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NATIONAL DAY OF THE RENAISSANCE

OMAN OBSERVER

OMAN **عُضَائِد** DAILY

Observer

WORDS OF INSPIRATION

“ Our government will follow up progress in various sectors, including small and medium enterprises, and entrepreneurship, particularly those based on innovation, artificial intelligence, and advanced technology. This is in addition to training and enabling youth to benefit from the opportunities made available in this vital sector ”



P10

HAMILTON STORMS TO RECORD-EQUALLING SEVENTH F1 WORLD TITLE



P15

WORLD'S LARGEST FREE TRADE PACT SIGNED IN COUP FOR CHINA



P18

A GIFTED ARTIST INSPIRED BY FAMILY



OMAN

STEPS TO CONSOLIDATE GCC CULTURAL IDENTITY

MUSCAT: HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, on Sunday took part via video-conferencing in the 24th session of GCC Ministers of Culture’s Council. The meeting touched on a number of topics listed on the agenda with a view to developing GCC joint cultural activities, drafting policies to regulate these activities and devising a common cultural plan action that achieves the member state’s vision on consolidating the GCC Cultural Identity and promoting it beyond the region’s boundaries through strong presence at the global arena. **DETAILS ON P3**

INFLATION FALLS BY 1.51% IN OCTOBER

MUSCAT: The Sultanate’s Consumer Price Index (CPI)-based inflation fell by 1.51 per cent in October compared to the same month in 2019, according to the latest data released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) on consumer price index. According to the report, the inflation rate in October declined by 0.11 per cent compared to September. **DETAILS ON P3**

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OMAN OBSERVER

INSIDE



VAMCO HITS VIETNAM AS PHILIP-PINES DEATH TOLL RISES TO 67

P7



IN VACCINE RACE, HUNGARIAN VIL-LAGE FIRM TAKES GLOBAL ROLE

P9

ONLINE REGISTRATION BEGINS

Expats with no documents told to collect outpass from their embassies

VINOD NAIR & KABEER YOUSUF

Online registration for expatriates who wish to leave the country permanently without paying fine began on Sunday. The scheme is open till December 31. The registration can be done at the Ministry of Labour’s website mol.gov.om. “The service aims to facilitate non-Omani workforce to permanently leave the country and exempt employers from all fees and fines resulting from the expiration of work permits. Residents who have expired work permits or are registered as absent without leave can apply to leave during this period,” the ministry said. “Registration can be done at the embassies, the ministry’s website and Sanad centres. Seven days after registration, the expatriate worker can visit

the Ministry of Labour office at Muscat International Airport or seven hours before the flight departure. They should carry a valid ticket, travel documents, and the PCR test valid for 72 hours.” If the expatriates do not have proper documentation (like a lost or expired passport) they have to get in touch with the embassies. “I hope that my embassy sends a clear message guiding us to complete the formalities and return home smoothly. It has been tough here without a job,” said a Bangladesh national who is working on-call basis. “Those who want to go to the country with an outpass from Oman should fill a form posted on the Facebook page of Bangladesh Embassy. They should also submit two passport size photos to the embassy. **TURN TO P6**

EXPAT EXIT SCHEME



ENSURE THAT TRAVEL DOCUMENT (PASSPORT) IS VALID



AFTER 7 DAYS OF SUBMITTING THE REGISTRATION REQUEST, THE WORKER IS ALLOWED TO TRAVEL

SUBMITTING THE REGISTRATION REQUEST TO LEAVE THE SULTANATE VIA:



■ THE MINISTRY’S WEBSITE IS WWW.MOL.GOV.OM



■ SANAD SERVICES CENTER



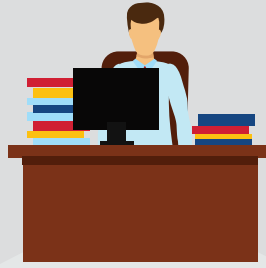
■ EMBASSIES OF THEIR COUNTRIES

VISITING THE OFFICE OF THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR AT MUSCAT INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT 7 HOURS BEFORE THE FLIGHT, BRING WITH THEM:

■ THEIR CONFIRMED TRAVEL TICKETS

■ VALID PASSPORTS OR TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

■ MEDICAL TEST (PCR) VALID FOR 72 HOURS



OVER 700 MOSQUES REOPEN

PHOTO BY MOHAMED MAHJOUB

The day break on Sunday saw the re-opening of more than 700 mosques in the Sultanate in implementation of a decision issued by the Supreme Committee tasked with tackling developments resulting from coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The committee allowed re-opening of mosques whose capacity is 400 worshippers or more. Zahir bin Abdullah al Hosni, Director of Mosques Department at the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs, said that registration is still open for eligible mosques to be added online through electronic form. — ONA

Majlis Ash’shura reconvenes, elects deputy chairman

MUSCAT: In response to the Royal orders of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, Majlis Ash’shura on Sunday began its second annual sitting of the ninth term (2019-2023), under the chairmanship of Khalid bin Hilal al Maawali.

At the beginning of the session, Khalid bin Hilal al Maawali, Chairman of Majlis Ash’shura, said: “It gives me pleasure to announce the opening of the second annual sitting of the ninth term of Majlis Ash’shura which coincides with 50th National Day celebrations.”

The chairman, members and employees of the General Secretariat of Majlis Ash’shura, extended their sincere greetings to His Majesty the Sultan on the occasion of the 50th National Day, praying for many returns of this glorious occasion while the Sultanate enjoys security and prosperity.

The chairman added: “The beginning of the second annual convening of the ninth term coincides with the onset of the Oman Vision-2040 and the

Tenth Five-Year Development Plan (2021-2025), the initial five-year plan of the Vision-2040 which is viewed as a bridge towards a renewed renaissance based on the Omani citizens and armed with science, knowledge and leadership in all walks of life.”

Later, the four substitute members Salim bin Ali al Amri, representative of the Wilayat of Sadah, Saleem bin Salim al Askari, representative of the Wilayat of Mahout, **TURN TO P6**

WEATHER

MUSCAT: Max 30°C | Min 22°C | SALALAH: Max 29°C | Min 24°C | NIZWA: Max 33°C | Min 20°C

PRAYER TIMINGS

SUNRISE: 06:22 | FAJR: 05:04 | DHUHR: 11:57 | ASR: 15:04 | MAGHRIB: 17:26 | ISHA: 18:40



Our sincere greetings to
His Majesty Sultan

Haitham bin Tarik

and the people of Oman on the occasion of the
50th National Day of the Renaissance

#TogetherWeMakeMorePossible

    
www.oq.com

GCC's common approach on tolerance, respect discussed



MUSCAT: His Highness Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham bin Tarik al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, on Sunday today took part via video-conferencing in the 24th session of GCC Ministers of Culture's Council.

The meeting touched on a number of topics listed on the agenda with a view to developing GCC joint cultural activities, drafting policies to regulate these activities and devising a common cultural plan action that achieves the member state's vision on consolidating the GCC Cultural Identity and promoting it beyond

the region's boundaries through strong presence at the global arena.

In addition to joint GCC identity, the ministers discussed a common approach to spread dialogue, tolerance and respect among people belonging to different cultures.

During the meeting, the ministers of culture approved recommendations submitted by their respective culture under-secretaries, including ways to forge a GCC Strategic Cultural Plan of Action. The ministers also discussed a proposal to establish a GCC Cen-

tre for Translation, Arabization and Arabic language, to be hosted by the Sultanate as a unit of the GCC Secretariat-General.

The meeting also touched on various scopes for joint cultural action between GCC states and other friendly countries and global institutions.

The ministers also looked into efforts made by GCC states to tackle coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and proposals to eliminate the threat on the sector of culture and to consider post-coronavirus rehabilitation steps.

— ONA

SHARP AND DUTY-BOUND

KABEER YOUSUF

@kabeeryousef

Women in Oman enjoy an equal status with men and she has the right to choose her studies, career like her counterparts.

It's no wonder Omani women hold key positions across sectors, thanks to the constant attention by the government. In order to ensure her services in the maintenance of law and order, and in expediting various government services, a number of women are working with the Royal Oman Police and the armed forces.

Women are performing stellar roles in ROP's criminal investigation, forensic laboratory, traffic, medical services, and training, in addition to work in special mission units, personal protection, police music band, police aviation, among others.

"We Omani women won the status and empowerment that we deserved with the Royal Oman Police formations," says Major Sakina al Jouhuriyah.

"Since the dawn of the blessed Renaissance, Omani women have received a lot of care and attention, and in recognition of the importance of the role of women in the work of maintaining security and order and providing various police services, the Royal Oman Police was and still is one of the pioneering institutions in involving women in policing work," says captain Thuraya bint Ahmed al Kalbaniyah.

Major Sukainah bint Ali al Jumhuriyah, Assistant Officer at the Al Wattayah Police Station, feels that the Omani women have gained her due position since the blessed Renaissance in 1970, thanks to the visionary leader, the late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos who recognised the importance of her role in the society and in the long



Thuraya al Kalbaniyah



Sakeenah al Jouhuriyah



Sharifa al Ameriyah



Azra al Shekailiyah

March of the blessed Renaissance. Women would be able to perform better under the leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik.

"Omani women in the Royal Oman Police formations have

Omani women in the Royal Oman Police formations have obtained the status and empowerment that they deserved, and proved their efficiency and competence in all the areas

MAJOR SUKAINAH BINT ALI AL JUMHURIAH

obtained the status and empowerment that they deserved, and proved their efficiency and competence in all the areas," said Major Sukainah.

"Omani women gained attention that enabled her to contribute to building the country in various fields," says Captain Azraa bint Sultan al Shakailiyah, Head of the Investigation and Criminal Investigation Department at the Rustaq Police Station in South Al Batinah.

"Women in Oman have opportunities for education and training in various fields and specialisations. It is the fruitful tree that tirelessly gives for the continued renaissance of this dear country," Captain Sharifa bint Hamad al Ameriyah, a training officer at the Traffic Safety Institute at the General Traffic Department.

