to RO 177.72 million for the same period of the previous year.

Hotels occupancy rates declined by 50.1 per cent to reach 26.1 per cent until the end of October 2020 against 52.3 per cent for the same period in 2019, according to the latest monthly statistics released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

Meanwhile, the total number of guests in Omani hotels dropped by 53.9 per cent in the first 10 months of 2020 to stood at 646,841 guests, compared to 1.40 million guests for the same period of 2019.

Among the nationalities, Omanis constituted the maximum number of visitors, reaching 337,687 guests. This was followed by 164,873 European guests and 47,643 Asian tourists until the end of October 2020, the



data released by NCSI revealed.

There was an overall drop in the number of guests of all nationalities until the end of

October 2020, with American guests and GCC guests increasing by 67.8 per cent and 79.5 per cent to reach 17,919 and 34,349

guests, respectively.

There was also a decline in the number of African, Oceanian and other Arab guests by 64.9 per

cent, 61.1 per cent and 69.7 per cent to reach 3,391; 5,302, and 18,335 guests, respectively.

— ONA

Smart water meters launch in Muscat, Musandam

MUSCAT: The Public Authority for Water (Diam) in cooperation with the National Energy Centre will launch smart water meters in the governorates of Muscat and Musandam, on Thursday.

The launch ceremony will be held at Kempinski Hotel Muscat, under the auspices of Sultan bin Salim bin Said al Habsi, Minister of Finance.

The event is aimed to shed light on the installation and operation of smart water meters, and acquaint the media with the achievements which happened in this sector.

Diam makes improvements to water supply network

MUSCAT: The Public Authority for Water (Diam) will introduce on Monday improvements to its main water pipeline feeding Al Dakhiliyah Governorate.

The 48-hour tasks include changing some pumps and valves, connecting new lines and conducting some mechanical and electrical works to provide better water supply to all wilayats of the governorate.

The improvements come after Diam's filling main tanks and subsidiary tanks, as well as

operation of some water wells to help meet the needs of all segments during maintenance works.

Diam takes the opportunity to remind all subscribers of the necessity of rationalising water use to avoid any inconvenience to inhabitants of villages and wilayats in the governorate.

Diam also stressed that consumers should have their own water tanks and should get them filled to avoid any shortage of supply during improvement tasks. — ONA

Shrimp fishing season ends



MUSCAT: The three-month shrimp fishing season is coming to an end on Monday, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources announced on Sunday.

The ministry called on all fishermen, traders, companies, hotels, restaurants and individuals involved in the buying, sale and export of shrimp, to register their stocks

following the end of the season.

The ministry warned against the trade and export of unregistered shrimp quantities after the end of the season.

The ministry also warned against the fishing of shrimp during the fertilisation period which begins in December each year and concludes at the end of August in the following year.

ROYAL CAVALRY ORGANISES SEVEN-HORSE ARDHA RACE



The Royal Cavalry today organised a seven-horse race known as Rakdh Al Ardha, held for the first time in the history of this sport to mark the second anniversary of endorsement of "Ardha Sports Art" by the UNESCO (both for horses and camels). The event comes after the Sultanate's success in preserving this patrimonial art and registering it in the List of International Intangible Heritage. Oman is unique in this art, which requires excellent riding skills, with the riders of seven horses or camels standing upright and racing as one block at top speed. — ONA

905 new COVID-19 cases, 27 deaths

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Health (MoH) reported 905 new cases of COVID-19 on Sunday, bringing the total number of cases registered in the Sultanate to 123,484.

The total death cases in the country has reached 1,418 after 27 people died in five days, the ministry said, adding that 114,963 have recovered, which is 93.1 per cent of the cases reported so far.

Twenty-one people were hospitalised during the past 24 hours, taking the total number of inpatients in hospitals to 218, including 107 in Intensive Care Units (ICUs). — ONA

Beware of cyber threats in distance learning

FROM PAGE 1

The priorities, according to the leaflet, should also contain educating students and parents to avoid suspicious and unreliable websites or programmes, training teachers to be keen in opening e-mails, discovering cyber security threats and dealing with them in an ideal way, and cooperating with organisations or bodies specialised in providing support and technical advice.

The list of principles included focus on the strengths of teachers by identifying them with experience and competence in distance education system, creating a main page that is a reference for all programmes, lessons on communication with details for both teachers and schools, working hours, and links to virtual meetings for classes. In addition, there should be a balance in the use of technology,

providing various educational paths for students, encouraging active interaction among students, knowing the needs of teachers, helping students in setting priorities and following healthy habits, and being patient in conducting business. The teacher should not rush to teach the curriculum before making sure that all students have the technical skills needed for educational purposes.

Social Forum Oman holds blood donation camp

MUSCAT: The Social Forum Oman organised the fourth phase of the blood donation camp at Farah Medical Centre, Al Athaiba, on Friday. The camp started at 9am and the blood collected from about 60 donors.

Dr Dhvani Shah (Specialist in Dermatology and Cosmetology-Aster Hospital) chief guest of the programme inaugurated the function and enlightened the gathering about the noble cause of donating blood. Social Forum representa-



tive Shafi Trivandrum honoured the chief guest, handing over the momentum. Social Forum Oman officials Ramiz, Hamza, Shajeer,

Tajudheen, Saleem extended their vote of thanks to the Medical team, Donors and Farah Medical Centre Management.



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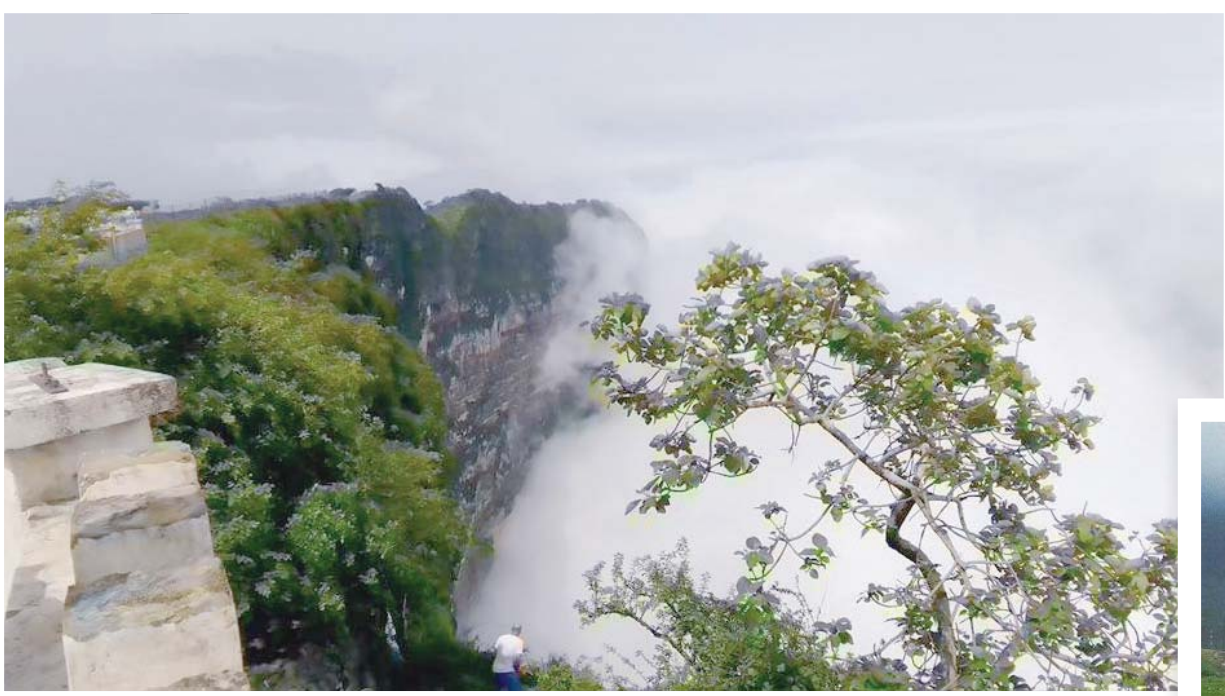
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Rakhyout



Much-loved
tourist destination

The Wilayat of Rakhyout is located in the western part of Dhofar Governorate. It borders Al Mughsail beach in the east, Wilayat of Dhalkout in the west, to the north by Haruib (Wilayat of Al Mazyouna), and Arabian Sea to the south.

It is a popular destination frequented by many tourists, due to its historical legacy, geographic and environmental diversity. It is a corner for lovers of natural beauty and a popular destination for campers who go hiking, mountain climbing, and

exploring the desert.

Throughout history, citizens of Rakhyout are engaged in many traditional crafts, including pottery, fishing, agriculture, leather tanning, extraction of frankincense and clay houses building.

Additionally, Rakhyout is known for a number of traditional arts like Huboot Azamil, Al Baraa, Atabel (the Drum), and Nana. The wilayat has long been known as an active commercial centre connected to many commercial destinations

and foreign markets such as Aden, India, coasts of Africa, and Basra, in addition to local markets like Bandar Salalah, Mirbat, Sedh and Bandar Al Afiyah.

The Wilayat of Rakhyout is one of the most important tourist attractions in the Sultanate and a destination for many tourists both inside and outside the Sultanate.

Some of the fascinating places in the wilayat for instance are Al Fazaeeh beach which extends over 5 kilometres. There are

several caves such as Sherot, Akharat, Hartom and Shaat, Ain Rob that extends for more than 10 kilometres to the north where there is an exit in Qaddon area.

One of the historic landmarks in the wilayat is Rakhyout fort, which was restored in 2013.

Additionally, there is the ancient Rakhyout Mosque, one of the oldest mosques in the Sultanate.

There is also a picturesque coastal area called Kharfout located west of the coast of Rakhyout and Al Hotah which

has a shrine and mosque that are frequented by European tourists.

Rakhyout is blessed with comprehensive development in all levels. There is an integrated infrastructure that results in significant transformation in all aspects of life.

Presently, there is the walis office, hospital, which provides primary services in the healthcare and maternity services, Shahab Asaab's health centre, eight educational schools, Omani Women Association, and a training centre for the artisans.



Mourners attend the funeral of 43 farm workers in Zabarmari, about 20 km from Maiduguri, Nigeria, on Sunday. – AFP

Northeast Nigeria massacre claimed at least 110 lives: UN

MAIDUGURI: A weekend attack on farm workers in northeast Nigeria blamed on the Boko Haram militant group left at least 110 dead, the UN humanitarian coordinator in the country said on Sunday.

"At least 110 civilians were ruthlessly killed and many others were wounded in this attack", Edward Kallon said in a statement, after initial tolls indicated 43 and then at least 70 dead from Saturday's massacre by suspected Boko Haram fighters.

"The incident is the most violent direct attack against innocent civilians this year", Kallon said, blaming "non-state armed groups" without

naming Boko Haram.

"I call for the perpetrators of this heinous and senseless act to be brought to justice", he added.

The bloodletting centred on the village of Koshobe near the Borno state capital Maiduguri, with assailants targeting farm workers on rice fields, with a pro-government anti-militant militia saying the assailants tied up the labourers and slit their throats.

Kallon said the assailants — "armed men on motorcycles" — also targeted other communities in the area.

Borno Governor Babaganan Umara Zulum attended the burial on Sunday in the nearby village of Zabarmari of 43 bodies recov-

ered on Saturday, saying the toll could rise after search operations resumed.

The victims included dozens of labourers from Sokoto state in northwestern Nigeria, roughly 1,000 kilometres away, who had travelled to the northeast to find work, it said.

Six were wounded in the attack and eight remained missing as of Saturday.

Kallon, citing "reports that several women may have been kidnapped", called for their immediate release.

Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari condemned the attack on Saturday, saying: "The entire country has been wounded by

these senseless killings."

The attack took place as voters went to the polls in long-delayed local elections in Borno State.

The polls had been repeatedly postponed because of an increase in attacks by Boko Haram and a rival dissident faction, the IS-affiliated West Africa Province (ISWAP).

The two groups have been blamed for increasing attacks on loggers, farmers and fishermen whom they accuse of spying for the army and pro-government militia. Last month Boko Haram militants slaughtered 22 farmers working on their irrigation fields near Maiduguri, in two separate attacks. — AFP

UN envoy urges progress in Syrian political process

BEIRUT: A UN envoy on Sunday pushed for progress on the eve of the latest round of talks in Geneva towards revising Syria's constitution and winding down the country's nine-year-old civil war.

"We want to see progress", Geir Pedersen, the UN special envoy for Syria, told reporters during a virtual news conference.

A so-called constitutional committee made up of 45 people — with 15 delegates each representing the Damascus government, the opposition and civil society — is to meet for the fourth time on Monday after months of little headway.

"I'm looking forward to extensive and hopefully good discussions next week that will be able to bring us a little bit further down the road towards then starting the discussions in January on constitutional principles" at a fifth meeting, Pedersen said. He said he had been on a flurry of diplomatic visits in recent weeks, including trips to Moscow as well as Ankara.

It is "important that we have clear international support for the work that we are doing, and I'm pleased to say that that has been forthcoming", he said.

The constitutional committee was created in September last year and first convened a month later,



UN special envoy for Syria Geir Pedersen gestures as he speaks during a press conference ahead of Syrian Constitutional Committee fourth session on Sunday at the United Nations Offices in Geneva. — AFP

but disagreement over the agenda and the coronavirus pandemic hindered further meetings until a third round in August that ended without concrete progress.

The fourth session was supposed to take place in October, but was postponed over lack of consensus on the agenda.

Syria's war, which broke out after the brutal suppression of anti-government protests in 2011, has killed more than 380,000 people and displaced millions from their homes.

Endless rounds of UN-backed peace talks have failed to stem the bloodshed and in recent years have been largely overtaken by a parallel negotiations track led by Russia and Turkey.

— AFP

Mysterious jade green fireball sighted in sky

BERLIN: A mysterious fireball was sighted streaking through the night sky over western Germany at the weekend. Jurgen Oberst of the Feuerkugelnnetz (fireball network), a joint project of the Ger-

man Aerospace Centre (DLR) and Berlin's Technical University, said that the centre had received about 90 reports of sightings within a few hours after the phenomenon occurred on Saturday.

"The reports all relate to an event at around 6:40 pm (1740 GMT), and most of the reports come from the Cologne-Frankfurt-Stuttgart area", he said.

— dpa

UK bird flu outbreak leads to mass turkey cull

LONDON: More than 10,000 turkeys will be culled at a British farm after a bird flu outbreak was confirmed by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra).

The flu was identified among 10,500 rearing turkeys at a farm in northern England, Defra said late on Saturday, with all foul to be culled to prevent a spread. Public Health England (PHE) said the risk to public health from the virus was very low.

Avian flu has been confirmed at a commercial turkey fattening farm near Northallerton, North Yorkshire. — AFP

AUCTION ANNOUNCEMENT NO. (01/2020)

Al Ghubrah Power & Desalination Company (GPDC) SAOC and Wadi Al Jizzi Power Company (WJPC) SAOC announce the following auction:

Sr.	Material to be sold	Location	Date of site visit	Last submission date
1	Used Materials & Scrap	Al Ghubrah North	07/12/2020 to 10/12/2020	22/12/2020 at 12.00 PM
2	Used Materials & Scrap	Wadi Al Jizzi Power Plant (Sohar)	13/12/2020 to 16/12/2020	22/12/2020 at 12.00 PM

Terms and conditions:

- Offers to be submitted in an envelope, sealed with red wax and addressed to the Chairman of Sub-internal Tender Committee, and must write on the envelope the auction name and auction No. without mentioning the name of the bidder before 10.00 am of the last submission date.
- Who wins the auction or part of it commits to pay its value in cash or certified bank check in the Sultanate during a period of three days from the day of notification.
- Separate the offers of the two locations (Al Ghubrah Power & Desalination Company & Wadi Al Jizzi Power Company) as per site visit.
- The buyer must transfer the materials within three weeks from the date of payment. In case of failure to transfer the purchased materials during the specified period, the materials are confiscated for the company. The buyer is not entitled to claim compensation and shall bear all expenses of the resale process. The buyer shall bear all risks involved in the transfer of materials or reuse.
- The buyer shall bear all risks involve in materials transfer or reuse.
- The Buyer can quote for any item line as per the attached lists. pm with all PPE.
- Bidders can preview the materials during working hours on the dates specified above, from 9:00 am until 12:00 pm with all PPE.

To preview the materials at Al Ghubrah Power & Desalination Company, please contact Mr. Ibrahim Al Hadi, Tel: (0096899884074/98085311), and Mr. Ali Al Shibli at Wadi Al Jizzi Power Company (99346909), or Email : saif.bousaidi@GPDC.nama.om.



Location to submit the offer :Nama Holding
In Beach One Building, 3rd Floor (Units 305 & 307) Shatti Al Qurum
P.O Box 850, Post Code 116, Sultanate of Oman.
Phone Number : +968 2455200 / 277
E-Mail: Yasmeen.allawati@Holding.nama.om





Sultanate of Oman

The Council of Administrative Affairs for the Judiciary

Tender Announcement

The Administrative Affairs Council of the Judiciary announces its desire to submit the following tender:

Tender No	Tender Title	Tender Document Sales End Date	Bid Submission Closing	Vendor Grade	Tender Document Fee
21/2020	SIME & VULNERABILITY MANAGEMENT SOLUTION TENDER	06/12/2020	03/01/2021	Excellent First	RO. 25/-

Where you can buy the tender documents electronically via the link below
website: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>)

Bidders should submit their offers electronically via the aforementioned site and attach to each bid an electronic copy of the provisional insurance in the form of a bank guarantee or a certified check from one of the banks operating in the country at a rate of (1%) of the bid value and is valid for a period of (90) days from the date of submission The offers are meant in the name of the Chairman of the Internal Committee for Tenders in the Council of Administrative Affairs for the Judiciary, And based on the Tender Board Circular No. (07/2020), we confirm that the necessity of uploading the soft copy of the bid bond when submitting the tender in a support system while preserving the original bid bond without the need to hand it over to the board until the council is asked to hand over the original one.

- For inquiries and clarifications on the tender:**
Submit inquiries related to the project electronically through the website of the electronic tender system (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>).
- For inquiries and clarifications on the electronic bidding system:**
Submit inquiries regarding technical support for the electronic bidding system via e-mail and the phone number shown below:
Phone: +968 24166670
Email: etenderhd@ita.gov.om



Libyan deputies
pledge to end
divisions

TANGIER, Morocco: More than 120 Libyan deputies pledged on Saturday in Morocco to “end the divisions” that undermine their country, starting by convening the elected parliament as soon as they return home.

The House of Representatives has not met for two years, and Libya has been wracked by violence and chaos since the toppling and killing of dictator Muammar Gaddafi in 2011.

Two rival administrations have been vying for control of the country -- the UN-recognised Government of National Accord and an eastern administration backed by part of the elected parliament.

The latter is deeply divided, with sessions taking place in parallel in the east and west.

At the end of five days of talks in Tangier, Morocco, 123 of the parliament’s 180 members pledged on Saturday to put an end to “hate speech” and “divisions” that undermine Libyan institutions.

They vowed to hold “parliamentary elections and to complete the transition as soon as possible”, and that all members of the House of Representatives would meet in session “as soon as they return” to Libya. — AFP

Iran mulls response as it prepares
to bury slain nuclear scientist

TEHRAN: Iran was weighing its response on Sunday to the killing of its top nuclear scientist, which it blames on Israel, as his body was taken to shrines ahead of being buried. Two days after Mohsen Fakhrizadeh died following a firefight between his guards and unidentified gunmen outside Tehran, parliament called in a statement for international inspectors to be barred from nuclear facilities.

Iran’s Supreme National Security Council usually handles decisions related to the country’s nuclear programme.

President Hassan Rouhani has stressed the country will seek its revenge in “due time” and not be rushed into a “trap”.

Israel says Fakhrizadeh was the head of an Iranian military nuclear programme, the existence of which the Islamic republic has consistently denied.

His body arrived in the northeastern city of Mashhad late on Saturday and was taken to the shrine of Imam Reza for prayers and a ceremonial circling of the tomb, state news agency IRNA reported.



Ebrahim Raisi, head of Iran’s judiciary, and family members of nuclear scientist Mohsen Fakhrizadeh, stand next to his body in Tehran, on Saturday. — Reuters

Then they were taken on Sunday to Fatima Masumeh’s shrine in Qom, south of Tehran, and later to that of the Islamic republic’s founder Imam Khomeini, according to Iranian media.

Fakhrizadeh’s funeral will be held on Monday in the presence of senior military commanders and his family, the defence ministry said on its website, without specifying where.

‘STRONG REACTION’
Israel has declined to comment

on Fakhrizadeh’s killing, less than two months before US President-elect Joe Biden is set to take office following four years of hawkish foreign policy under President Donald Trump.

Trump withdrew the US from a multilateral nuclear agreement with Iran in 2018 and then reimposed and beefed up punishing sanctions as part of its “maximum pressure” campaign against Tehran.

Biden has signalled his administration may be prepared to

rejoin the accord, but the nuclear scientist’s assassination has revived opposition to the deal among Iranian conservatives.

On Sunday, Iran’s parliament held a closed session to “investigate the assassination,” ISNA news agency reported.

Speaker Mohammad-Bagher Ghalibaf called on Sunday for “a strong reaction” that would “deter and take revenge” on those behind the killing of Fakhrizadeh, who was aged 59 according to Iranian media.

In an op-ed on Sunday, the Kayhan daily called for strikes on Israel if it is “proven” to be behind the assassination.

It called for the port city of Haifa to be targeted “in a way that would annihilate its infrastructure and leave a heavy human toll”.

That will “certainly achieve deterrence, since the US and the Zionist regime ... are in no way ready to fight a war,” it added.

The United States slapped sanctions on Fakhrizadeh in 2008 for “activities and transactions that contributed to the development of Iran’s nuclear programme”.

— AFP

UK ‘concerned’ by
scientist killing

LONDON: Britain is “concerned” about the possible escalation of tensions in the Middle East following the assassination of a top Iranian nuclear scientist earlier in the week, foreign minister Dominic Raab said on Sunday.

“We are concerned about the situation in Iran and the wider region we do want to see de-escalation of tensions,” Raab told Sky News when asked about the killing of Mohsen Fakhrizadeh, dubbed by Israel the “father” of Iran’s nuclear programme.

TURKEY CONDEMNS IT
Turkey has condemned the fatal attack on Fakhrizadeh as an “abominable murder,” the Foreign Ministry said. Turkey hopes that the culprit will be brought to justice and appealed for calm and to regional parties to avoid taking action that could lead to escalation, the ministry said on Saturday evening.

“We condemn this abominable murder and extend our sympathies to the Iranian government and to the family of the deceased,” the ministry said in a statement.

— AFP/dpa

■ WAITING FOR A MEAL



Ethiopian refugees wait in lines for a meal at the Um Rakuba refugee camp which houses Ethiopian refugees fleeing the fighting in the Tigray region, on the Sudan-Ethiopia border, Sudan. — Reuters

Gaza gets medical aid
as hospitals struggle
with rising infections

GAZA: The World Health Organization delivered 15 ventilators to Gaza hospitals on Sunday amid a spike in COVID-19 infections that has tested the Palestinian territory’s under-developed health system.

The donation of the intensive care devices, funded by Kuwait, came a week after local and international public health advisers said hospitals in the enclave could soon become overwhelmed.

“These devices will help medical teams provide better service to patients, but it is not enough,” said Abdullatif Alhaj of Gaza’s health ministry. Alhaj said hospitals had suffered acute shortages in oxygen essential in the treatment of COVID-19 patients.

Gaza has logged nearly 20,000 coronavirus cases and 97 deaths, mostly since

August, amid concern of a wider outbreak in the densely populated enclave of 2 million people, many of whom live in poverty.

The Gaza Health Ministry said 342 COVID-19 patients, of whom 108 are in critical condition, are being treated in the territory’s hospitals, which have been able to expand their intensive care units to 150 beds over the past week.

It said more than half of the territory’s 150 ventilators are in use. “The health system right now can hold on for a few weeks after the expansion of beds,” said Abdelnaser Soboh, emergency health lead in the World Health Organization’s Gaza sub-office. Soboh said Gaza is also experiencing severe shortages of medications and disposable equipment needed to treat COVID-19 patients.

— Reuters

SHORT TAKES

SANAA

Seven civilians killed in fighter group’s shelling

At least seven civilians were killed on Sunday in a shelling attack by Yemen’s fighters in the western province of Hodeidah, pro-government forces said. They said 10 others were injured in the attack in a village south of the coastal city of the same name. The Ansar Allah fighters have not yet commented on the attack.