According to these officials, the Royal Oman Police has realised the importance of involving women in all aspects of policing to serve its goals. Today, women play all the roles that her male counterparts are tasked with. She is in the forefront to protect lives and property, safeguarding peace and tranquility, and contributes to push development forward.



**Congratulations to
HIS MAJESTY SULTAN HAITHAM BIN TARIK
and the people of Oman on the occasion of the
50th National Day of the Renaissance**

Mitsubishi Corporation

Consumer inflation falls

MUSCAT: The Sultanate's Consumer Price Index (CPI)-based inflation fell by 1.51% in October 2020 compared to the same month in 2019, according to the latest data released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) on consumer price index. According to the report, the inflation rate in October declined by 0.11% compared to September 2020. — ONA

INVITATION TO TENDER

SOHAR ALUMINIUM

Sohar Aluminium LLC (SA), PO Box 80, PC- 327, Sohar, Sultanate of Oman hereby invites qualified Suppliers/Contractors for the following tender:

Tender No.	: 20-022
Tender Title	: Transportation of Spent Pot Lining Waste
Scope	: The Transportation of Spent Pot Lining (SPL) Waste from Sohar Aluminium Company LLC (SA) to any designated Customer of SA in Oman (Currently Oman Cement Company - OCC) in Rusayl, Muscat & Jindal Shaded Company, Sohar Port) premises / operational area shall be hereinafter referred to as the Services.
Tender No.	: 2020-ENG-SOW-0070
Tender Title	: Fire Protection Upgrades - Carbon Paste Plant
Scope	: Contractor shall Design, Supply, Installation & Commissioning of Fire Protection Upgrades - Carbon Paste Plant at SA Smelter. Contractors must be SFC (Specialist fire Protection Contractor) registered with PACDA Oman for fulfilling project requirements.

Kindly send your email and company profile to: tender@sohar-aluminium.com
For list of active tenders visit: <https://www.sohar-aluminium.com/en/content/tender-listing>

Over 700 mosques reopen

MUSCAT: The day break on Sunday saw the re-opening of more than 700 mosques in the Sultanate in implementation of a decision by the Supreme Committee tasked with tackling developments resulting from coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

The committee allowed the re-opening of mosques whose capacity is 400 worshippers or more, accounting for 30% of the total. The committee laid emphasis on commitment to precautionary measures as stated in the Awqaf and Religious



Affairs Ministry's "Directory of COVID-19 Guidelines" issued last week.

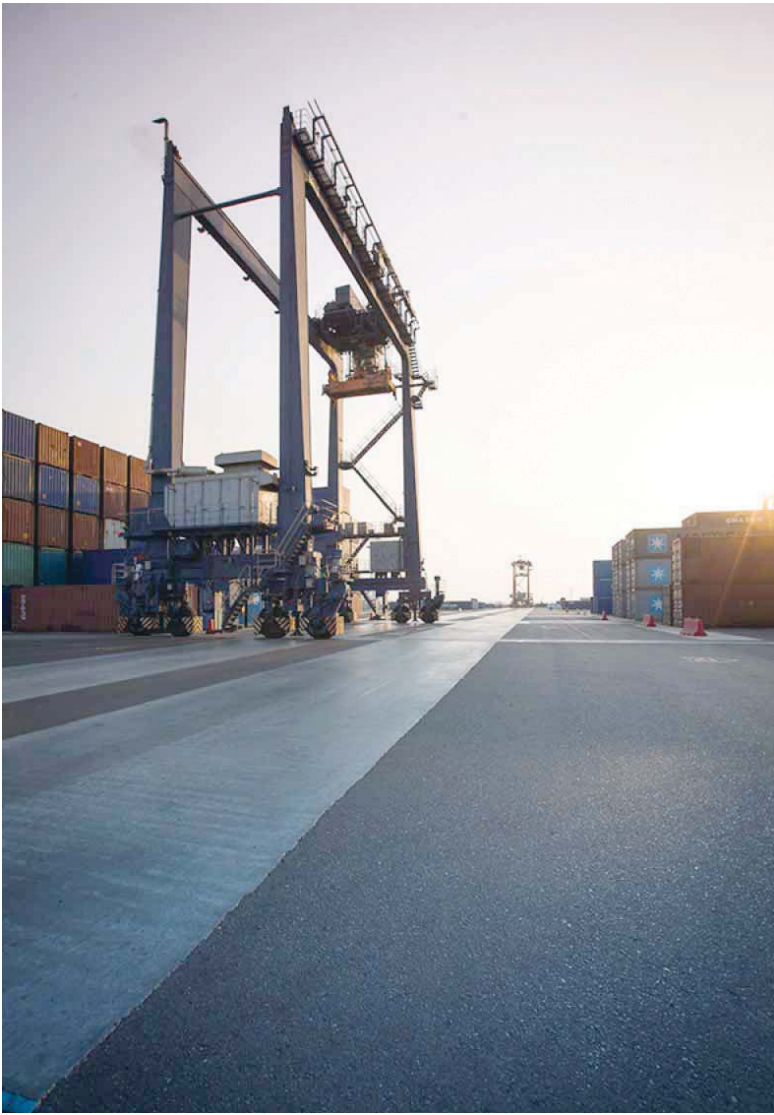
Zahir Abdullah al Hosani, Director of Mosques Department at the Awqaf and Religious Affairs Ministry, said that registration is still open for more eligible mosques to be added online through electronic form-filling by mosque supervisors.

The Mosques Department turned down a number of applications because the mosques requested to be opened did not meet the requirements of the safe congregation, Al Hosani said.



Suhar

DRIVER OF
DIVERSIFICATION



STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, NOV 15

The Wilayat of Suhar gained acclaim around 100 years ago as the homeland of heritage, sciences and scholars. Suhar was considered as the East's gateway, China's vestibule, copper land and the great city. Considering the prosperity of trade among GCC ports during the middle ages, Suhar was a prominent hub for commercial activities.

In the ancient history of Oman, the wilayat was the capital of the country after Bani al Gulanda had assumed the throne. Many believe that Suhar was the birthplace of Sindbad the Sailor. Having a rich sailing history, Suhar has traditionally been a fishing town, but of late the wilayat has come to be known as the Sultanate's industrial hub due to the massive development projects at Suhar Port and Free Zone.

The wilayat is witnessing significant investments, making it the focus of attention of many local and international investors and businessmen. Established

in 2002, the Suhar Port has a strategic importance due to its closeness to the Strait of Hormuz.

The government has paid special attention to the city of Suhar, and given priority in the future plan of Oman's economy for 2020. The goal of the government is to make Suhar a business and industrial hub and help the economy diversify its income sources.

To achieve this diversification, the government is investing in a number of projects in Suhar. For example, it is investing in the steel industry aimed to be one of the Gulf Cooperation Council's leading producers.

As part of its future plans, Suhar Port and Free zone is offering developers the opportunity to invest in utility scale solar farms that will generate competitively priced electricity for various industrial and petrochemical plants operating within the port.

Equally promising is the opportunity for investors to produce 'green hydrogen', which can be used by industries that

currently depend on valuable natural gas as a source of hydrogen for their requirements.

Additionally, green hydrogen can be used as a source of calorific energy, thus supplanting electricity generated from natural gas. Either application effectively frees up natural gas, which can then be used in petrochemical and other value-add industries, thereby helping unlock further value from Oman's hydrocarbon resources.

The wilayat embraces various tourist landmarks and natural features such as towering mountains that attract trekkers, wadis with abundant water, clean beaches, forts, public parks and Suhar Recreational Center. Visitors can also see its large souq with tailors, fruit sellers and fishermen vying for space.

Suhar is the capital and largest city of the Al Batinah North Governorate in the Sultanate.

Suhar is identified with the ancient town Omana mentioned by Pliny the Elder in his Natural History. This settlement is believed to have given Oman its

name.

Sohar Fort is considered one of the most important castles and forts in Al Batinah North Governorate due to its outstanding location and the significant role it played over past centuries. This fort dates back to the end of the thirteenth century and beginning of the fourteenth century.

Archaeological excavations carried out confirmed that it was completed in the fourteenth century. The building's current features were built during the rule of the Portuguese.

Currently, the fort includes a museum, opened in 1993, that showcases many archaeological and historical aspects of Suhar City as well as other places in the Sultanate of Oman.

The museum also highlights the important role played by the copper trade in this city and its relationship with the city of Canton in China, in addition to various artefacts found during archaeological excavations inside the fort and other locations in Oman.



In brief

MUSCAT

ENTREPRENEURSHIP
AWARDS ON NOV 23

The main committee of the Entrepreneurship Award announced that a ceremony unveiling winners of the fourth edition of the Award will be hosted on Monday, November 23. The event will take place under the auspices of HH Sayyid Taimour bin Asaad bin Tarik al Said.

The award is organised by the Public Authority of Small and Medium Enterprises Development in partnership with Oman Telecommunications Company (Omantel) for the second consecutive edition.

This year's theme of the Award is 'Competition and Innovation' as these attributes reflect the Award's goals of instilling a culture of entrepreneurship within the community. It also aims to promote excellence and innovation, as well as strengthening the capacities of SMEs to further compete in the market. Furthermore, the initiative seeks to reinforce In-Country Value (ICV) by allying with local businesses and driving the Sultanate's efforts of economic diversification based on knowledge and technological advancements.

— ONA

SMART CITIES
INITIATIVE
LAUNCH TODAY

The Smart City Platform of the Research and Innovation Sector of the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation will hold the first session for their new initiative called 'Smart Cities Around The World'.

The idea of the new initiative is to host local, regional and global experts online to talk about their experiences in adopting the concept of smart cities in their countries and discuss the results, challenges, achievements and other factors when adopting the project in their respective countries.

The first session of the 'Smart Cities Around The World' initiative will be conducted through video-conferencing on Monday.

The session will introduce Duqm smart city as the first smart city of the Sultanate to be part of the initiative.

— ONA

ARAB BOARD OF HEALTH
SPECIALISATIONS MEETS

The Sultanate today took part in a meeting of the Executive Office of the Arab Board of Health Specialisations (ABHS), held via video-conferencing and managed from Jordan, Amman with the participation of members of the ABHS Executive Office.