The city of Hodeidah, and its strategically-important port, have been under the fighters’ control since late 2014.

— dpa



Government forces control suburban parts of the province. Yemen has been in the grip of a power struggle between a Saudi-backed government and the Ansar Allah since late 2014.

DUBAI

UAE cabinet approves new cybersecurity body

The United Arab Emirates on Sunday approved the establishment of a new national cybersecurity council, Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, UAE Prime Minister and Vice-President and ruler of Dubai, said on Twitter.

The cabinet of the UAE government also appointed Industry and Advanced Technology Minister and head of Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC) Sultan



al Jaber as a special envoy for climate change.

Al Jaber, who holds a PhD in business and economics, is also the chairman of Abu Dhabi’s renewable energy company known as Masdar. — Reuters

NOUAKCHOTT

Rights protesters arrested in Mauritania

Police have arrested 42 people in Mauritania, rights groups and police said on Sunday, after a protest demanding justice for victims of civil unrest between 1989 and 1991.

Tensions between the West African state’s black population and lighter-skinned Berber-Arab Moors plagued the 1984-2005 regime of Maaouiya Ould Taya.

A surge in violence included an infamous episode on November 28, 1990, when 28 black Mauritanian soldiers were



hanged without charge after being accused of plotting a coup.

No one has ever been tried for the crimes owing to a 1993 amnesty law, although the families have been compensated.

— AFP

In brief

■ BANGKOK

THAI PROTESTERS
CHALLENGE KING'S
MILITARY COMMAND

Thai anti-government protesters challenged on Sunday King Maha Vajiralongkorn's personal control over some army units to condemn the military's role in politics. It was the latest open defiance of the king by protesters, who have broken taboos by criticising the monarchy in a country where it is officially revered under the constitution and laws to ban insulting it. Hundreds of protesters gathered to march to the 11th Infantry Regiment, one of two units that were moved under the king's command in 2019. "An army should belong to the people, not the king," Parit "Penguin" Chiwarak told reporters. — **Reuters**

■ SINGAPORE

BABY BORN WITH
COVID-19 ANTIBODIES,
SAYS REPORT

A Singaporean woman, who was infected with the novel coronavirus in March when she was pregnant, has given birth to a baby with antibodies against the virus, offering a new clue as to whether the infection can be transferred from mother to child. The baby was born this month without COVID-19 but with the virus antibodies, the *Straits Times* newspaper reported on Sunday, citing the mother. "My doctor suspects I have transferred my COVID-19 antibodies to him during my pregnancy," Celine Ng-Chan told the paper. Ng-Chan had been mildly ill from the disease and was discharged from hospital after two-and-a-half weeks. — **Reuters**

■ JAKARTA

VOLCANO BELCHES
HUGE TOWER OF SMOKE
AND ASH

Indonesia's Mount Ili Lewotolok erupted on Sunday, belching a column of smoke and ash four kilometres into the sky, triggering a flight warning and the closure of the local airport.

There were no reports of injuries or damage from the eruption in a remote part of the Southeast Asian archipelago.

But authorities raised the volcano's alert status to its second-highest level as they warned of possible lava flows.

A two-kilometre no-go zone around the crater was also expanded to four kilometres, while flights were advised to steer clear of the area. — **AFP**

Bomber kills 30 Afghan security personnel

GHAZNI: A car bomber struck an army base in Afghanistan on Sunday killing at least 30 security personnel, officials said, in one of the bloodiest attacks targeting government forces in recent months.

The attack occurred on the outskirts of Ghazni city, capital of the eastern province of Ghazni, which has seen regular fighting between the Taliban and government forces.

It came as the Afghan government and Taliban are engaged in peace talks, but a top official said such attacks have the potential to "harm the peace process" as violence continues to surge across the country.

"Thirty bodies and 24 wounded people have been brought to hospital. All of them are security personnel," Baz Mohammad Hemat, director of Ghazni hospital, said.

Interior ministry spokesman Tariq Arian said a bomber had detonated a vehicle full of

The attack occurred on the outskirts of Ghazni city, capital of the eastern province of Ghazni, which has seen regular fighting between the Taliban and government forces

explosives.

"The bomber drove a Humvee vehicle right inside the base and detonated it," Ghazni governor spokesman Wahidullah Jumazada said.

The base is located on a vast swath of arid land surrounded by mountains.

Video footages showed military ambulances taking the dead and wounded to hospitals and cranes deployed to remove the debris from the site of the attack in the base.

The ministry of defence gave a toll of 10 security personnel killed



Afghan National Army soldiers keep watch outside of a military compound after a car bomb blast on the outskirts of Ghazni city, on Sunday. — **Reuters**

and seven wounded. The ministry is known to downplay tolls in attacks against its forces.

No group has so far claimed the attack, and the Taliban who are fighting government forces largely in rural areas have often not commented on deadly strikes since the peace talks commenced in September.

‘ATMOSPHERE OF FEAR’

"Such terrorist attacks will create an atmosphere of fear, terror and pessimism among the Afghan people and will harm the peace process," said Abdullah Abdullah, who is leading the overall peace process in Afghanistan.

"The increase in violence is not acceptable to people... and

runs against the peace process, negotiations and reconciliation."

The Ghazni attack comes just days after two bombs killed 14 people in the historic city of Bamiyan, ending years of calm in the isolated town famous for its ancient Buddhist heritage.

In another car bomb attack on Sunday, one civilian was killed and 20 others wounded in the southern city of Qalat in the province of Zabul, provincial police chief Hekmatullah Kochi said.

Sunday's bombings marked the latest carnage in Afghanistan, where violence has surged since the start of peace talks on September 12 in Doha.

Brutal attacks have killed more than 50 people in Kabul in recent weeks, including two assaults on educational centres and a rocket attack.

The three Kabul attacks were claimed by the IS group, but Afghan officials blamed the Taliban — who denied any involvement. — **AFP**

■ HAPPY JOURNEY!



Officials of Four Paws International and wildlife rangers move Kavaan, Pakistan's only Asian elephant, into a crate prior to transporting it to a sanctuary in Cambodia, at the Marghazar Zoo in Islamabad on Sunday. Following years of public outcry and campaigning by American pop star Cher, the "world's loneliest elephant" was poised on Sunday to embark on a mammoth journey to Cambodia. — **AFP**

South Korea bans year-end parties, some music lessons

SEOUL: South Korean authorities announced a ban on year-end parties and some music lessons on Sunday and said public saunas and some cafes must also close after coronavirus infections surged at their fastest pace since the early days of the pandemic.

South Korea has been one of the world's coronavirus mitigation success stories but spikes in infections have reappeared relentlessly, triggering alarm in Asia's fourth-largest economy.

Authorities reported 450 new infections on Sunday after more than 500 cases were recorded for three days in a row, the Korea Disease Control and Prevention Agency said. What authorities are calling a third wave of infections is spreading at the fastest rate in nearly nine months, driven by outbreaks at military facilities, a sauna, a high school and churches.

Prime Minister Chung Sye-kyun said restrictions would



People wearing face masks walk at a traditional market amid the coronavirus disease pandemic in Seoul. — **Reuters**

be tightened on gatherings and activities seen as prone to virus transmission, especially in the capital Seoul and surrounding urban areas.

"Year-end events and parties hosted by hotels, party rooms, guest houses and other accommodation facilities will be banned outright," Chung told a briefing after meeting health officials.

Saunas and steam-bath rooms

with a high risk of mass infection would also be banned as would the teaching of wind musical instruments and singing, he said. For the rest of the country, social distancing rules would also be tightened from Tuesday, he said. Chung said the government was talking to parliament about the possibility of new relief funds for households and businesses, the third this year as the economy struggles. — **Reuters**

Sydney records hottest Nov night as heatwave sweeps city

SYDNEY: Sydney recorded its hottest November night as Australia's largest city suffered through a weekend heatwave that saw daytime temperatures peak above 40 degrees Celsius.

The overnight temperature did not drop below 25.3 degrees Celsius on Saturday into Sunday in central Sydney, according to the meteorology bureau, making it the hottest November night since records began.

The temperature had already hit a scorching 30 degrees Celsius by 4:30 am on Sunday, before reaching above 40 degrees for the second consecutive day.

"New South Wales is in the midst of a severe heatwave with very warm conditions already being experienced yesterday, and today being a repeat of some of those conditions," said the Bureau of Meteorology's Agata Imielska.

Daytime records for November fell elsewhere in Australia's southeast, with the outback towns of Griffith and Mildura reaching 43.2 and 45.7 degrees Celsius respectively on Saturday.

The heatwave saw bans on lighting fires imposed across large swathes of New South Wales (NSW) state, which was badly hit by catastrophic bushfires during the last southern hemisphere summer.

A number of blazes broke out on Sunday, including one on Sydney's western outskirts that the NSW Fire and Rescue Service said damaged a property.

More than 60 bushfires were still burning across the state, but most had been brought under control by firefighters as a southerly wind change led to a rapid drop in temperatures.

— **AFP**

Farmers defiant against reform as Modi tries to calm anger

NEW DELHI: Thousands of Indian farmers, angry over reform of the agriculture sector, held a third day of protests on the outskirts of the capital on Sunday, blocking roads into the city and defying a government appeal to move to a designated site. The government on Saturday invited farmers' union leaders for talks on new legislation to deregulate agricultural reforms but that has not calmed farmers' anger over what many see "anti-farm laws", and their action appeared to be spreading.

"We will stay put here today," said Rakesh Tikait, spokesman of the Bharatiya Kisan Union, one of more than 30 protesting unions, as he and his members blocked a road on the eastern approaches to Delhi.

The farmers object to legislation introduced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government in September that would let farmers sell their produce anywhere, including to big corporate buyers like Walmart, not just at government-



Farmers rest inside a trailer at a site of a protest against the newly passed farm bills at Singhu border near Delhi. — **Reuters**

regulated wholesale markets where growers are assured of a minimum price. Small growers worry they will be left vulnerable to big business and could eventually lose price support for staples such as wheat and rice. Modi sought to allay farmers' concerns on Sunday.

"From these reforms, farmers will get new rights and opportunities," he said in his monthly radio address. But one farm union leader said many protesters were demanding that the government withdraw the laws. — **Reuters**



Street medics tend to Syrian freelance photographer Ameer al Halbi who was injured during clashes in a demonstration against the 'global security' draft law, in Paris on Saturday. — AFP

French police risk charges over black man’s beating after clashes

PARIS: Four French police on Sunday risked being charged over the beating and racial abuse of a black music producer that shocked France and intensified controversy over new security legislation. Tens of thousands protested across France on Saturday against the security bill — which would restrict the right of the press to publish the faces of on-duty police — with the rally in Paris ending in bitter clashes. The beating of music producer Michel Zecler — exposed in video footage published last week — has become a rallying cause for anger against the police in France, accused by critics accuse of institutionalised racism including singling out blacks and Arabs. The protests in Paris saw a brasserie set alight, cars set on fire and stones thrown at security forces, who responded

with tear gas and anti-riot tactics. Among those hurt was an award-winning Syrian photojournalist, Ameer al Halbi, seen with a bruised face and much of his head covered in bandages in AFP photos. Christophe Deloire, secretary general of Reporters Without Borders, tweeted that the 24-year-old had been wounded at Place de la Bastille by “a police baton” and condemned the violence. Al Halbi is freelance photographer who has worked for *Polka* Magazine and AFP, who both condemned the incident in statements on Sunday. “We are shocked by the injuries suffered by our colleague Ameer al Halbi and condemn the unprovoked violence,” said Phil Chetwynd, AFP’s global news director, demanding that the police investigate the incident. — AFP

Rockets target Eritrea capital after Ethiopia declares victory in Tigray

ADDIS ABABA: Rockets launched from Ethiopia’s northern Tigray region targeted the capital of Eritrea several hours after Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed declared military operations in the region were over, diplomats said on Sunday. It remained impossible to independently verify whether the regional capital Mekele was completely under federal government control, though a military spokesman said operations were proceeding “very well”. The US embassy in the Eritrean capital Asmara reported early on Sunday “six explosions” had occurred in the city “at about 10:13 pm” on Saturday. Two Addis Ababa-based diplomats said multiple rockets appeared to have targeted Asmara’s airport and military installations. It marked the third time Asmara has come under fire from Tigray since Abiy ordered military operations against leaders of the region’s ruling party, the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF). The TPLF has claimed responsibility only for the first attack two weeks ago. It said Asmara was a legitimate target because Ethiopia was enlisting Eritrean military support for its campaign in Tigray, something Ethiopia denies. As with the previous attacks it was unclear where the rockets landed and what damage they might have caused. Eritrea is one of the world’s most secretive countries and the government has not commented on the strikes.



It remained impossible to independently verify whether the regional capital Mekele was completely under federal government control, though a military spokesman said operations were proceeding “very well”. — AFP

CONFLICT ‘COMPLETED’ Abiy, last year’s Nobel Peace Prize winner, announced November 4 he was sending federal troops into Tigray in response to attacks by pro-TPLF forces on federal army camps. The move marked a dramatic escalation of tensions between Abiy and the TPLF, which dominated Ethiopian politics for nearly three decades before anti-government protests swept Abiy to office in 2018. Thousands have died in the fighting and tens of thousands of refugees have streamed across the border into Sudan. On Saturday night, Abiy declared military operations in Tigray “completed” after the army

On Saturday night, Abiy declared military operations in Tigray “completed” after the army claimed control of the regional capital Mekele, a city of half a million before the conflict broke out

claimed control of the regional capital Mekele, a city of half a million before the conflict broke out. Tigray has been under a communications blackout throughout the conflict and media access has been restricted making it impossible to verify Abiy’s claim.

Little news filtered out of the city on Sunday even through official channels. A military spokesman, Gen Mohamed Tessema, said that operations were proceeding “very well” and that soldiers were “doing their work peacefully”, but said he could offer no details. State television stuck to its usual Sunday programming of talk and music shows, while Tigray regional television did not appear to be broadcasting at all. The lack of clarity on the situation in Mekele did not preclude some small-scale celebrations on Saturday night in Addis Ababa, the Ethiopian capital, and the city of Gondar, in the Amhara region south of Tigray. — AFP

Mysterious monolith in US desert reportedly disappears

LOS ANGELES: A mysterious metal monolith found in the remote desert of the western United States, sparking a national guessing game over how it got there, has apparently disappeared, officials said. The Bureau of Land Management in Utah said on Saturday it had received “credible reports” that the object had been removed “by an unknown party” on Friday evening. The bureau “did not remove the structure which is considered private property,” it said in a statement. “We do not investigate crimes

involving private property which are handled by the local sheriff’s office.” The shiny, triangular pillar which protruded some 12 feet from the red rocks of southern Utah, was spotted on November 18 by baffled local officials counting bighorn sheep from the air. After landing their helicopter to investigate, Utah Department of Public Safety crew members found “a metal monolith installed in the ground” but “no obvious indication of who might have put the monolith there.” News of the discovery quickly went viral, with many noting the



The shiny, triangular pillar which protruded some 12 feet from the red rocks of southern Utah, was spotted on November 18 by baffled local officials counting bighorn sheep from the air.

object’s similarity with strange alien monoliths that trigger huge leaps in human progress in Stanley Kubrick’s classic sci-fi film “2001: A Space Odyssey.” Others remarked on its discovery during a turbulent year that has seen the world gripped by the COVID-19 pandemic, and optimistically speculated it could have a different function entirely. “This is the ‘reset’ button for 2020. Can someone please press it quickly?” joked one Instagram user. “Somebody took the time to use some type of concrete-cutting tool or something to really dig down,

almost in the exact shape of the object, and embed it really well,” Nick Street, a spokesman for the Department of Public Safety told the *New York Times*. “It’s odd,” he added. “There are roads close by, but to haul the materials to cut into the rock, and haul the metal, which is taller than 12 feet in sections — to do all that in that remote spot is definitely interesting.” Some observers pointed out the object’s resemblance to the avant-garde work of John McCracken, a US artist who lived for a time in nearby New Mexico, and died in 2011. — AFP

PARIS

Order to review crowd limits in churches

France’s State Council, the country’s highest court, on Sunday ordered the government to review a law limiting the number of people in churches during religious services to 30. The Council said in a statement that the measure was not proportionate to coronavirus infection risks. Last week, the government announced that a nationwide lockdown in place since October 30 would be unwound in phases. Shops selling non-essential



goods were allowed to reopen from November 28 and indoor religious services were allowed to resume, but the number of worshippers was capped at 30 people, regardless of the size of the place of worship. — Reuters

LONDON

UK, France sign deal to reduce migrant crossings

Increased patrols and technology will be deployed along France’s beaches under a new agreement between Paris and London aimed at stopping illegal migration across the Channel. A growing number of migrants have tried to reach Britain across the perilous and busy shipping lane in recent months, with four deaths recorded in 2019 and seven so far this year. Just this weekend, French



patrol boats rescued 64 migrants, including a pregnant woman and children apparently suffering from hypothermia, attempting to cross over to Britain. The deal will see French patrols doubled from December 1. — AFP

MINSK

Belarus protesters stage demo with new tactic

Opposition protesters in Belarus took to the streets of capital Minsk on Sunday in the latest of three months of demonstrations against the re-election of strongman president Alexander Lukashenko. Since an August election, Belarus has been gripped by massive protests that erupted after Lukashenko, 66, secured a sixth term as president of the ex-Soviet republic. The opposition believes the election was rigged and political novice Svetlana



Tikhanovskaya — who ran against Lukashenko in the place of her jailed husband — was the true winner of the polls. In recent weeks, authorities imposed an intense crackdown in which hundreds were detained. — AFP

When learning becomes a challenge for all...

Learning as a process always brings a different feeling of enthusiasm, not only to school students, but also to their parents and teachers. This is very normal indeed, as everyone understands the importance of being motivated to learn, especially students.

Parents are happy that their children are going back to school after the long holiday. Teachers, on the other hand, are missing their students, school environment and teaching spirit.

While it is possible to get students learn by rewarding them, the most powerful learning occurs when students take ownership of the learning process. Besides, it is very insightful for them to link what they are taught to a set of goals that they need to achieve or direct their efforts towards it. When students have a vision of what they want their future to be and their learning moves them towards that vision, they are powerfully motivated to bring about their best.

Furthermore, this will inspire students to engage more in the learning process. Now more than ever, such kind of learning experience must not only allow students to acquire academic content, but it must also be more intentional about fostering critical thinking, communication, collaboration, creativity and other skills that students need to navigate this complex and



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PARENTS ARE
HAPPY THAT
THEIR CHILDREN
ARE GOING BACK
TO SCHOOL
AFTER THE LONG
HOLIDAY

rapidly changing world. Touching on the current local learning experience, everyone went on emergency mood as the schools' doors have already opened. As all are waiting for the new academic year, parents, teachers and students were on a gray area on how the learning process will be. It is all because of the global health pandemic, which affected everyone's interest towards welcoming the new learning approach.

Unlike before, this year's back to school experience was not as exciting as it used to be. In the past, students, for instance, were very much longing to return to school after the summer break. However, this year, their feelings were mixed with passion and fear for the would be different learning approach.

The coronavirus pandemic made it even frightening and risky too, mostly for parents who were not willing to send their children to school. However, the scenario of learning was in some way clear with online learning through educational portals. Though almost one month is over since the start of the semester, the learning process is still limping with the unstable functionality of the portals.

Teachers are unable to manage their log in and out of these portals, some students are successfully enrolled and parents are struggling to cope

with online sessions and guide their children. There are cases when teachers and students are unable to log in to any of these portals. This is just to name a few examples of the common issues experienced by students, teachers and parents. Possibly, something is not going well with these portals and the learning process is being affected by the inadequacy of portals.

Accordingly, teachers, students and parents are seeing days of stress and pressure. As a point of fact, parents are getting more headache and tension than children. They are worried about their children's education. In contrast, teachers spare no effort to help students in their learning process through online teaching sessions. They start their day by opening multiple tabs and apps, switching between them for the sake of bringing a better learning experience for students.

People are just wondering why it took all the time to resume the online learning approach and the outcome is not as expected.

One is questioning whether there was a real trial and fail period to test the suitability and efficacy of these educational portals! Regardless of all these, the Ministry of Education is still doing its best to deliver a unique rewarding educational experience; no doubt about it! All should support in making this journey a success!

HOPES ON BIDEN

Deported Mexican migrants dream of change

NATALIA CANO

Mauricio Lopez was deported to Mexico after spending most of his life in the United States. Now he hopes against the odds that Joe Biden's administration will let him return.

The 26-year-old English teacher is one of thousands of migrants known as "dreamers" who as children were taken to the US by their parents. Like many Mexicans who were expelled, in particular under outgoing President Donald Trump, Lopez is hoping that President-elect Biden will push for changes that protect undocumented migrants.

"It would be good for us if he relaxes immigration laws... if there are asylum processes, if he makes it easier for us to obtain work permits or tourist visas, since many of us have families there", he said.

Lopez was deported to Mexico from North Carolina in 2016 after he was unable to renew his residency permit under the DACA programme for unauthorised immigrants brought to the United States as children.

He was deported with his mother, leaving behind a sister but joining a brother who had already been sent back to Mexico years earlier.

Lopez is part of a growing number of

deportees trying to integrate into a country that often feels foreign to them.

Around 89,000 Mexicans were expelled from the United States in the first half of this year, according to the interior ministry. Widespread expulsions have also occurred under Democratic administrations. About three

“It would be good for us if he relaxes immigration laws and makes it easier for us to obtain work permits or tourist visas

MAURICIO LOPEZ
English teacher

million unauthorised immigrants were deported by former president Barack Obama between 2009 and 2016, when Biden was vice-president.

Biden has signaled a break with the policies of Trump, who vowed to halt almost all immigration and expel the more than 10 million undocumented migrants estimated to live in the United States.

The Republican sparked anger during his 2016 election campaign when he branded Mexican migrants "rapists" and drug dealers, and vowed to build a wall along the southern US border. But experts say Biden may be hamstrung by a Republican-controlled Senate, depending on the result of runoffs in the state of Georgia on January 5.

"Even with the best will of the new government, it (change) won't happen imminently", said Leticia Calderon, an expert on migration at Mexico's Mora Institute.

The Democrat's win should not be seen as an "invitation to migrate" because "the bad guy is leaving and now the good guys" are in the White House, she said.

"The immigration system in the United States has no political party."

One area where she does expect action from Biden is to try to address rights for "Dreamers" to stay and work in the United States. Biden fiercely criticised Trump's moves against "Dreamers."

"It's likely that they will deal with it in the first 100 days of government, but it has to go through the Senate", where it is likely to meet resistance, Calderon said. Even if it is too late for him personally, Lopez hopes that other young migrants can benefit under the new administration. — AFP

METEORIC RISE

Ethiopia's PM Abiy: From peace prize to air strikes

ROBBIE COREY-BOULET

Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed came to power promising real democracy, promoting women and feverishly planting trees across his vast country, snapping up the Nobel Peace Prize along the way.

But Abiy's image of a modern, peacemaking reformer risks shattering entirely after he sent troops and warplanes into Ethiopia's Tigray region, a move analysts fear could push Africa's second most populous country into a long, devastating civil war.

Abiy, 44, announced the campaign on November 4, saying it came in response to an attack by Tigray's ruling party, the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), on two federal military camps, an accusation the party denies.

A communications blackout in Tigray has made it difficult to verify competing claims on the ground.

Yet officials say hundreds of people have been killed, and the UN is warning of a rapidly deteriorating humanitarian situation as thousands flee across the border into neighbouring Sudan. World leaders are calling for an immediate halt to fighting and for dialogue, but Abiy has repeatedly insisted on the need to preserve the country's "sovereignty and unity" and "re-establish law and order".

It is a remarkable turn of events for a leader who less than a year ago



Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed speaks during a media conference at the Elysee Palace in Paris, France. – Reuters file photo

WORLD LEADERS
ARE CALLING FOR
AN IMMEDIATE
HALT TO FIGHTING
AND FOR DIALOGUE

travelled to Oslo to accept the Nobel for ending a two-decade stalemate with neighbouring Eritrea after a brutal 1998-2000 conflict that left some 80,000 people dead and achieved little. Abiy declared in his acceptance speech that "war is the epitome of hell for all involved", and his office insists that this remains his position.

His press secretary has even suggested he deserves "a second Nobel Prize"

for his efforts to resolve the Tigray conflict. Born in the western town of Beshasha to a Muslim father and Christian mother, Abiy "grew up sleeping on the floor" in a house with no electricity or running water.