The Sultanate was represented by Dr Ahmed bin Mohammed al Saeedi, Minister of Health, President of the ABHS Supreme Council.

Dr Al Saeedi praised the health workers in the Arab world and worldwide for their valued efforts and sacrifices.

The Minister of Health, President of the ABHS Supreme Council announced that the ABHS approved to grant honorary certificates to the ABHS physicians, who passed away while carrying out their duty.

— ONA

State Council convenes session

MUSCAT: On the orders of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the State Council on Sunday opened the Second Annual Sitting of the Seventh Term.

During the opening, the State Council approved the minutes of the 11th ordinary session of the first annual convening and reviewed the report of the Council's Secretariat-General.

The session was headed by Shaikh Abdulmalik bin Abdullah al Khalili, Chairman of the State Council, who expressed the Council's allegiance to His Majesty the Sultan and its appreciation for the Royal confidence in the council's ability to shoulder the responsibilities entrusted to it.

Commending the achievements made the Council during the past six sittings, Sheikh Abdulmalik vowed to maintain the council's



positive role in enhancing the development march and consolidating it in line with the Royal vision of the late Sultan Qaboos bin Said bin Taimour.

The current term of the State Council, Al Khalili said, "constitutes a new, historic turning point that equates in its importance the foundation term due to the fact that it is the first term in the reign of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik who charted out

the State institutions' method of functioning during his inaugural nation address on 11 January."

Al Khalili called for matching work plans of the Council's sessions in line with the Royal vision stated in the nation address.

Al Khalili pointed out that the Council's foremost mission during the current term will be to discuss ways for improving the economic situation and



achieving fiscal balance.

He spoke about constructive steps that have been undertaken at the national level, since January till today with respect to ameliorating the Sultanate's economic position, restructuring of the State's Administrative Apparatus and government firms and developing investment potential to realise fiscal balance and upgrade economic performance.

Effort in this direction, he

said, culminated into the Royal endorsement, last October, of the Sultanate's mid-term Fiscal Balance Plan (2020-2024).

Al Khalili described the plan as "ambitious and deserves to be supported by concerted efforts towards the accomplishment of Oman Vision 2040, which clearly marks the path of a more prosperous future in the Sultanate."

Al Khalili explained that the plan of action will coincide with the revamping of the schema of laws and legislations. He added that, since the speciality of the State Council is to discuss draft laws and plans on development or annual budget, then tact is required in studying hard realities and comprehending challenges posed by temporal changes. He called for exploring original sources of issues and finding appropriate solutions.

— ONA

A noble gesture to mark 50th National Day

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, NOV 15

As the nation gears up to mark the 50th National Day, an expatriate shopkeeper in Ruwi's Oman Commerical Centre (OCC) is celebrating the landmark occasion with a difference.

He donated the whole stock of sports goods and materials of his shop to the children to pursue their favourite sports.

He did so through Bait al Rahma, a charity and humanitarian NGO, which would be helping him achieve his dream for the National Day.

"Oman is the country that has been giving me a livelihood for the last 25 years and the kind gesture of supporting the local youth is nothing but giving back to the country," Najeeb

Abdurahman, the expatriate shopkeeper from the Indian state of Kerala said.

Najeeb is doing this for the second time in a row. Last year, he donated sporting goods in his shop prior to the National Day and was appreciated by many for his genuine gesture.

"My experience in this country and the love given by the people of this beautiful country hold me here for such a long period. It has been my dream to return back something for the benefit of this nation."

His donations were received by the representatives of the Bait al Rahma on Sunday. When asked why he didn't sell these goods off at a discounted price and share the money with the charity institutions, he said that would fetch less money than what he is doing now.



FROM PAGE 1

Online registration for expat exit scheme

Then they will be given time to come and collect the outpass," the Bangladesh Embassy said.

"Those who don't have a passport can also return to the home country with the outpass issued by the embassy.

Bangladesh expatriates are required to furnish a birth registration card, passport photo-

copy, or national ID card."

Social workers associated with various embassies have urged expats to register with the Ministry of Labour to facilitate their exit from the country.

"Expatriate workers who are living in the country with no valid documents can leave

the country with no financial obligation in the form of fines or fees and anyone falling in this category should report at their embassies or register online," P M Jabir, secretary, Community Wing at the Indian Social Club, and Director of Norka Welfare Board in Oman, told the *observer*.

FROM PAGE 1

Shura reconvenes, elects deputy chairman

Ali bin Rashid al Ghaithi, representative of the Wilayat of Al Buraimi and Mohammed bin Ahmed al Madhani, representative of the Wilayat of Madha, took the oath.

During the session, the council opened the nomination for the position of the council's deputy chairman. Abdullah bin Khalifa al Majali, Ali bin Ahmed al Maashani, Malik bin Hilal al Yahmadi and Yaqoub bin Mohammed al Harthy were in the race for vice-chairman post.

An electronic vote was conducted in accordance with the regulations to elect the deputy chairman, but no candidate managed to win a majority of votes. Then a second round of voting was held between Ali bin Ahmed

al Maashani and Yaqoub bin Mohammed al Harthy which resulted in the latter winning a majority of 45 votes, thereby becoming deputy chairman of Majlis Ash'Shura.

During the session, the council listened to a number of ministerial replies including from the minister of agriculture, fisheries and water resources with regard to the utilisation of treated salt-water for the irrigation of forage crops, in addition to the reply of the chairman of the Environment Authority about the waste generated by Orpic at the Port of Sohar.

The council also discussed the state's general Budget for the fiscal year 2021, and the Tenth Five-Year Development Plan (2021-2025).

— ONA

Heavy rains lash coastal wilayats

MUSCAT: Some coastal wilayats adjoining the Sea of Oman experienced rains of varying intensity, while the Sea of Oman and Al Hajar Mountains witnessed formation of convective clouds on Sunday.

The Wilayat of Saham in North Al Batinah Governorate registered the highest amount of rainfall with 68 mm as rains began to fall at dawn and continued till 10 am.

Meanwhile, Saham Municipality made great efforts to drain

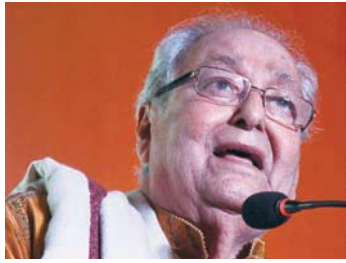
away the rainwater from the roads and clean up waste drifted away by overflowing wadis to ensure the safety of road users. The Wilayat of Khasab in Musandam Governorate registered 16 mm of rainfall, Bukha and Al Rustaq (10 mm), Al Suwaiq (6 mm) and Suhar (4mm).

Light to moderate rains were reported in the Wilayat of Al Awabi in South Al Batinah Governorate mainly in the city centre, the residential quarters and the surrounding mountains.



In brief

■ KOLKATA


**RENOWNED ACTOR
SOUMITRA CHATTERJEE
PASSES AWAY**

Renowned Indian actor Soumitra Chatterjee died on Sunday at the age of 85 at a hospital in Kolkata, where he was admitted on October 6 after being tested positive with COVID-19 coronavirus. His death left a heavy sense of loss and sadness in the hearts of many people around the country and in the world, who followed his films and were a fan of his craft.

Chatterjee's oeuvre comprised many different films through the course of his long career — more than 200 of them — with some of his best works with one of India's greatest film-makers Satyajit Ray, with whom he had collaborated 14 times.

The Dadasaheb Phalke award-winning actor breathed his last after a long period of illness.

The actor was born in Mirjapur Street in Kolkata.

■ ISLAMABAD


**POOR AIR QUALITY
RECORDED AS COVID-19
CASES INCREASE**

Pollution reached hazardous levels in Pakistan's two mega cities, as both were included among the top five most-polluted cities in the world in an index published on Saturday.

Air quality of the eastern city of Lahore was recorded as 316 in an index with a maximum reading of 500. Air in Lahore, the country's second-largest city after Karachi, had a high concentration of poisonous particulate matter (PM), at levels of 2.5 of 270 microgrammes per cubic metre.

The city temporarily replaced New Delhi as the most polluted in the world, while Karachi was listed fifth in the index by IQAir. White smog has engulfed cities of the central Punjab province, including the provincial capital Lahore, home to more than 11 million people.

■ KABUL


**'MASTERMIND'
BEHIND KABUL VARSITY
ATTACK ARRESTED**

Afghan security forces have arrested the "mastermind" behind the deadly Kabul University attack earlier this month, Vice-President Amrullah Saleh said on Saturday. Saleh identified the perpetrator as Adel, a resident of north-eastern Panjshir province who was recruited by the Haqqani network.

According to Saleh, Adel had completed his third year in Islamic studies at the university before being attracted to the network. The Haqqani network is believed to have close ties with the Taliban, and according to experts, it often acts as a military wing of the group.

On November 2, three gunmen stormed the Kabul University campus and indiscriminately opened fire on students, professors and employees, killing at least 22 people and wounding 27 others.

Thousands evacuated as Vamco lashes Vietnam; Philippines death toll hits 67

HANOI: Storm Vamco barrelled into Vietnam on Sunday, damaging buildings and injuring at least five people, as the death toll in the Philippines climbed to 67.

The storm made landfall on Sunday morning with reported winds of up to 90 kilometres per hour, uprooting trees and blowing the roofs off houses and schools.

Vamco is the latest in a series of storms that have pummelled Vietnam over the past six weeks, causing flooding and landslides that have killed at least 159 people and left 70 others missing.

Initial reports from the Disaster Management Authority on Sunday said that five people were injured while they were trying to secure their houses.

Vamco has weakened since hitting the Philippines as a typhoon with winds of up to 155 kph, but state media said it had still caused significant damage.

Pictures showed seafront restaurants in the tourist hotspot of Hoi An — a Unesco world heritage site — ripped apart by the storm, and huge trees uprooted in the old imperial city of Hue.