"We used to fetch water from the river", he told Ethiopian radio station Sheger FM last year, adding that he was 12 or 13 before he first saw an asphalt road or electricity. — AFP

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Victorious Dhofar

The victory meant the Salalah giant sealed their ninth HM Cup football title as they are the title holders of the 1976, 1980, 1981, 1990, 1999, 2004, 2006, 2011 and 2020 editions.

HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, the Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, was the chief guest of the match in presence of dignitaries and officials. The chief guest gave away the trophy to the Dhofar captain and gold medals to the HM Cup champion players.

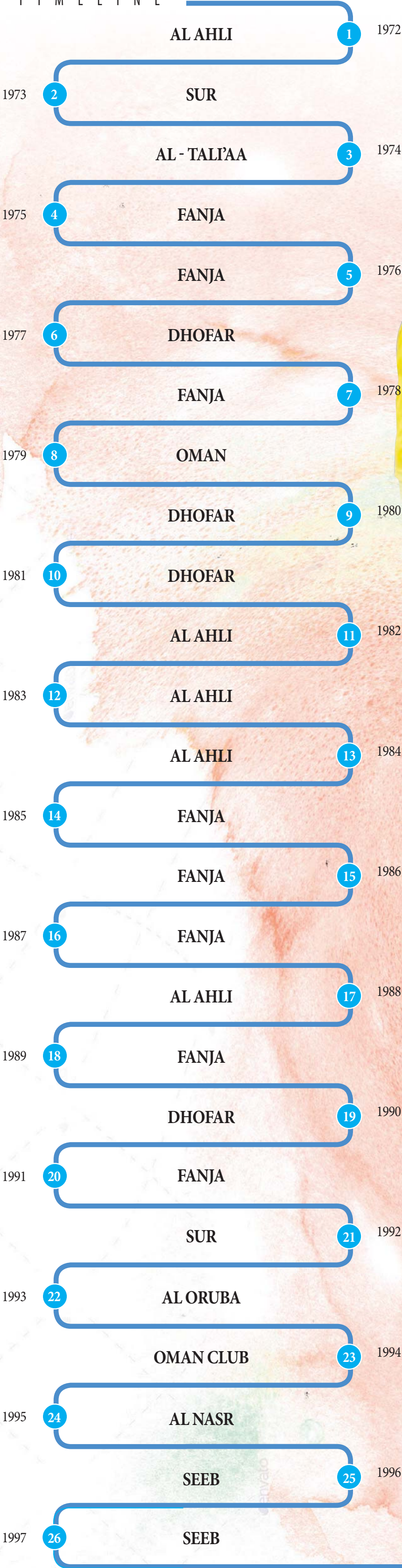


Minister of Sports Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said congratulates the Dhofar players with the trophy after their victory against Al Oruba in the HM Cup final. – Mohammed Mahjoub



47

HM CUP WINNERS
T I M E L I N E



Star campaigner

Oman national team goalkeeper Fayeel al-Rushaidi has been instrumental in Dhofar's run to the 2020 HM Cup final as he made many crucial saves in the semifinal first and second legs.

RECORDS
FROM
HM
CUP

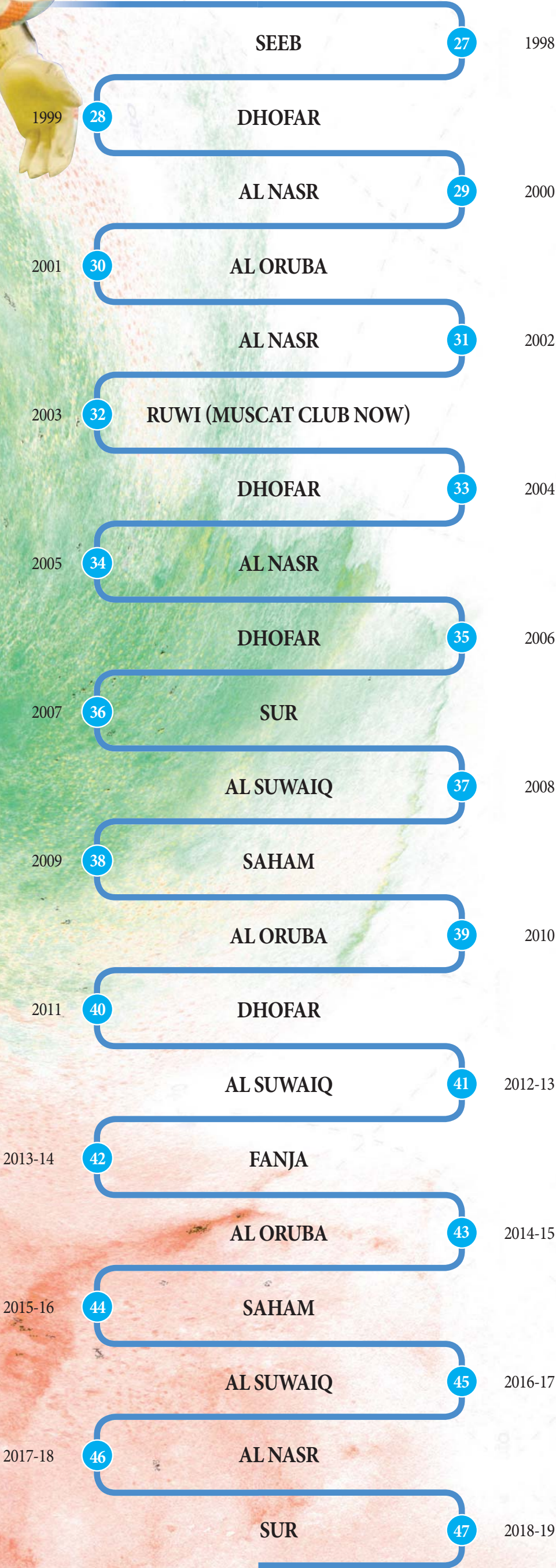
FIRST HAT-TRICK
ABDULRAHMAN (1976)

FIRST SUPER
HAT-TRICK
RASHID (1980)

FIRST GOLDEN GOAL
ALI AL MAROURI (1999)

FIRST FOREIGN
PLAYER IN DOMESTIC
LEAGUE
LARRY (1971)

FIRST OMANI CLUB
TO BE PLACED
IN A FOREIGN
TOURNAMENT
DHOFAR
(3RD, GCC CSHIP, 1986).





Dhofar clinch historic ninth HM Cup crown



Dhofar players celebrate with the trophy after the HM Cup final victory against Al Oruba. – Mohammed Mahjoub

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, NOV 29

Dhofar were crowned HM Cup football champions after beating Al Oruba 5-4 on penalties after a goalless draw in 120 minutes of playing time at the Rustaq Sports Complex on Sunday night.

The victory meant the Salalah giant sealed their ninth HM Cup football title as they are the title holders of the 1976,1980, 1981, 1990, 1999, 2004, 2006, 2011 and 2020 editions.

HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, the Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, was the chief guest of the match in presence of dignitaries and officials. The chief guest gave away the trophy to the Dhofar captain and gold medals to the HM Cup champion players.

Coming into the final, after an impressive show in the knockout stages, Dhofar were clearly the better team in the final.

The first scoring attempt registered in the match was from Dhofar as Qasim Said received a golden pass from Salah al Yahyaei and his shot was saved by Al Oruba's goalkeeper Abdulaziz Mubarak in the 6th minute.

Rasheed Jaber's men continued seeking their opening goal through pressure from the strikers Lopez, Salah al Yahyaei.

Al Oruba's defence stood tough and broke all the attempts led by Dhofar attack side. Al Oruba's coach Haitham al Alawi preferred to lie deep in the back and launch quick counter-attacks.

Both team players spirit were very high with preference for Dhofar as they delivered top quality match within 45 minutes but it was missing a goal. The international referee Omar al Yaqoobi ended the first half with a goalless draw. The second half started with more intent from both teams to score the first goal. The referee showed a red card to Dhofar's Ahmed al Khamisi for his strong tackles in the beginning of the second half.

Coach Rasheed Jaber decided for the first substitution as he replaced Qasim Said with Abdul Salam Amer. Few minutes later, the referee showed another red card to Al Oruba's captain Ahmed Saleem for his strong interaction in the 61st minute.

After the missing of the team members, coach Haitham al Alawi



joined Omran al Farsi with Fayeز Jameel in the 65th minute. Dhofar players faced difficulty to penetrate the box as the defenders Khalid Saleh and Hamed Khamis broke all the attempts. Lopez Hugo was very close to score the opening goal for Dhofar as he was inside the box and received a pass from Motaz Saleh but his shot was saved by the goalkeeper Abdulaziz Mubarak in the 80th minute.

The fourth referee Ishaq al Subhi added three minutes as additional time but there was no change in the result and the match extended for extra time.

Al Oruba's Mohammed al Mukhaini missed a golden opportunity to score as he went inside the box and hit a ball but was saved by the national team and Dhofar goalkeeper Fayeز al Rushaidi in the 109 minute.

Al Oruba's players were the better as they controlled the game from the middle and created many attempts. Finishing was the real challenge for both the teams as they struggled to break the deadlock. The Al Oruba's goalkeeper saved another opportunity from Abdullah Fawaz who kicked the ball strongly.



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Refinery and mineral projects to buoy Oman Shipping’s growth



PROMISING POTENTIAL:
New gas discoveries, the consolidation under way of the mining sector, and increased connectivity between ports (represent business opportunities)

CONRAD PRABHU
@conradprabhu

Oman Shipping Company (OSC), the Sultanate’s high-seas maritime transportation services provider, says it is keenly eyeing emerging opportunities in a number of strategic areas of the country’s economy to drive business growth, as well as diversify its expanding fleet.

According to a top official of the wholly government-owned shipping line, a string of mega developments due to come to fruition in the coming years, alongside other economic initiatives, will spark a strong uptick in cargo volumes that OSC is set to capitalise on.

“Oman is a promising local market, offering different products in different areas,” said Ibrahim al Nadhairs, Acting CEO of the recently integrated Oman Shipping Company & Oman Drydock Company. “At OSC, we want to capitalise on this market; we see growth in a number of

sectors — Oil & Gas, chemicals, dry cargo, and logistics.”

Particularly promising for OSC is the Duqm Refinery project — a joint venture of OQ of Oman and Kuwait Petroleum International (KPI) — which is set to double Oman’s refining capacity when it comes on stream in 2023, said Al Nadhairs.

Participating in the 5th Annual Maritime Standard Tanker Conference held last week, the official also listed a number of emerging opportunities that will fuel OSC’s business growth.

“New gas discoveries, the consolidation under way of the mining sector, and increased connectivity between ports (represent business opportunities). It will also allow us to diversify our fleet; we have a portfolio of segments targeted at these businesses. We are building new ships or (acquiring) second hand ones for the different segments of our business.”

OSC, part of Asyad Group, currently has a well-diversified fleet of 54 modern vessels comprising LNG carriers, LPG carriers, Very Large Crude Carriers (VLCCs), product tankers, Very Large Ore Carriers (VLOCs), dry cargo carriers, and container ships.

Two new VLCCs are set to join the fleet over the next two years, bolstering its size to 56 vessels.

TURN TO PAGE 14

Multinational alliance wins bid to operate Duqm fisheries port

VALUE CREATION: OPAZ names alliance of Omani and international firms led by Fisheries Development Oman (FDO) to develop, manage and operate multipurpose fisheries hub at Duqm SEZ

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, NOV 29

The Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) represented by the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD) has awarded the tender for the development, management and operation of a Multipurpose Fishing Port and the related projects at Duqm SEZ to a strategic alliance of Oman and international companies led by Fisheries Development Oman, a state-owned group supervised by Oman Investment Authority.

Together with Fisheries Development Oman (FDO), the winning alliance includes Al Wusta Fisheries Company, Oman Food Investment Holding Company, Oman Fisheries Company and Port of Duqm along with Lorient Keroman SEM which manages one of the major fishing ports in Europe.

The alliance will invest an amount of RO 50 million to develop, manage and operate the Multipurpose Fishing Port, with the potential of expanding the facilities and services to include several operational and services aspects.



The Agreement stipulates that the winning alliance pays 15 per cent of the annual net profits to the Authority for the management and operation of the port starting from the beginning of the third year from signing the agreement.

The alliance shall also commit to include all related contracts signed in the future a provision for assigning 10 per cent of the works to SMEs and commit to Omanisation percentage as set forth in the laws of the Ministry of Labour and the Regulation of the Special Economic Zone at Duqm.

The Multipurpose Fishing Port is 10 metres deep and works are currently progressing to connect it to

the road network and various service facilities.

It also includes a 2.2km long main breakwater, 1.1km long secondary breakwater and jetties totalling 1.2 km in length. The area allocated for service facilities totals 248,931 m2. The Port is also equipped with a tourism berth overseeing an area of 75,000 m2 suitable to accommodate tourism ships. Facilities complementing the Multipurpose Fishing Port include a fisheries & food processing complex connected by 5.2 kilometres of road network.

The port will shortly provide services to local fishermen, commercial fishing ships, livestock

carriers and ships designated for transporting foodstuff in addition to some tourism facilities and other services facilities.

The Multipurpose Fishing Port is one of the key projects of the Duqm SEZ that seeks to enhance the zone’s capacity to take advantage of rich coastal fisheries and its advantageous location overlooking the Arabian Sea.

The fisheries complex will leverage Duqm Airport services through the air freight terminal to promote fish processing activities and exports, and thereby support the diversification of the economy, enhance food security, and create job opportunities for nationals.

Sohar International concludes \$100m syndication

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, NOV 29

Sohar International has recently concluded a \$100 million syndication, which is considered a landmark transaction for the bank as it defied the odds of depressed market conditions, tight global liquidity, and a reduced market appetite.

Sohar International had mandated United

Arab Emirates based Mashreqbank PSC, on its behalf, to lead and arrange the syndication.

Commenting on the syndication, Ahmed al Musalmi, Chief Executive Officer, Sohar International, said, “The new funding is a part of our concerted efforts to extend financing solutions for general corporate purposes. We are pleased to partner with Mashreqbank PSC in arranging

this facility in order to pave the way for a broader range of future partnerships, with a diverse set of lenders. The fact that the syndicated facility has been closed during unprecedented economically challenging times, is testament to the reputation we have in the market and the strong relations with banks in the region as well as across the globe.”

OPAL launches unified defensive driving permit

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, NOV 29

In conjunction with the Sultanate’s celebrations of the glorious 50th National Day, the Oman Society for Petroleum Services (OPAL) celebrated the launch of the Unified Defensive Driving Permit for the energy sector under the patronage of Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Energy and Minerals in the presence of Shaikh Nasr bin Amer al Hosni, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Labour for Labour and Eng Salim bin Mohammed al Nuaimi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology for Transport and a number of executives and heads of member companies.

The ceremony was held at the W Muscat Hotel respecting all measure prescribed by Supreme Committee for fight against COVID-19.

The Unified Defensive Driving Permit for the energy sector is an integrated and recognised driving licence for the whole energy sector and allows drivers to drive throughout the sector with a single document that is periodically renewed to ensure commitment to safe driving skills and behaviours to achieve a driving environment free of injuries or accidents.

With Unified Defensive Driving Permit, qualified drivers will be able to drive in all concession areas followed by advanced training and evaluation. This initiative will save operators and



contractors a lot of time and efforts in training or testing drivers. In addition, annual costs of up to RO 6 million for the sector will be saved.

Another milestone during the ceremony was awarding the

winners of member companies with OPAL Awards for Best Practices. After a fair competition between oil institutions and companies, PDO, Schlumberger Oman and Seeh Al Sarya won awards in the Health and

This initiative will save operators and contractors a lot of time and efforts in training or testing drivers. In addition, annual costs of up to RO 6 million for the sector will be saved.

Safety category.

In the Omanisation category, Occidental of Oman and Al Shawamikh were among the winners. OQ Company, Al Hassan Engineering Company and Al Baraka Oil Services Company were crowned in the category of technical and operational excellence.

In the environmental category, PDO and Oman Cement Company

took the crowns. PDO and Petrofac were crowned in the Omani product category. As for the Research and Development category, it went to Daleel Petroleum. And, last but not least, in the Energy Transition category, the award went to Petroleum Development Oman.

The Opal Award for Best Practices competition for member companies has shown an honourable competition among the member companies that submitted their projects to the evaluation committee with the amount of 60 projects, of which 24 projects classified by types of companies qualified to the projects of major operating companies, contractors and local community contractors.

TURN TO PAGE 14



SPOTLIGHT

Weekly 'Made in Oman' series



Purrfect Oman-made pet food



We want Raseen to be the go-to brand for pet owners in Oman and across the GCC

MUADH AL SUBHI
Founder & CEO, Raseen



Tell us about Raseen.

Raseen is a proud Omani company producing pet food and supplements. We saw a gap in the pet food market with what was available on supermarket shelves and what we knew pet owners were looking for.

Today, as pets are considered more and more as family members their owners want to purchase only the best for their animal companions. So we developed Baseen, the first Omani cat food. What makes it extra special is that it promotes feline health that meets the daily nutrition recommended by AAFCO for cats. It has a unique and innovative recipe with 80 per cent of its protein coming from Omani fish.

On top of this it is packed with vital vitamins and essential nutrients. Functional pet food ingredients that offer proven health benefits are very much at the heart of our brand. Today, we are distributing Raseen cat and dog food as well as our pet supplements right across Oman. They are also available on Markeetex.com, Oman's online marketplace.

Where did your entrepreneurial journey start?

My innovation and entrepreneurial journey started when I chose to study chemical engineering at university. I did this with the goal of working on a graduation project that could form the basis for a start-up.

To make sure I got the experience I needed and that

I was ultimately successful in my goals, I worked as an assistant or volunteer on as many scientific projects as possible during my studies.

Once I graduated, I got on with marketing my project and products to as many government agencies as I could. And I'm delighted to say it got all the interest I had hoped for and more.

Tell us about Raseen's innovation journey.

I first got involved with the Industrial Innovation Centre (IIC) in 2017 and enrolled in their Innovation Specialist Program which swiftly swept me up in three months of lectures and workshops.

At each stage of Raseen's innovation journey, IIC connected us with both international and local expertise – technical, commercial, administrative and financial – and helped us build institutional relationships.

IIC also assigned a strategic partner who gave us the training we needed to explore international markets. We got to follow up as well on business opportunities and benchmark against pet food items already on the market.

Exploring how to add value to our recipes, differentiate Raseen's cat and dog food products and gain the all-important competitive edge was particularly useful.

Thanks to this program, we were able to establish an innovative industrial company – something that had long been my ambition.

This is something that

is very important for me personally but also important for Oman – this program helps young entrepreneurial Omanis get innovative ideas off the ground and turn them into businesses.

As these businesses grow, they create jobs and contribute to the national economy in a really significant way and support our national competitiveness. And every innovative business increases our intellectual capital – a national asset that can pay dividends in the future.

Is E-commerce part of your plans?

Most definitely, the digital shelf is of real interest to us. With the impact of COVID-19 the sale of pet food online has risen dramatically. According to Nielsen data in-store pet food retail sales were up 26 per cent while e-commerce sales soared by an impressive 77 per cent.

The world is fundamentally recalibrating right now. Consumer habits are changing and understanding those changes will be critical to us as we prioritize how we too recalibrate to meet the changed circumstances driven by the pandemic.

What's next for Raseen?

We want Raseen to be the go-to brand for pet owners in Oman and across the GCC. And in 2021 we will also be targeting markets outside the MENA region. At the end of the day, we want the brand to be synonymous with environmental responsibility, quality and innovation. Exciting times ahead.

MEDRC supports 15 overseas water research projects

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, NOV 29

Fifteen researchers from Palestine and Jordan will be participating in MEDRC's Water Research Fellowship Programme, starting this academic year. Muscat-based MEDRC supported MSc research projects address an immediate need or specific problem as identified in conjunction with the water authorities of Jordan and Palestine.

This year's topics include: non-revenue water and the use of domestic water metres; anthropogenic metal pollution in a wadi catchment area and spatiotemporal evaluation of soil moisture using low-cost sensors and remote sensing techniques.

In addition to the MSc Fellowships, MEDRC also supports 10 PhD projects



in water research. MEDRC also supports the Innovation Initiative, a scheme that provides annual funding for researchers to continue or expand their research from a laboratory setting to the field for practical applications.

In total, over 300 Fellows from Palestine and Jordan were able to conduct their research with

support from MEDRC since 2012. The successful researchers secured their Fellowship Awards by panels representing universities and water authorities who assessed the research proposals according to criteria in line with national water research priorities, sustainability and innovation.

Coveted recognition for local audit firm



BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, NOV 29

Crowe MAK Ghazali Oman, a leading audit firm in the Sultanate, was recognised for '25 Years of Excellence in Audit, Consulting and Tax Advisory', at the Alam al Aktisaad Awards event held here last week.

The chief guest on the occasion, Qais bin Mohammed al Yousuf, Minister for Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, presented

the award to Davis Kallukaran, Managing and founding Partner of Crowe Oman. During the last 25 years, Crowe Oman has grown into a market-leading multidisciplinary practice providing comprehensive services in audit and assurance, risk advisory, tax, forensic technology, corporate finance and IFRS.

It prestigious clientele comprises CMA regulated clients and major business groups. Incorporated 25 years ago in Oman, as a member firm of Crowe Global, the 8th largest accounting network headquartered in the United States, the firm derives its strength from over 800 offices of Crowe Global situated in 146 countries across the 5 continents. The firm commenced its operations in Oman from scratch with three equity partners — Davis Kallukaran, Muna al Ghazali, and Dr Khalid Maniar – and currently boasts six partners and 60+staff, offering diversified services from its two offices in Muscat and Salalah.

Refinery, mineral projects to buoy Oman Shipping's growth

FROM PAGE 13

Beyond the Sultanate, Oman Shipping is also evaluating opportunities to provide maritime transportation services to companies operating across the wider region, said Al Nadhairi.

"We continue to explore additional cargo opportunities, not only in the Gulf, but also the region and globally. This also helps us a lot in triangulating opportunities and maximising our cargo base."

Triangulation – the technique of optimising usage of shipping capacity – has contributed to a 30 per cent enhancement of the company's dry bulk business, according to the Acting CEO.

The practice has been successfully employed in OSC's dry bulk operations between Oman and Australia, he said.

Oman Shipping Company is owned around 80 per cent by Oman Global Logistics Group (Asyad) with OQ (formerly Oman Oil & Orpic Group) and Oman Rail sharing the balance 20 per cent of the equity in the company.

The group has three subsidiaries: Oman Charter Company, which oversees the group's commercial operations; Oman Ship Management Company (OSMC), which provides technical management services; and Oman Container Line to support its new container business.

PRESS RELEASE

HYUNDAI, INEOS TO COOPERATE ON DRIVING HYDROGEN ECONOMY FORWARD



Hyundai Motor Company and INEOS announced the signing of a memorandum of understanding to explore new opportunities to accelerate the global hydrogen economy.

Hyundai and INEOS will jointly investigate opportunities for the production and supply of hydrogen as well as the worldwide deployment of hydrogen applications and technologies. Both companies will initially seek to facilitate public and private sector projects focused on the development of a hydrogen value chain in Europe.

The agreement also includes the evaluation of Hyundai's proprietary fuel cell system for the recently announced INEOS Grenadier 4x4 vehicle.

This cooperation represents an important step in INEOS' efforts to diversify its powertrain options at an early stage. Hyundai's proprietary modular fuel cell system, which evaluation vehicles will use, has already proven reliable and effective in the Hyundai NEXO SUV.

OPAL launches unified defensive driving permit



FROM PAGE 13

AbdulRahman Humaid al Yahyaie, CEO of Oman Society for Petroleum Services (OPAL), praised the active participation of companies in the various fields of the competition by adding: "We are very proud of this, wide participation of energy companies

in the competition with various and magnificent projects they have presented and healthy competition amongst each company in the specified categories for the award.

I would like to express my thanks to all the participating companies for their effort and projects that will undoubtedly contribute to support in spreading

best practices among the sector companies.

We also extend our thanks to all companies, institutions and government agencies that have supported the Society to achieve its goals and aspirations throughout the period in order to raise productivity and working culture."

In brief

■ BEIJING

**CHINA TO FURTHER
EXPAND OUTBOUND
INVESTOR SCHEMES**

China plans to roll out an outbound investment scheme to new regions as it looks to meet onshore investors' asset allocation needs, official news agency Xinhua reported on Sunday.