Authorities evacuated nearly



Residents are carried on a forklift truck to dry land through flood waters brought by heavy rain from Typhoon Vamco after it made landfall in Thua Thien Hue province on November 15, 2020. — **AFP**

650,000 people from seven coastal provinces to higher and safer ground before the storm hit, but on Sunday warned of the danger of landslides triggered by the heavy rains.

Vamco was the deadliest storm

to hit the Philippines this year, killing at least 67 people across the main island of Luzon in recent days and affecting some 1.7 million around the country.

The storm triggered some of the worst flooding in years,

swamping villages, destroying crops and leaving hundreds of thousands without power.

Rescue teams and emergency supplies including food were dispatched to the northeast Philippines on Saturday where swathes of the

The storm made landfall in the morning with reported winds of up to 90 kph per hour, uprooting trees and blowing the roofs off houses and schools

region were inundated. The situation was made worse by the release of water from a dam.

Vice-President Leni Robredo said on Sunday that the waters were now receding after visiting Cagayan province, giving hope that the worst may be over for the storm-battered country.

"Situation is so much better. Many areas still flooded but water receded already," Robredo tweeted.

In Vietnam, weeks of severe weather have damaged or destroyed more than 400,000 homes, according to the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

Roads and bridges have been washed away, power supplies disrupted, and crucial food crops destroyed, leaving at least 150,000 people at immediate risk of food shortages. — **AFP**

■ PANDEMIC

**INDONESIA REPORTS
4,106 NEW VIRUS CASES
AND 63 DEATHS**

JAKARTA: Indonesia reported 4,106 new coronavirus infections on Sunday, taking the total caseload to 467,113, data from the country's COVID-19 task force showed. It recorded 63 COVID-19 deaths, taking the number of fatalities to 15,211. As of Sunday, 391,991 people have recovered from the virus in Indonesia.

Malaysia reported 1,208 new coronavirus cases on Sunday, taking the total to 47,417 infections. The health ministry also recorded three new fatalities, raising the total number of deaths from the pandemic to 309.

South Korea reported 208 new coronavirus cases as of Saturday midnight, marking the eight straight day of triple-digit increases, the Korea Disease Control and Prevention Agency (KDCA) said on Sunday.

That was slightly higher than the previous day's 205 new infections and the highest since early September. Of the cases, 176 were domestically transmitted and 32 imported. — **Reuters**

DARING RIDE


A member of Sikh Nihang, Sikh warriors, rides a horse standing on its back during a Fateh Divas celebration a day after Diwali festival in Amritsar on Sunday. — **AFP**

Northern India chokes on toxic smog day after Diwali

CHENNAI/NEW DELHI: Hundreds of millions of Indians in north India woke up on Sunday to toxic air following Diwali, the Hindu festival of lights, after many revellers defied bans on using firecrackers to celebrate.

The capital New Delhi was blanketed with a thick haze, with the average pollution level over 9 times what is considered safe by the World Health Organization. Delhi's Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal had banned the use and sale of firecrackers ahead of Diwali, but the policy has been difficult to implement.

Revellers in the capital let off huge amounts of fireworks well

into Sunday morning, prompting angry residents and environmentalists to complain on social media of breathing difficulties and stinging eyes.

"Our gods must be so happy today, that their followers burst firecrackers and choked the young ones to despair and death," said Vimlendu Jha, the founder of non-profit environmental group Swachha.

Some defended firecrackers as an essential part of a religious tradition celebrated by millions across the country. "Are you realising how all of India, all places stood up in defiance against the cracker ban? It's like a form of



A man walks along the Rajpath street near India Gate amid smoggy conditions a day after Diwali, in New Delhi on Sunday. — **AFP**

Hindu- freedom battle cry," Tarun Vijay, a leader of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata

Party, tweeted. New Delhi's air pollution typically worsens in October and November due to farm-

ers burning agricultural waste, coal-fired power plants, traffic and windless days.

The raging coronavirus epidemic, with more than 400,000 cases in the city of 20 million people, has also heightened alarm over the smog. Doctors have warned of a sharp increase in respiratory illnesses. Cities in the states of Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Bihar and New Delhi — which have already been suffering from some of the worst air in the world — saw even higher levels of pollution than on the morning after Diwali last year, government data analysed by Reuters showed.

— **Reuters**



A picture taken on Sunday shows a view of porta cabins in Givat Hamatos, an Israeli settlement suburb of annexed east Jerusalem. — AFP

Israel advances plans for new Jerusalem settler homes

TEL AVIV: Israel has pushed on with plans to build a new Jewish settler neighbourhood in east Jerusalem, a watchdog group said on Sunday, warning such efforts were being stepped up before US President Donald Trump leaves office. The Trump administration has broken with decades of bipartisan US practice by not opposing Jewish settlement activity in Israeli-annexed east Jerusalem and the occupied West Bank. President-elect Joe Biden

has said his administration will restore US opposition to the settlements which are considered illegal under international law and that many governments view as an obstacle to peace. The latest move saw the Israel Land Authority issue construction tenders in Givat Hamatos, a currently uninhabited area of east Jerusalem next to the mainly Palestinian neighbourhood of Beit Safafa. — AFP



An Ethiopian migrant who fled intense fighting in their homeland of Tigray, speaks to a fellow refugee at the border reception centre of Hamdiyet, in the eastern Sudanese state of Kasala, on Friday. — AFP

Tigray claims rocket strikes on Eritrea airport

ADDIS ABABA: The leader of the Tigray region of Ethiopia on Sunday claimed responsibility for rocket strikes on the airport in neighbouring Eritrea's capital, a move that ratcheted up fears of a wider conflict in the Horn of Africa region. Diplomats said on Saturday night that multiple rockets had struck the capital, Asmara, landing near the airport, though communications restrictions in Tigray and Eritrea made the reports difficult to verify. Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed announced November 4 he had ordered military operations in Tigray in a

dramatic escalation of a long-running feud with the region's ruling party, the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF). "Ethiopian forces are also using the airport of Asmara," TPLF leader Debretsion Gebremichael said on Sunday, saying this made the airport a "legitimate target" for the strikes. He added that his forces had also been fighting "16 divisions" of Eritrean forces in recent days "in several fronts". The TPLF has previously accused Abiy's government of enlisting military support from Eritrea, something Ethiopia denies. — AFP

Trump backtracks on accepting Biden has won the election



Supporters of President Donald Trump participate in a 'Stop the Steal' protest in Washington, on Saturday. — Reuters

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump backtracked after appearing on Sunday to acknowledge for the first time that Joe Biden won the November 3 election, saying he conceded "nothing" and repeating his unfounded claims of widespread voting fraud. Biden defeated Trump by winning a series of battleground states that the Republican incumbent had won in 2016. The Democratic former vice president also won the national popular vote by more than 5.5 million votes, or 3.6 percentage points. Trump made his conflicting statements in a series of Twitter

posts. "He won because the Election was Rigged," Trump wrote on Sunday morning, not referring to Biden by name. "NO VOTE WATCHERS OR OBSERVERS allowed, vote tabulated by a Radical Left privately owned company, Dominion, with a bad reputation & bum equipment that couldn't even qualify for Texas (which I won by a lot!), the Fake & Silent Media, & more!" About an hour later, Trump wrote, "He only won in the eyes of the FAKE NEWS MEDIA. I concede NOTHING! We have a long way to go. This was a RIGGED ELECTION!" Speaking on the NBC

programme "Meet the Press," Biden's pick for White House chief of staff, Ron Klain, said, "Donald Trump's Twitter feed doesn't make Joe Biden president or not president. The American people did that." Trump's campaign has filed lawsuits seeking to overturn the results in multiple states, though without success, and legal experts say the litigation stands little chance of altering the outcome of the election. Election officials of both parties have said there is no evidence of major irregularities. Democrats and other critics have accused Trump of trying to delegitimize Biden's victory

and undermine public confidence in the American electoral process. Before the election, Trump had refused to commit to a peaceful transfer of power. Trump's refusal to concede did not change the fact that Biden was the president-elect, but it has stalled the government's normal process of preparing for a new presidential administration. The Trump administration's decision not to recognise Biden as the winner has prevented Biden and his team from gaining access to government office space and to funding normally afforded to an incoming administration to ensure a smooth transition. — Reuters

Moldovans vote in tight presidential polls



Igor Dodon, Moldova's President and presidential candidate, and his wife Galina cast their ballots at a polling station in Chisinau on Sunday. — Reuters

CHISINAU: Moldovans voted on Sunday in the second round of a tightly contested presidential election pitting a pro-European challenger against the country's Moscow-backed incumbent. The tiny ex-Soviet nation is under the watchful eye of Russia, which wants polarised Moldova to remain in its sphere of influence at a time when several Kremlin-aligned governments are rocked by political unrest. In the first round vote earlier this month, pro-European Maia Sandu — a 48-year-old centre-right politician — won a surprise victory. Sandu, who worked for the

World Bank and briefly served as prime minister, won more than 36 per cent of the vote against pro-Russian incumbent Igor Dodon's 33 per cent. "Today, you have the power to punish those who robbed you, who reduced you to misery and forced you to leave your home," Sandu said after voting in the capital Chisinau on Sunday, in a clear allusion to her rival who has been targeted by accusations of corruption. The appeal has resonance in one of Europe's poorest countries where as many as 40 per cent of citizens are estimated to have travelled abroad to work. — AFP

SHORT TAKES

LIMA

Peru interim leader under pressure to quit

Peru's interim president, Manuel Merino, came under growing pressure on Sunday to resign after more than half his new cabinet stepped down following the deaths of two people in protests over the sudden ouster of his predecessor. Thousands of Peruvians have staged some of the country's largest protests in decades - mostly peaceful but increasingly marred by clashes - since the Congress voted last Monday to remove Martin Vizcarra as president over bribery



allegations, which he denies. The political shakeup has come as Peru, the world's No 2 copper producer, battles the coronavirus pandemic and what is expected to be its worst economic contraction in a century.