China will expand the Qualified Domestic Limited Partner (QDLP) trials already under way in Shanghai, Beijing and Shenzhen, Xinhua said, citing an official at the foreign exchange regulator. — **Reuters**

■ SYDNEY

**AUSTRALIA MOVING
TOWARDS TAKING
CHINA TO WTO OVER
BARLEY DISPUTE**

Australia could take China to the World Trade Organization as the next step in a trade dispute over barley, Canberra's Trade Minister said on Sunday.

Trade tensions between the two economies have escalated in recent months, with Beijing slapping a string of trade tariffs and customs delays on several Australian exports, including wine, barley and beef. Canberra has already made efforts to appeal Beijing's decisions on Australian barley using a domestic Chinese process, but it was rejected by Chinese authorities, Simon Birmingham said in remarks to ABC's Insiders programme. "So now the WTO appeal for barley is the next step", Birmingham said, adding that the Australian government was discussing the move with the grains industry. — **dpa**

■ GENEVA

**SWITZERLAND VOTES
ON TOUGHER GLOBAL
BUSINESS ETHICS RULES**

Swiss voters will decide in a referendum on Sunday whether Swiss businesses should be held to account for environmental and human rights violations that are committed abroad.

Firms would become liable not only for their own actions, but also for foreign subsidiaries, suppliers and business partners, according to the so-called "Responsible business Initiative" that is backed by advocacy groups such as Greenpeace and Amnesty International.

Switzerland is home to a number of global corporations that are among the largest in their field, including food maker Nestle, commodity group Glencore and pesticide producer Syngenta. — **dpa**

Sudan inflation soars, raising spectre of hyperinflation

KHARTOUM: Inflation in Sudan has risen to one of the highest levels in the world, and the country risks slipping into hyperinflation unless it gets its budget deficit and money supply under control, economists say.

The runaway prices have worsened an economic crisis for millions of ordinary Sudanese and imperilled a political transition under a military-civilian power sharing deal.

The government has run up enormous budget deficits by subsidising the cost of fuel, then financed the deficits by printing money. This has debased the currency, weakening it against other currencies and driving inflation up to annual 230 per cent in October, according to the state statistics bureau.

The skyrocketing prices have led many consumers to spend their salaries quickly, particularly on durable items that hold their value.

Idrees Abdelmoniem, who works in marketing at an engineering company in Khartoum, said he had snapped up car spare parts and furniture, but was not as quick with food and drink, whose prices were not increasing as fast.

"If I have something I want to buy outside of the monthly house supplies, I buy it as soon as I get money, and I won't even try to haggle because tomorrow it could be double the price", he said.

Central bank figures show the scale of money printing by the authorities with the M2 money supply measure increasing by over 50 per cent in the year to end-September. In September alone M2 rose by 7.13 per cent.

Steve Hanke, a hyperinflation specialist at Johns Hopkins University, calculated that on a monthly basis, the inflation rate



A man gets US dollars inside a transfer money bureau in Khartoum. — **Reuters**

has accelerated to about 24 per cent a month, dangerously high, but still below hyperinflation, generally defined as 50 per cent a month.

He placed Sudan among the five countries with the highest inflation. "It's pretty scary", he said, adding that it was hard to predict what direction inflation would go from here.

A US decision to remove Sudan from its list of state sponsors of terrorism has provided little immediate relief from the economic crisis and the country has turned to the International Monetary Fund for help.

Sudan is counting on a reform programme drawn up with the lender to help get control of the deficit, exacerbated by decades of US economic sanctions and by economic mismanagement under president Omar al Bashir, who was ousted in a popular uprising in April of last year.

Gross domestic product (GDP) contracted by more than 2 per cent in both 2018 and 2019 and is expected to shrink another 8.5 per cent in 2020 after being walloped by the coronavirus pandemic, Sudan told the IMF in September.

The one-year staff-monitored programme signed with the IMF commits the transitional government to reforming energy subsidies and reducing government borrowing from the central bank, among other reforms.

The programme is designed to provide a track record that would qualify Sudan for debt relief from its official creditors.

"The issue of hyperinflation is real, and it requires serious attention", said Ibrahim Elbadawi, who stepped down as Sudan's finance minister in July.

"The starting point should be the subsidies, because that will have unquestionable

implications for the finances of the government."

Fuel subsidies, which account for 71 per cent of all subsidies, were equivalent to 10.6 per cent of GDP in 2019, according to the IMF.

The government this year began allowing private companies to import petrol and diesel at near market prices and has gradually reduced the number of stations where subsidised fuel is sold.

Last month it doubled the price of locally produced petrol to 56 Sudanese pounds a litre, still among the lowest levels in the world. It says it stopped subsidising petrol and diesel altogether as of September.

The reforms should reduce fuel subsidies to 2.2 per cent this year, the IMF said, but imported fuel will further stretch people's resources as a collapsing currency pushes up its local price.

— **Reuters**

Work on Nord Stream 2 pipeline to resume in December



Pipeline parts are installed at Nord Stream 2 receiving station in Lubmin, Germany. — **Reuters**

KIEV: Work on the controversial German-Russian Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline is to continue in December after a one-year break, a company spokesperson said.

Construction work on the natural gas pipeline, which will link Russia to Germany, will resume on December 5, German broadcaster NDR 1 Radio MV earlier reported, citing an announcement by the Baltic Sea Waterways and Shipping Office in Stralsund.

The US government wants to prevent the pipeline being completed. In December 2019, construction work on the Danish island of Bornholm was stopped abruptly because two Swiss laying vessels had ceased their work under the pressure of sanctions from the US.

The same month the US passed the PEESA act, which provides a 30-day draw-down period for most companies determined to be conducting sanctionable activity on the pipeline.

Construction of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline is nearly complete. It would double Russian deliveries of natural gas via a Baltic Sea route to Germany, Europe's largest economy.

— **Reuters**

Fishing rights top of the menu as Brexit talks continue

LONDON: Last-ditch Brexit trade talks continued in London on Sunday with fishing rights remaining an "outstanding major bone of contention", according to British foreign minister Dominic Raab.

European Union chief negotiator Michel Barnier told reporters that "work continues, even on a Sunday", as he arrived for the second day of talks.

Barnier had arrived in London on Friday following a spell in self-isolation after a member of his team contracted coronavirus and ahead of the resumption of talks with British counterpart David Frost on Saturday.

Both men warned that a deal could not be reached without major concessions from the other party.

There are only five weeks to go until the end of the current transition period, during which trade relations have remained largely unchanged.

The two key sticking points remain post-Brexit access



Fishing boats take part in a Brexit flotilla, organised by Fishing For Leave, in Newcastle upon Tyne, Britain. — **Reuters**

to British fishing waters for European vessels and the EU's demand for trade penalties if either side diverges from common standards or state aid regulations rules.

Raab told Sky's Sophie Ridge on Sunday that this could be the final week of "substantive" talks, with time running out to agree and ratify a deal.

"There's a deal to be done", he said.

"On fishing there's a point of principle: As we leave the EU we're going to be an independent... coastal state and we've got to be able to control our waters", he added.

Barnier told envoys last week that London was asking that European access to UK waters be cut by 80 per cent, while the EU was willing to accept 15 to 18 per cent, according to a Brussels source. — **Reuters**

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NOVEMBER 30, 2020

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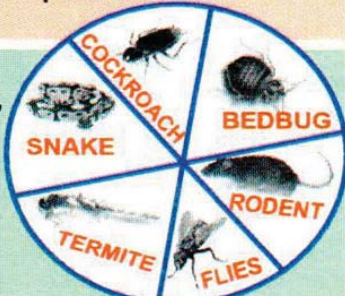
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BREAKING NEWS

86 new Covid-19 cases in Oman, Muscat crosses 1,000-mark

■ Oman Observer 19/04/2020
Muscat: The Ministry of Health (MOH) in Oman announced 86 new cases of Covid 19 on Saturday, bringing the total ...

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Oman

WE ARE MAKING A SWITCH.

features



Sun, Sand, Salt, Surf and Sea... Missing the time at the beach

The people in Oman will always have a special relationship with the sea. Even the expats who come and live in the country for sometime develop and discover the beauty of Oman's vast waters and eventually learn to appreciate it as a great source of food and contributes greatly in the transport of goods. Here's an anecdote of what it meant to miss the sea ... **P18**

INSIDE STORIES

HUMAN INTEREST



CYPRUS OLIVE FARMER VOWS CHANGE TO FACE CLIMATE CHALLENGE

Standing in her olive grove in Cyprus, Elena Sampson sighs at the sight of hundreds of barren trees and vows to tackle climate change after another scorching year... **Story on Page P20**

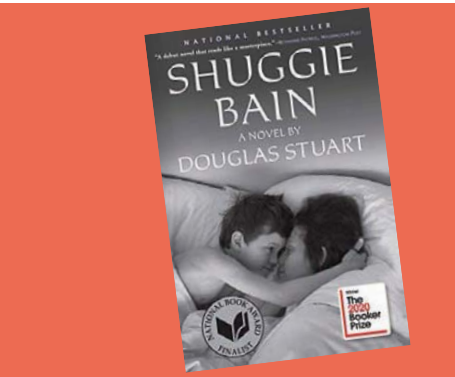
GASTRONOMY



CAN'T DINE OUT? UK RESTAURANTS OFFER DIY MEAL KITS TO SURVIVE LOCKDOWN

From fast food to fine dining, some restaurants in Britain are relying on home kits to keep them afloat during lockdown, turning clients into cooks who recreate favourite meals in the comfort of their own kitchens... **Story on Page 19**

READ



SHUGGIE BAIN BY DOUGLAS STUART

The winner of the 2020 Booker Prize. A boy's working-class childhood in 1980s Glasgow is subsumed by his mother's alcoholism.

TRAVEL TALES



BRITONS TO PLANT TREES TO MARK QUEEN ELIZABETH'S 70 YEARS ON THRONE

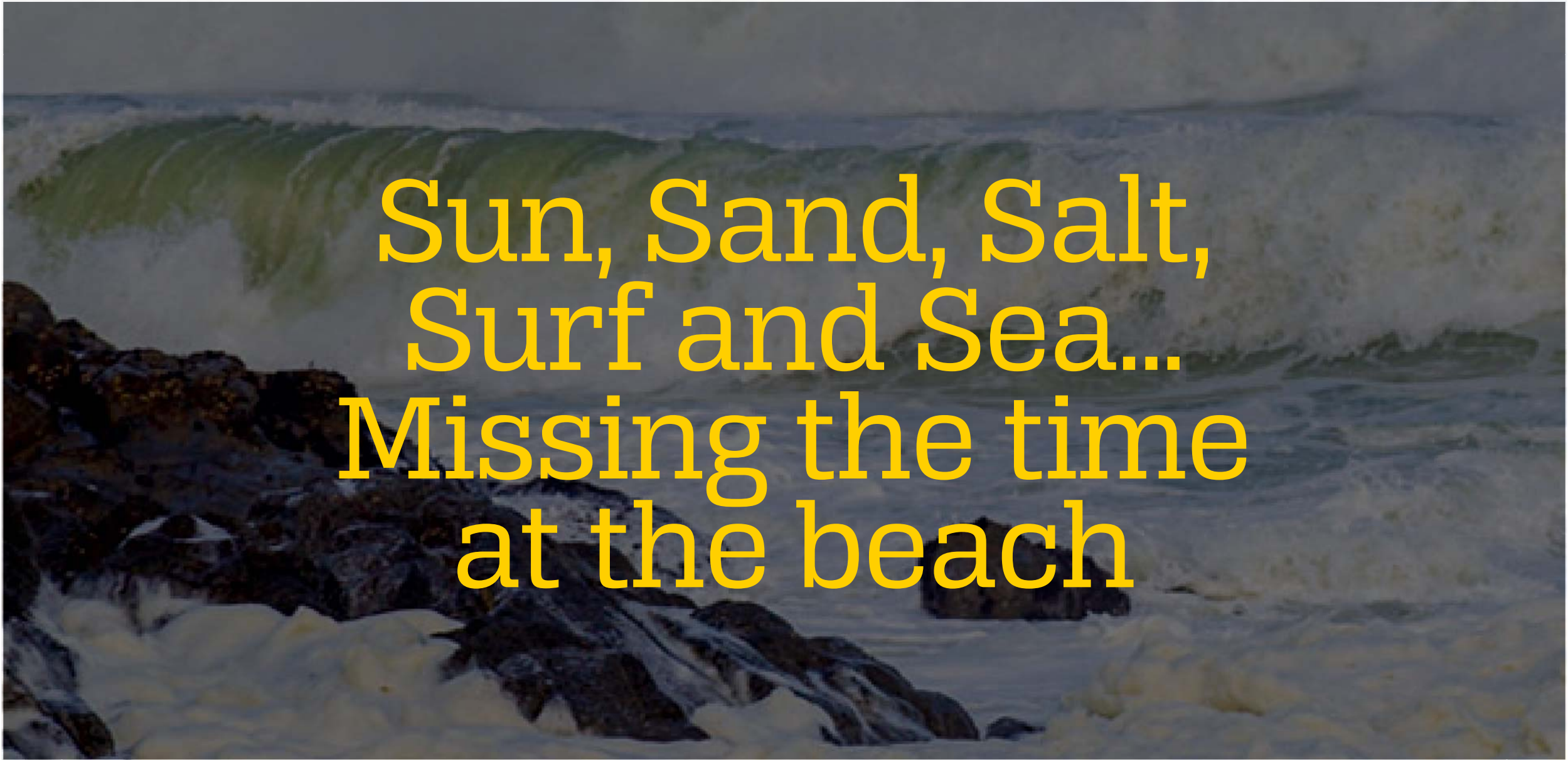
Britons will be encouraged to plant trees to celebrate Queen Elizabeth's 70th anniversary on the throne as part of a plan to create a greener country in honour of her seven decades of service... **Story on Page 19**

CELEBRATE



CYBER MONDAY

Cyber Monday was originally conceived by Ellen Davis, senior vice president of the National Retail Federation in 2005 and has become exceedingly popular among Americans as one of the best days to shop online and save lots of money. To celebrate today, check out your favourite stores online and buy while the sales are hot!