DUBAI

Virus experts to get 'golden' 10-year visa

The United Arab Emirates said on Sunday it will grant all doctors and infectious disease experts living in the country a 10-year visa, who are helping to combat the coronavirus pandemic. Foreigners in the UAE, like most Gulf countries, are generally only given limited residence visas tied to their current employment, and long-term residency is difficult to obtain. But to attract wealthy



business people and highly skilled workers, the UAE last year launched the "Golden" 10-year visa programme, which is now being expanded.

LONDON

UK, Ireland say breakthrough needed

There has to be a breakthrough this week on a post-Brexit trade agreement, British and Irish ministers said on Sunday, as London's top negotiator went back into talks saying progress had been made in recent days. Without a deal, around \$1 trillion worth of trade would be at risk of disruption through tariffs and tougher rules after the December 31 expiry of Britain's transition period for leaving the European Union. That would deliver a fresh



economic shock just as Britain and the EU are struggling to contain the economic fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Get inspired as you walk around!

Life experiences and interacting with others are all about making impact on one another's life. It is not about getting and having, but it is about giving and being; this is the real meaning of living with other people and being social. It has been said that if you look at the people in your circle and you do not get inspired, then you do not have a circle, but a cage! Usually, people get inspired by each other!

Possibly, you remember the time when you made someone's day! Likewise, you recall the day when you were on cloud nine because of someone else, who could share a great moment or probably made a change in your life. Could most likely be someone who changed you in a way that made you healthier, happier, successful or even more satisfied? If so, then definitely you realise the impact that a positive inspiration can make in one's life.

Inspiration is a life within life, it is very powerful, but not an easy matter to do! Have you ever thought of what does it mean to be inspired? If so, would you like to return the favour by making a positive difference in the life of your friends, family, or a colleague even?! Don't you want to experience the feeling of being a positive influence capable of inspiring your loved ones to



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INSPIRATION IS
A LIFE WITHIN
LIFE, IT IS VERY
POWERFUL, BUT
NOT AN EASY
MATTER TO DO!

become a better version of themselves? That is why inspiration is a necessity in different phases of one's life for we all need it, regardless who we are. Inspiration always awakens us to new possibilities by allowing us to surpass our ordinary experiences and limitations. Inspiration drives a person from lack of interest to possible opportunities and it changes the way we perceive our own capabilities.

In fact, inspiration revives our hope towards having a better tomorrow! Inspiration is the reason behind keeping us enthused and optimistic. I believe it stands as a therapy, which we all need at a time! However, one should get it from a reliable and insightful source because some sources are just ones of propaganda and show off only. Therefore, inspiration is not everyone's cup of tea. It has never been an easy art to have or get your hands on even for only talented people can be inspiring to others.

Today, the world's most successful people are renowned and regarded celebrities for the different things that they are good at. Some are famous for their unique skills and talents while others are distinguished for their courage and strong impact on different segments of the society. Hence, they become most loved,

believed and trusted words of mouth ambassadors among their families, friends, colleagues and society overall. Their ability to convince others is their real weapon to entice people's hearts and minds.

That is why some people are emotionally and mentally attracted to them; they are after nothing, but advising, guiding and helping people to find their ways. Their only common talent is the ability to inspire others, urge them to value their own talents and push them to discover themselves. Sometimes, all what we need is someone to remind us on who we are and what could we achieve and how could we serve the society with what we have! Something important that we do not do is the attempt to discover ourselves and what merits and talents we have been bestowed.

Here comes the role of inspirational speakers whom they provoke our emotions and feelings with their spellbinding words. Accordingly, we wake up and start brainstorming to explore the potential and undiscovered talents and abilities of our own. Thanks to all the inspiring speakers and human development professionals who spare the time and effort to help us find our ways, guide us all the way in the journey of self-discovery.

WORK FROM HOME

Are Americans actually more productive?

PHILLIP MOLNAR

Americans might be working more at home because they don't have to commute, said a recent study published by the Becker Friedman Institute for Economics at the University of Chicago. The institute's report — based on surveys and other data — said extra time not driving was mainly given to extra work. It said even if people are working less at home, they are still more productive not spending time in their cars.

Nicholas Bloom, an economist at Stanford University who worked on the study, said his conclusion was Americans were too hard on themselves with their work-from-home productivity. Still, many experts have questioned the benefits of working from home because of a lack of collaboration and motivation issues.

I put the question to San Diego-area business leaders and scholars. Q: Are Americans actually more productive working from home? Lynn Reaser, Point Loma Nazarene University: YES: Avoiding the stress caused by commuting is probably boosting the productivity of most employees now working from home.

Beyond that, productivity depends on the new working environment, job role and personalities. People who have a private and quiet home

Avoiding the stress caused by commuting is probably boosting the productivity of most employees now working from home

LYNN REASER

Depending upon experience level, working at home tends to be more productive.

A recent Harvard Business Review study found working at home helped office workers "focus on the work that really matters."

Workers took on more responsibility for their own schedules, viewing actual work completed as more worthwhile to their employer as well as to themselves. They spent 12 per cent less time drawn into large meetings and 9 per cent more time interacting with customers and external partners.

One measure of productivity is time invested. Working at home expands the amount of time a person can work, rather than commute. Online working can mostly be accomplished at all hours, and many invest extra hours in their work (maybe that's bad). We can achieve a better balance of work, family, fitness and fun.

However, the productivity unknown includes the benefits of being around your co-workers, formally and informally. Probably Zoom cannot replace that.

The ability to forgo commuting frees up a lot of time, particularly in areas where the commute is long and by car.

Research shows that people are using that extra time to work more. There are some negative impacts in terms of lack of interaction with co-workers and with morale. It is probably too early to tell how big those problems are compared to the benefits of more time.

While the jury is still out on the longer-term analysis, now, they are more productive. Assuming the average physical commute and preparation for leaving (grooming) saved each way is 45 minutes in the morning and 30 minutes (no grooming needed) going home, even if two-thirds of the time saved is for non-work activities, 25 minutes have been saved net for work. — dpa

OILING THE WHEELS

In COVID-19 vaccine race, Hungarian firm takes global role

MARTON DUNAI & BALAZS KAUFMANN

In an unassuming house in rolling hills east of the Hungarian capital, a small family firm is helping oil the wheels of the world's big pharmaceutical companies on the path to a coronavirus vaccine.

Biologist Noemi Lukacs, 71, retired to Szirak, her birth village, to establish English and Scientific Consulting (SciCons) and manufacture a genetic sensor so sensitive that a few grams can supply the entire global industry for a year.

"We produce monoclonal antibodies," Lukacs said in the single-storey house where she was born, now partly converted into a world-class laboratory. The white powder ships worldwide from here, micrograms at a time.

"These antibodies recognise double-stranded RNA (dsRNA)," she explained. DsRNA is a byproduct of viruses replicating, so its presence signals the presence of a live virus, long useful in virus-related research. More importantly, dsRNA is also a byproduct of the process used by US giant Pfizer and Germany's BioNTech to create their experimental COVID-19 vaccine which is more than 90 per cent effective according to initial trial results last week.

And because dsRNA can be harmful to human cells, it has to be filtered out from any vaccine to be used in humans. Several filtering methods exist, but the most widely used way to do quality control is to expose the



Hungarian biologist Alexandra Torok checks the purity of an antibody, a genetic sensor of sorts, in Szirak, Hungary. — Reuters

THE SMALL COMPANY IS GROWING RAPIDLY, YET ITS REVENUE WAS ONLY \$400,000 LAST YEAR

vaccine to Lukacs' antibodies. Not only will the antibodies show if there is any dsRNA in the vaccine, they will also tell researchers how much of it is present.

Only once completely freed from dsRNA can the vaccine be administered. The result: a line of big pharma representatives outside her door. The small company is growing rapidly, yet its revenue was only 124 million forints (just over \$400,000) last year, with profits at 52 million forints. That feeds five employees and even leaves some for local charity projects in Szirak.

To Lukacs, that is just fine. The success of the RNA field, long frowned

upon, is vindication enough.

The former university professor followed the race to the vaccine closely and rooted especially for the contestants who look set to come first: those using modified RNA to train cells of the human body to recognise and kill the coronavirus. The RNA was her dog in the race.

The modified RNA, or mRNA, methodology is a whole new group of drugs, with the COVID-19 vaccine the first product likely to get regulatory approval and go into mass production. But more applications are expected, which has Lukacs overjoyed.

— Reuters

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SEVEN IS UNIMAGINABLE. THERE IS NO END TO WHAT WE CAN DO TOGETHER, ME AND THIS TEAM. I FEEL LIKE I'M ONLY JUST GETTING STARTED. PHYSICALLY, I'M IN GREAT SHAPE

LEWIS HAMILTON
BRITISH F1 DRIVER

SUPER SEVEN

HAMILTON STORMS TO RECORD-EQUALLING SEVENTH F1 WORLD TITLE

ISTANBUL: Lewis Hamilton secured a record-equalling seventh Formula One world title on Sunday after winning the Turkish Grand Prix and then warned pretenders to his crown “I’m only just getting started!”

After a momentous drive from sixth on the grid, the Briton matched Michael Schumacher’s haul of drivers’ crowns with three races of the season remaining.

The 35-year-old sealed his latest title 12 years after his first with a typically measured masterclass, handling treacherous wet early conditions to claim his 94th career win.

It was widely declared as one of his finest triumphs and entirely appropriate on the day he drew alongside the legendary German in the record books.

“That’s for all the kids out there that believe in the impossible,” said an emotional Hamilton on Mercedes’ team radio. “You can do it.”

Hamilton admitted he found it difficult to express his feelings afterwards. “I’m definitely a bit lost for words,” he said.

“Naturally, I have to start by saying a huge thank you to the guys here and the guys at the factory. The journey we’ve been on is monumental. I want to also thank ‘Team LH’ for sticking with me, and my family.”

Hamilton, who sealed his first title in 2008, added to his unprecedented roster of records — most wins with 94, most pole positions (97), most podium finishes (163) and most consecutive points finishes (47).

He added: “We dreamed of this when I was young.

“I remember watching Michael win those world championships. To get one or two or even three is so hard.

“Seven is unimaginable. There is no end to what we can do together, me and this team.

“I feel like I’m only just getting

started. Physically, I’m in great shape.”

BRITON BLEW AWAY RIVALS

He lapped his team-mate and only remaining title rival Valtteri Bottas, who finished 14th after a desultory outing, to claim his 10th victory in 14 races of a season delayed by the coronavirus pandemic.

Hamilton came home over half a minute clear of Racing Point’s Sergio Perez. Both chose to make only one pit-stop and spent most of the race on a single set of intermediate tyres as their rivals pitted several times to cope with the slippery conditions.

Hamilton’s old rival, four-time former champion Sebastian Vettel, finished third ahead of his Ferrari team-mate Charles Leclerc, Carlos Sainz of McLaren and, after a wild and impulsive afternoon, Max Verstappen in the leading Red Bull. — AFP

Turkish Grand Prix
Intercity Istanbul Park circuit

1	L. Hamilton (GBR)	1h42:19.313
		25 Mercedes
2	S. Perez (MEX)	at 31.633 secs
		18 Racing Point
3	S. Vettel (GER)	at 31.960
		15 Ferrari
4	C. Leclerc (MON)	at 33.858
		12 Ferrari
5	C. Sainz (ESP)	at 34.363
		10 McLaren

Driver standings	
Lewis Hamilton (GBR) (Champion)	307
Valtteri Bottas (FIN)	197
Max Verstappen (NED)	170
Sergio Perez (MEX)	100
Charles Leclerc (MON)	97
Team standings	
Mercedes (Champion)	504
Red Bull	240
Racing Point	154
McLaren	149



Awtad, ARTT post impressive victories

MUSCAT: Arun Pushpan struck a match-winning 91 to power Awtad International to an exciting 5-wicket victory against Ernst and Young (E&Y) in an A Division 50-over League game at OC Turf 2 in Al Amerat on Saturday.

A superb 136-run partnership between Pushpan and Nidhin Mohan (70) was the highlight of Awtad's chase of E&Y's 255 that they surpassed in the 48th over, scoring 257 for 5. Farhan Afzal

bowled well, taking 4 for 46. **Brief scores (A Division 50-over League):** Ernst & Young 255 for 8 in 50 overs (Shrey Wilson 76 not out – 5x4, 2x6, Issa Abdul Rahim 52 – 2x4, 3x6, Muhammed Attique 35 – 3x4, 1x6, Omar Sarfraz 22 – 1x4. Pradeep Kumar 3-41, Shankar Parameswaran 2-39) lost to Awtad

International 257 for 5 in 47.3 overs (Arun Pushpan 91 – 9x4, Nidhin Mohan 70 – 3x4, Farhan Afzal 4-46) by 5 wickets.

SIDDIQUI SHINES IN 278-RUN WIN OVER OCT MUSCAT

In another A Division match on Friday, former Oman player Zeeshan Siddiqui (98 off 69) and left-arm spinner Aqil Khan (4 for 19) steered Arabian Region Travel and Tourism (ARTT) to a massive 278-run win over OCT Muscat on OCT Turf 2.

ARTT rode on brilliant batting by Siddiqui, Syed Amir Ali (65 off 61), Pranav Mehta (56 off 81), Adeel Abbas (42 off 49) to reach a huge 362 for 8 that also included a whirlwind 24 off only 5 balls by Mohsin Qureshi who also hit three big sixes.



ARTT players Pranav Mehta, Zeeshan Siddiqui and Aqil Khan.

ARTT bowlers ripped OCT Muscat apart, dismissing them for 84 inside 25 overs.

Brief scores (A Division): Arabian Region (ARTT) 362 for 8 in 50 overs (Zeeshan Siddiqui 98 – 14x4, Syed Amir Ali 65 – 8x1, 1x6, Pranav Mehta 56 – 5x4, 1x6, Adeel Abbas 42- 5x4, Mohsin Qureshi 24 – 1x4, 3x6. Rashad Mohammed 3-59,

Mohamed Aslam 2-57) beat OCT Muscat 84 for 10 in 24.3 overs (Shiralkal Muzaffar 28 – 6x4, Aqil Khan 4-19, Nazir Ahmed 3-16, Adeel Abbas 2-17) by 278 runs.

ARIF POWERS ORIENT

Wonderful all-round show by veteran Arif Hussain helped Orient Travels to a 7-wicket win over OCT Seeb in a 30-



Awtad International's Arun Pushpan (L) and Nidhin Mohan were the main acts in the win over E&Y.

over B Division clash at Muscat Municipality ground 1 on Friday.

Batting first, OCT Seeb were bundled out for 140 in the 30th over. Opener Arif scored an unbeaten 90 off 62, while Kamaljit Singh contributed 29 off 39 as Orient Travels chased the total in the 23rd over, scoring 143 for 3.

Brief scores (B Division): OCT Seeb 140 all out in 29.1 overs (Sudan Mohammed 37 – 4x4, 1x6, Ali Abid 2-20, Rafique al Balushi 2-23, Arif Hussain 2-26) lost to Orient Travels 143-3 in 22.3 overs (Arif Hussain 90 – 13x4, 1x6, Sudan Mohammed 2-28, Samir Othman 1-27) by 7 wickets.

5-WICKET WIN FOR IDEAL

Ideal International defeated Douglas OHI by 5 wickets in a low-scoring C Division game that was reduced to 18 overs a side.

Brief scores (C Division): Douglas OHI 124-6 in 18 overs (Jagannath Kauthankar Waman 27 – 3x4, Chintan Kamlesh 24 – 3x4, Sheik Sameer 2-27, Salman Khan 2-29) lost to Ideal International 128 for 5 in 15.4 overs (Deepak Bhandari 39 – 3x4, 1x6, Khan Tosim 33 – 3x4, Mohsin Alimamad 2-14, Rajender Kumar 1-7, Rai Abhishek 1-25, Mohammed Dawood 1-30) by 5 wickets.

Sinner becomes youngest ATP champion in 12 years



Italy's Jannik Sinner celebrates with the trophy at the ATP 250 Sofia Open in Sofia. – AFP

SOFIA: Teenager Jannik Sinner on Saturday became the youngest ATP champion in 12 years when he defeated Canada's Vasek Pospisil in the Sofia final.

The 19-year-old, ranked at 44 in the world, racked up a 6-4, 3-6, 7-6 (7/3) victory over Pospisil, his 19th win of the season.

Sinner, the youngest Italian winner of an ATP title in the modern era, withstood 14 aces and won 75 per cent of his first-serve points (45/60) to become the youngest man to capture an ATP Tour title since 18-year-old Kei Nishikori won the 2008 Delray Beach Open.

"It is always special when you win tournaments," said Sinner.

"I felt well this week. It is special. Playing finals like this, 7-6 in the third... is always tough. But when you win, it is an even better win than winning 6-1 6-1.

"I am happy about the match, how I tried to stay there every point and I think it is a very special week for me."

Sinner is also the sixth player this year to lift his maiden tour-level title joining Ugo Humbert, Casper Ruud, Miomir Kecmanovic, Thiago Seyboth Wild and John Millman as a first-time champion.

This time last year he won the NextGen title in Milan. "It is a nice feeling to win the first title like last year in the same week. It is good," he said.

"I felt well the whole week here. It is beautiful playing here. The crowd was amazing and it is a nice achievement."

— AFP

SPEND
20
RIAL
GET
10
RIAL
GIFT VOUCHER

GARMENTS • FOOTWEAR
BABY ACCESSORIES
LADIES BAGS • LUGGAGE
(Selected brands only)

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Oman beach soccer team back in action



AFC BEACH SOCCER CHAMPIONSHIP 2021 IN THAILAND NEXT MAJOR ASSIGNMENT FOR TEAM

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, OCT 14

Oman national beach soccer team is back in action on Sunday in a preparatory camp at Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Muscat.

Coach Talib Hilal's men are back to the field after an absence of more than eight months due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The 15 selected players for the internal camp completed the PCR test which is part of the approved OFA medical protocol prior to commencement of any first team's footballing event. The test reports allowed all the called player to join the camp which began on Sunday and will end on November 19.

The five days camp focused initially on the fitness training sessions after the long break of the team due to the pandemic. Training at the gymnasium is one of the essential part of the warm-up camp while the coach will implement some basic technical and tactical training in the evening sessions. The existing camp will be followed by another local camp in mid of the next month. It is expected that the forthcoming gathering will feature some preparatory matches after obtaining the confirmation from the teams.

The last presence of the Sultanate's beach soccer team was at the global showpiece event at the FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup in Paraguay in December. It was the third participation of the team at the world high-profile beach soccer tournament which had registered a crucial win for Oman against Nigeria. The national team had suffered two losses against Portugal and Brazil.

Experienced national coach Talib had led Oman to the FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup for the first time in history in 2011 in Ravenna, Italy. Oman had crashed out in the first round as the team suffered three defeats against Portugal, Salvador, and Argentina. The second participation for the team at the global level was in Espinho in Portugal in 2015. The team ended their campaign again in the first round as they lost to Italy and Switzerland and registered a win against Costa Rica.

The 45-year-old will be leading the team in its sixth participation at the 2020 Asian Beach Games. Oman beach soccer team had managed to win the gold medal after beating UAE in the final clash.

The team had finished as runners-up twice in Muscat 2010 edition and Danang,



Vietnam in 2016. Oman were crowned as champions of the Asian Championship in 2015 and positioned as runners-up in the 2009 edition.

The national beach soccer will take part in many top beach soccer events in the forthcoming year including the AFC Beach Soccer Championship 2021 finals which will take place in Thailand from March 13 to 21 is ranked as one of the top assignment for the national team. The Asian event also acts as the qualification route for Asian nations to the upcoming edition of the FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup in Russia from August 19 to 29.

Another challenge for the team is the 2020 Asian Beach Games which will be staged in Sanya city, Hainan Island, China, during April. This event was scheduled for November 28 until December 6 but was rescheduled by the Olympic Council of Asia and the organisers to April 2 to 10 in 2021.