Sun, Sand, Salt, Surf and Sea... Missing the time at the beach



TEXT BY RAY PETERSEN
PHOTOS BY LENA PETERSEN

Right now, I'm suffering from withdrawal symptoms. I cannot go near the sea or the beach, and I am suffering for it. It is the fresh salty air, the ubiquitous sea breeze, and the ever-changing coastal landscape that have drawn me to the sea all my life. Psyche Roxas-Mendoza wrote of the subtle thrill of the seaside, "Every time I stand before a beautiful beach, its waves seem to whisper to me: If you choose the simple things and find joy in nature's simple treasures, life and living need not be so hard."

I was fortunate, no doubt, to be born in the small port town of Bluff, in New Zealand, which boasts the southernmost deep-water port in the world. In its heyday the Port of Bluff was responsible for exporting millions of tonnes of South Island raised and processed lamb and mutton to Russia, the United Kingdom and the Middle East, it exported millions of logs and processed wood products to Japan, and has been the logistics terminal for the Tiwai Aluminium Smelter across the other side of the harbour.

It is famous as home too, to the Foveaux (pronounced Fovo) Straits oyster boat fleet, crayfish and wet fish commercial fisheries, and is the service hub for the amazing Stewart Island, where tourists, among many other pursuits, brave the cold seas to 'cage-dive,' with 5 and 6 metre long Great White Sharks.

Not me though, I can't even swim, yet I never ever turned down a chance to be 'at sea,' whether it was on a fishing boat, oyster boat, the Stewart Island ferry, a yacht or a dinghy, I was always game for whatever came next. We fished off the wharves and rocks and reached under the big rocks and boulders of the rocky shoreline for the 'paua,' which you know as abalone. Those life experiences were normal for those of us born in the tiny port town with a population of around 3000, and still are today, though the port has seen its huge tonnages of yesteryear very much depleted.

Coming to Oman has seen the 'boy' in me re-emerge somewhat, and Lena and I, even though living in the interior, have found it easy to hop in the car and get to the seaside. We befriended prominent local fishing identity, Sulieman al Hajri and he and Franz Kohler introduced us to the thrill of trolling, a form of fishing where lures are towed along behind a boat, and the predatory 'game fish,' such as Kingfish, Tuna and Mahi Mahi provide some pretty exciting action when they strike. We even bought a boat ourselves but living 150 kms away from it took the fun out of it, so we sold it.

Lena has become more and more keen on fishing in recent years, and we have enjoyed the fact that we can fish together from the shore, enjoying each other's company, and being active. We share the catches, and 'the ones that got away,' with passion, and Lena has found the 'baitcaster' reels and relatively light rods suit her well, while I favour 'spinning' reels and longer, heavier rods and gear. I think we are about even with our catches, but when Lena gets 'on the bite,' she gets plenty! We only take the decent sized fish home and release any exotics or small fish. There is absolutely no satisfaction for us in taking a beautiful 'Parrot fish', or a 'Picasso fish', for eating.

The fishing though, is only part of the story, as it's the health benefits of the exercise, the clean fresh air, the Sun, the feel of the sand and sea between your toes, that all add up, each time, to a new, revitalizing experience. With the beaches closed for now under the Supreme Committee directives, we can only yearn for the sea while looking through the kitchen window at Jabal Akhdhar! It's a truth, a tie, a bond, of which JFK said, "When we go back to the sea, we are returning whence we came." I do wish I could... I came from the sea.





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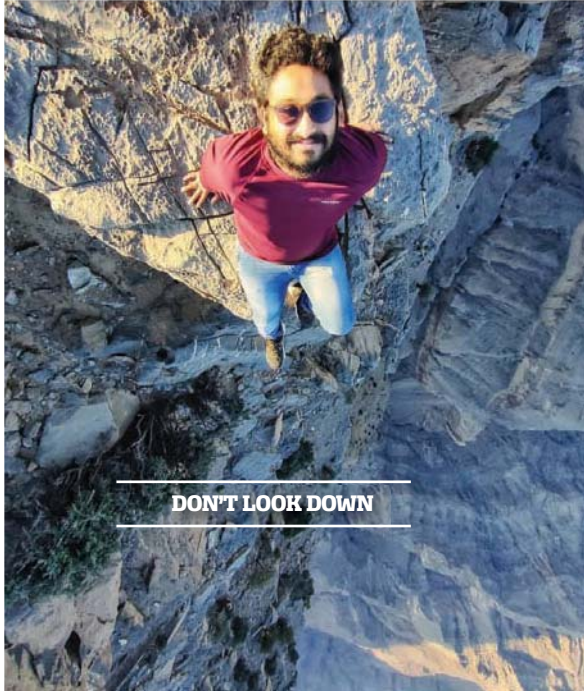
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TRAVEL TALES

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TRAVEL TALES

Britons to plant trees to mark Queen Elizabeth's 70 years on throne



BRITONS WILL be encouraged to plant trees to celebrate Queen Elizabeth's 70th anniversary on the throne as part of a plan to create a greener country in honour of her seven decades of service.

The 94-year-old, the longest-reigning monarch in British history, is due to mark her Platinum Jubilee in February 2022. The government is planning a four-day celebration that summer, featuring an extra day's public holiday, with tree planting to be a feature of the milestone, according to an announcement on Sunday.

Named "The Queen's Green Canopy," the charity-backed project will encourage communities, schools, councils and landowners to plant native trees to help the environment and make local areas greener. Prime Minister Boris Johnson said that the health crisis and pandemic had reminded people of the importance of nature and green spaces and that

trees could transform communities as well as tackling climate change.

"As we celebrate Her Majesty's incredible 70 years of service, I encourage everyone to get behind this scheme and go 'Plant a Tree for the Jubilee,'" Johnson said. Charities Cool Earth and The Woodland Trust said the planting of trees would create a special gift for the monarch, who has planted more than 1,500 trees around the world during her reign.

Elizabeth, who is also the world's current oldest and longest-reigning monarch, became queen on Feb. 6, 1952, following the death of her father King George VI. The British royal family have been vocal campaigners on a host of environmental issues, with Elizabeth's son Prince Charles speaking out for decades about the impact of climate change and the importance of conservation, and her grandson Prince William also taking up the mantle.—Reuters

Can't dine out? UK restaurants offer DIY meal kits to survive lockdown

From fast food to fine dining, some restaurants in Britain are relying on home kits to keep them afloat during lockdown, turning clients into cooks who recreate favourite meals in the comfort of their own kitchens.

For James Knappett, chef-owner of Michelin-starred London restaurant Kitchen Table, the decision to deliver do-it-yourself (DIY) meal kits wasn't easy,

but it was essential.

The venue has been closed since the first lockdown in March, because seating is around a kitchen table so social distancing is not possible.

"It's a very hard feeling to have to give this control to the guests...But the word that we use every day more than any... is survival, and if we didn't do that there wouldn't be a restaurant to come back to," he said while packing a box of his home-tasting menu.

The restaurant used to be fully booked every day with a three-month waiting list and employed 20 people. Now there's a staff of four handling about 80 home delivery orders per week, Knappett said.

Targeting the high-end of the market, meal kits cost 150-250 pounds for two and come with cooking instructions.

For brothers James and Thom Elliot, the lockdowns provided an unexpected lifeline for their "pizza in the post" Pizza Pilgrims business.

"We tried to launch this back in 2014 and it was a spectacular failure, people just weren't ready for it. But then the pandemic put everyone at home and suddenly

everyone was really missing pizza and we relaunched the kit and it's just been madness ever since," said James.

For the initiative, whereby clients roll out the dough and select from a range of toppings, the brothers brought back 30 out of 270 staff who had been furloughed from the restaurant business to re-launch "pizza in the post".

The venture now sells over 1,000 kits a day delivered by couriers.

Priced at 15 pounds for two pizzas, the Elliots say the business was profitable from day one.

"We absolutely think this is going to be something that is going to be staying around after the vaccine in 2021," James said.—Reuters





Cyprus olive farmer vows change to face climate challenge

Standing in her olive grove in Cyprus, Elena Sampson sighs at the sight of hundreds of barren trees and vows to tackle climate change after another scorching year.

The first of several heatwaves in 2020 descended in May, the flowering season for her 2,500 olive and citrus trees in Akaki, about 20 kilometres (12 miles) outside the Mediterranean island's capital Nicosia.

"This year the heatwave struck at the exact time that the olive trees were flowering, and it was not just a heatwave of a couple of days," said the 38-year-old Greek Cypriot.

"We were watering, watering, but we didn't manage to save the blossoms," Sampson said. "This year, maybe 40 (of her 1,200 olive) trees had olives — Nothing! Nothing!"

Harvested for millennia on Cyprus, olives are at the heart of the local culture and trees now cover 11,000 hectares (27,000 acres) of its land, according to the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation.

More than 19,000 tonnes of olive oil were produced in 2018.

But olive oil and other sectors of Cypriot agriculture face the threat of climate change, Adriana Bruggeman, an associate professor at the Cyprus Institute, said.

"Not only droughts, but also increasing temperatures and heatwaves affect the flowering, fruit set and ripening of crops," she said.

Although olive trees are generally resistant to drought, they do need water during the flowering season in the spring.

But Bruggeman warned that some semi-arid areas of Cyprus now face the threat of becoming fully arid by 2050 because of global warming.

Official figures show average annual rainfall has fallen to 470 millimetres (18.5 inches) since 1971, down from 540 mm (21 inches) between 1902 and 1970.



On top of that, heatwaves are growing more common and have squeezed the duration of springtime.

This year alone, the mercury soared above 42 Celsius (104 Fahrenheit) on May 17 and the island experienced its highest ever recorded average daily temperatures for July, August and September.

CHANGE IS 'DOABLE'

"We know that climate change will make the region hotter and drier... We need to adapt to this change and make our agricultural and semi-natural ecosystems more resilient," said Bruggeman. Sampson is ready for alternative methods and new ways.

"If you have healthy soil, you have less run-off, less erosion, more water retention, which means we can try to fight

droughts," said Sampson, who took over the family farm two years ago.

A 2016 study based on a worst case scenario by the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change warned that 43 per cent of Cyprus' territory is in "critical' danger of desertification.

Sampson, who largely avoids tilling her land — a practice that leads to soil erosion and carbon loss — says she will install drip-irrigation and plant other crops between the olive trees. Also, she will no longer use pesticides.

"I think it's doable to make that change, I want to be part of that change," she said.

Bruggeman likewise noted that "improved practices, such as no-till systems, rotation with legumes and application of organic fertilisers could improve productivity". — **AFP**