Oman players in the camp include: Khalid Khamis al Orami, Mishal al Orami, Muthar al Orami, Yahya al Orami, Jalal al Sinani, Nouh al Zadjali, Abdullah al Souti, Abdulaziz al Raqadi, Salim al Orami, Abdullah al Balushi, Amjad al Hamdani, Shareef al Balushi, Younis al Oaisi, Sami al Balushi and Eid al Farsi.

Our congratulations on 50 years of prosperity

Congratulations to
His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik
– may the Almighty preserve him –
and the people of Oman on this
50th National Day of the Renaissance.

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Omran projects pull in RO 186m in FDI

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, NOV 15

Omran Group, the Sultanate's executive arm for tourism investment and development, has so far attracted RO 186 million in foreign investments in Oman's tourism and hospitality sector. This has been achieved through a number of avenues, most noticeably through strategic development partnership agreements with renowned regional and global developers.

The Group has entered strategic partnerships with leading real estate developers in the region to develop state-of-the-art Integrated Tourism Complexes (ITCs) across the Sultanate, namely, Madinat Al Irfan (West), Al Mouj Muscat with Majid Al Futtaim, Muscat Bay with Eagle Hills, Ras Al Hadd with Qatari Diar, Jebel Sifah and Hawana Salalah with Orascom Development Holding.

Omran also owns and oversees the



management of a growing portfolio of hospitality properties across Oman, with 24 hotels and resorts encompassing over 3,800 hotel rooms

ranging from luxury retreats, eco-reserves and large-scale beach resorts to convention and city centre business hotels and eco-tourism and heritage

destinations.

These include the Millennium Resort Musannah, Alila Jabal Akhdar Resort and Atana Musandam, Atana

Khasab, Crowne Plaza Duqm, City Hotel Duqm, Crowne Plaza OCEC, W Muscat, JW Marriot Muscat, Dibba Beach Resort and other hospitality assets in the country.

The Omran Destinations also include, Al Hoota Cave, Nizwa Fort, Harat Al Bilad and Majlis Al Jinn Cave. As part of its expanding portfolio, a number of tourism assets and companies has been transferred to Omran Group from the government, including the Oman Tourism College, which is concerned with qualifying young cadres in the tourism sector and providing them with the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the growing requirements of this vital sector.

In addition to the Oman Sail, which aims to revive the glories of the Omani maritime heritage and promote the Sultanate around the world through the sport of sailing.

TURN TO PAGE 14

Made in Oman campaign kicks off today

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, NOV 15

A new month-long Made in Oman campaign will be launched in stores, supermarkets and malls across the Sultanate on Monday, November 16.

Organised by the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion in partnership with the Authority of Small and Medium Enterprises Development, the Consumer Protection Authority, Madayn and the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, as well as representatives from the business community, the campaign is designed to support local producers and manufacturers by encouraging consumers across the Sultanate to think and buy local first.

TURN TO PAGE 14



WTO membership has delivered benefits for Oman

TARIFF REDUCTIONS:
Sultanate was recognised for its adherence to WTO principles and obligations in multilateral trading systems

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, NOV 15

As the Sultanate of Oman celebrates 20 years as a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO), Qais bin Mohammed al Yousuf, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion recently delivered an online presentation at a WTO, Arab Monetary Fund and Islamic Development Bank organised event.

Alongside Al Yousuf was Hilda al Hinai, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Sultanate of Oman to the WTO Office in Geneva, and Maqbool Ali Sultan, who headed the erstwhile Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

The World Trade Organization's General Council approved the accession of Oman to the WTO in October 2000. Following the



General Council's approval, Maqbool Ali Sultan, Minister of Commerce and Industry at that time, along with WTO Director-General Mike Moore signed the Protocol of Accession thereby completing the process and Oman became the 139th Member of the WTO on November 9, 2000.

Expressing his pleasure at being able to participate in the event on the anniversary of Oman joining the WTO, Al Yousuf praised the organisation, saying: "Over this past quarter century, the WTO has helped transform international economic relations,

promoted global trade and assisted economies worldwide grow. Importantly too it has played a significant role in lifting people out of poverty."

Al Yousuf explained: "In a time of heightened trade tensions the world needs rules to fall back on and a trusted referee to resolve disputes.

Unfortunately, international trade disputes result in companies losing profits, workers losing jobs and governments losing revenue.

It also results in consumers having fewer product choices. This is why the WTO plays such

an important role and we are very proud both of our own contribution to its activities and the benefits WTO membership has delivered for Oman.

In fact, thanks to our WTO membership we have seen growth in industrial exports and increases in the volume of foreign investment Oman has attracted over the past twenty years. Indeed, in WTO Secretariat reviews in 2008 and 2014, Oman was recognised for its adherence to WTO principles and obligations in multilateral trading systems."

Since the General Agreement

on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) took effect in 1947, the average value of tariffs in force around the world has declined by 85 per cent, this is the result of multilateral co-operation and eight rounds of global trade negotiations, first under the GATT and then under its successor, the WTO.

Tariff reductions, together with technological advances, have driven the extraordinary expansion of global trade witnessed in the past 50 years.

In 1960, trade as share of world GDP stood at 24 per cent; today it is just over 60 per cent. This expansion of trade has fuelled economic growth, created jobs and increased household incomes worldwide. It is a key factor behind the rise of emerging markets, where dozens of developing countries have experienced strong economic growth. It also made possible one of the most remarkable achievements in human history: lifting one billion people out of poverty in the space of just two decades. Aiming to increase participants' knowledge of the WTO accession process,

accession-related rules and the state-of-play of Arab accessions, the three-day event also looks to facilitate acceding governments and Article XII members share experiences and lessons learned from the accession process.

Furthermore, it will attempt to identify and mobilise technical assistance support to facilitate and accelerate ongoing Arab accessions in collaboration with development partners. Al Yousuf concluded: "As we celebrate both Oman's 50th National Day and 20 years as a WTO member, we look ahead confident in the leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik as he builds on the outstanding legacy of government, trade and international relations he has inherited, leading the sultanate on its path of development in peace and prosperity."

Currently, the WTO Secretariat is working on the preparation of programme reviews for 2021. More than 20 members are on the provisional list of reviews for next year, including Oman, Bahrain, Qatar and Saudi Arabia.

Omran projects pull in RO 186 million in FDI

FROM PAGE 13

Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre, the Sultanate's prestigious venue for local regional and global events, and Marina Bandar Al Rowdha, which is a premium destination for tourists and visitors who wish to explore the unique coastline of Oman and its marine tourism adventures.

As the Sultanate celebrates its 50th National Day of renaissance, the year 2020 also marks a special milestone for Omran Group, as the company commemorates its 15th anniversary.

The Group was established by the Omani government in 2005 to unlock the potential of the tourism industry. According

to the Royal Decree 61/2020, Omran Group became one of the government companies under the umbrella of the Omani Investment Authority.

The group is the key instigator for master developments in Oman that transforms tourism-oriented government plots into purposeful infrastructure that meet the demand for multi-use destinations and facilities, which contribute to the national economic growth.

Few of Omran's prominent master developments include the Sultanate's largest urban project — Madinat Al Irfan, Oman Convention and Exhibition Center (OCEC), Mina Sultan Qaboos Waterfront and Muscat InterContinental Urban Re-Development.

FROM PAGE 13

Noting the tremendous support received from collaborators and partners in the Made in Oman campaign, Qais bin Mohammed al Yousuf, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion said: "It is with immense pride that we launch this campaign, a celebration of the achievements of Omani products and services in the global marketplace and a showcase for the great items produced and grown by businesses large and small in the Sultanate.

Part of the ministry's activities to mark the very special occasion of Oman's 50th National Day, Made in Oman has the ultimate objective of encouraging consumers to buy local. In doing so the campaign will inform the public about the impact buying local has on



communities across the country and its importance for us as a nation, the difference that makes to our balance of trade and GDP as well as how Omani riyals spent on local products help long-term growth. It will also be showing real examples of how 'going local' is already helping create quality jobs for young people as well as making a difference to everyday life."

Al Yousuf went on to note that a key goal of the campaign would be to get consumers to see Omani products, produce and services in

It will also be showing real examples of how 'going local' is already helping create quality jobs for young people as well as making a difference to everyday life
QAIS BIN MOHAMMED AL YOUSUF

Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion

a new light by sharing information and stories of the many successes enjoyed by local companies in international markets and the high regard in which they are held.

Indeed, local shoppers may be

surprised to find out that well-known international food brands have chosen to produce their own-label goods in factories on Madayn industrial cities.

They will likely be surprised too to know that mattresses made in the Sultanate are the first choice of major hotel chains around the world and that Omani manufactured batteries have powered transport systems in major cities in Asia and Europe.

The campaign will highlight many more success stories like these over the course of the coming four weeks. Playing a pivotal role in the Made in Oman campaign will be leading retailers who will be devoting additional shelf space to promote local products and providing special offers to tempt customers to try new items grown in our fields and made in our factories.

PRESS RELEASES

GET CASHBACK OF UP TO 10 PER CENT OF SALARY BY OPENING A MEETHAQ SALARY ACCOUNT

Meethaq the pioneer of Islamic Banking in Oman from Bank Muscat, in line with the bank's vision "To serve you better, everyday", has announced a very attractive promotion that



will allow its customers to receive up to 10 per cent of their salary or RO 500, whichever is lower, as a one-time cashback reward for opening a salary account with the bank.

The cashback will be a confirmed amount, which will be paid out of the shareholders' funds as Hiba (gift) to the salary account holder. To be eligible for the offer, customers have to open a savings account and transfer his/her salary during the campaign period, which will run till December 31, 2020.

Customers may note that the applicable cashback will be credited to the customer savings account within 15 days of receiving the first salary credit. If a customer has two salaries and he/she transfers both of them separately, then he/she will get two cashbacks under this campaign with each cashback capped to a maximum of RO 500.

CHARITABLE ENDOWMENT FOUNDATION APPOINTS TIBIAAN TO MANAGE ITS REAL ESTATE PORTFOLIO

Charitable Endowment Foundation, a trust set up by the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs,



has tapped leading Omani real estate firm Tibiaan properties to manage a sizable portfolio of endowment properties distributed across Muscat Governorate. On this occasion, Shaikh Rashid bin Saif al Saadi, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Charitable Endowment Foundation, said: "It is a pleasure to sign this contract marking the start of good relations with Tibiaan properties, a company known for its efficiency, good management and reliance on a specialised Omani cadre that qualified it to outperform the rest of the companies that submitted the tender. The work will include the management of approximately 300 commercial and residential real estate units distributed in different areas within the Governorate of Muscat."

ENTREPRENEURSHIP AWARD TO ANNOUNCE WINNERS ON NOV 23

The main committee of the Entrepreneurship Award announced recently that a ceremony announcing winners of the fourth edition of the Award will be hosted on Monday, November 23, 2020. The event will take place under the auspices of HH Sayyid Taimour bin Asaad bin Tarik al Said Chairman of the Board of Governors of the Central Bank of Oman. The award is organised by the Public Authority of Small and Medium Enterprises Development in partnership with Oman Telecommunications Company (Omantel) for the second consecutive edition. This year's theme of the Award is 'Competition and Innovation' as these attributes reflect the Award's goals of instilling a culture of entrepreneurship within the community.



It also aims to promote excellence and innovation as well as strengthen the capacities of SMEs to further compete in the market. Furthermore, the initiative seeks to reinforce In-Country Value (ICV) by allying with local businesses and driving the Sultanate's efforts of economic diversification based on knowledge and technological advancements.

MEDRC Eco School Prize 2020 launched online

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, NOV 15

For the second year in a row, MEDRC has launched its Eco School Prize, an inter-school competition designed to build greater water and energy use awareness among school children in Oman.

Sponsored by the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands and Oman LNG Development Foundation, five schools (Anas bin al Nadher, Kaab bin Zaid, Barka bint Thalaba, Jamila bint Thabit and Atika bint Zaid) were nominated by the Seeb office of the Directorate General of Education to compete for the prize. Each school appointed 5 students to represent the school in a kick off meeting held online today where Eng Aisha al Hinaiyah, Research project Manager at MEDRC, delivered a youth water and energy awareness workshop to

the students.

Competing schools will also attend a virtual tour of an Eco House as one of the activities in a series of activities expected in the upcoming weeks.

The virtual tour will demonstrate simple yet effective techniques students can adopt in their own homes to save energy and water. Each school will eventually present the progress they have achieved in their homes to conserve water and energy and the steps they have taken to achieve this. Students will also showcase the efforts they made in spreading the message to the rest of their communities and school. In parallel with the prize, a video competition was also launched in an effort to raise awareness through film. Participating students will attend an online film making workshop with an expert from the Oman Film Society and create a 3-minute awareness video each for social media.

Qualcomm receives US permission to sell 4G chips to Huawei

WASHINGTON: Qualcomm Inc received a license from the US government to sell 4G mobile phone chips to China's Huawei Technologies Co Ltd, an exemption to US trade restrictions imposed amid rising tensions with China.

"We received a license for a number of products, which includes some 4G products," a Qualcomm spokeswoman said.

Qualcomm and all other American semiconductor companies were forced to stop selling to the Chinese technology firm in September after US trade restrictions took effect.

The spokeswoman declined to comment on the specific 4G products Qualcomm can sell to Huawei but said they were related to mobile devices. Qualcomm has other license applications pending with the US government, she said.

In the past, Huawei was a relatively small chip customer

for Qualcomm, which is the biggest supplier of mobile phone chips. Huawei used its own house-designed chips in its flagship handsets but used Qualcomm chips in lower-priced models.

Huawei's potential to design its own chips was thwarted in September by US trade restrictions that blocked its access to chip design software and fabrication tools.

Industry analysts believe Huawei's stockpile of chips purchased before the ban could run out early next year, crippling its smartphone business.

Bernstein analyst Stacy Rasgon said the Qualcomm license would have a "limited impact" because it covers only 4G chips while consumers are shifting to newer 5G devices.

Rasgon said it is still unclear whether US officials will grant Qualcomm licenses for 5G smartphone chips.

— Reuters



A man walks past Qualcomm logo in San Diego, California. — AFP

World's largest free trade pact signed in coup for China

HANOI: Fifteen Asia-Pacific countries on Sunday signed the world's biggest free trade deal, seen as a huge coup for China in extending its influence. The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) includes 10 Southeast Asian economies along with China, Japan, South Korea, New Zealand and Australia, with members accounting for around 30 per cent of global GDP.

First proposed in 2012, the deal was finally sealed at the end of a Southeast Asian summit as leaders push to get their pandemic-hit economies back on track.

"Under the current global circumstances, the fact the RCEP has been signed after eight years of negotiations brings a ray of light and hope amid the clouds," said Chinese Premier Li Keqiang after the virtual signing. "It clearly shows that multilateralism is the right way, and represents the right direction of the global economy and humanity's progress."

The agreement to lower tariffs and open up the services trade within the bloc does not include the United States and is viewed as a Chinese-led alternative to a now-defunct Washington trade initiative.

The RCEP "solidifies China's broader regional geopolitical ambitions around the Belt and Road initiative", said Alexander Capri, a trade expert at the National University of Singapore Business School, referring to Beijing's signature investment project that envisions Chinese infrastructure and influence spanning the globe.



Vietnam's Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc (L) sits next to Minister of Industry and Trade Tran Tuan Anh (R) as they watch a screen showing Chinese Minister of Commerce Zhong Shan (R) signing next to Chinese Premier Li Keqiang during the virtual signing ceremony of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) Agreement in Hanoi. — Reuters

The agreement to lower tariffs and open up the services trade within the bloc does not include the US and is viewed as a Chinese-led alternative to a now-defunct Washington trade initiative

"It's sort of a complementary element." But many of the signatories are battling severe coronavirus outbreaks and they are also hoping the RCEP will help mitigate the crippling economic cost of the pandemic.

Indonesia recently tumbled into its first recession for two decades while the Philippine economy shrunk by 11.5 per cent on-year in the latest quarter.

"COVID has reminded the region of why trade matters and governments are more eager than ever to have positive economic growth," said Deborah Elms, executive director of the Asian

Trade Centre, a Singapore-based consultancy.

India pulled out of the agreement last year over concerns about cheap Chinese goods entering the country and was a notable absentee during Sunday's virtual signing.

Signatories to the agreement said they hoped New Delhi would rejoin in the future, acknowledging its "strategic importance" to the deal which already covers more than two billion people.

The pact should help shrink costs and make life easier for companies by letting them export

products anywhere within the bloc without meeting separate requirements for each country.

The agreement touches on intellectual property, but environmental protections and labour rights are not part of the pact.

The deal is also seen as a way for China to draft the rules of trade in the region, after years of US retreat under President Donald Trump which have seen Washington pull out of a trade pact of its own, the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP).

Though US multinationals will be able to benefit from RCEP through subsidiaries within member countries, analysts said the deal may cause President-elect Joe Biden to rethink United States' engagement in the region. — AFP

Chile hopes Biden victory will help avoid vaccine 'trade war'

SANTIAGO: Joe Biden's win in the US election is raising hopes in Latin America that a war over medical supplies at the start of the COVID-19 outbreak will not be repeated once vaccines are approved for use, Chile's health minister said.

Enrique Paris said he believed Biden's leadership would allow for countries to present a more "united" front against the pandemic, avoiding the commercial battles by nations including the US to secure ventilators, masks and personal

protective equipment.

"There was a trade war in which those who could pay more got more and those who could take things out of or even rupture distribution chains did so," Paris said. He said Chile had to charter or send military planes to pick up supplies and keep flight plans secret.

"I believe that Mr Biden has another vision of what is diplomacy and global understanding between countries."

Despite the "very good news" this week from Pfizer that its



vaccine had proved 90 per cent effective in late-stage trials, Paris said Latin America — which topped global charts for COVID cases and deaths between for several months up to August — should prepare for a second wave

I believe that Mr Biden has another vision of what is diplomacy and global understanding between countries

ENRIQUE PARIS
Chile health minister

like the one current ravaging Europe.

"We should not think of ourselves as in a zone of stability," he said. "We must not lower our guard." Chile has signed up for 7.6 million doses through the global vaccine distribution scheme COVAX, co-led by the GAVI vaccines alliance and the WHO.

Paris said Chile had paid extra to be able to pick the vaccines it received from COVAX. But he added that he had proposed, and received backing from his fellow Latin American and Caribbean

health ministers, to push for all countries to be treated equally under COVAX.

"We proposed as ministers that there should be just one format ... a more equitable way for everyone to choose or for everyone to receive the vaccines that the WHO deems appropriate for each country," he said.

Paris said the Pfizer vaccine represented one option for Chile's vaccination campaign but that the country had sought to diversify to assure a steady supply.

— Reuters

SHORT TAKES

BEIJING

China aims for moderate export expansion

China will no longer aim at achieving trade surpluses and solely expanding exports, but will pivot to moderately expanding imports for a balance between inbound and outbound shipments, a senior official from a state-affiliated think tank said on Sunday.

"This will not only help China to take the initiative in the new round of economic and trade negotiations, but also help promote the internationalisation of yuan," said Huang Qifan



(pictured), vice chairman of the China Center for International Economic Exchanges, during a financial forum.

China will import over \$22 trillion worth of goods over the next decade. — Reuters

RIYADH

Saudi inflation at 5.8 % as food prices up on VAT

Arabia's consumer price index increased by 5.8 per cent in October compared with the same month last year, official data showed on Sunday, rising slightly above September's 5.7 per cent rate.

The world's largest oil exporter is facing a steep economic contraction this year after the COVID-19 pandemic curbed global crude demand and measures to contain the coronavirus hurt activity.

"Taking into account the effect



the increase of the VAT from 5 per cent to 15 per cent in July 2020 had on consumer prices throughout the Kingdom, the rise of the CPI originated mainly from the increase in prices of food and beverages. — Reuters

TEXAS

Gas producer Gulfport Energy files for bankruptcy

Natural gas explorer and producer Gulfport Energy Corp filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy, becoming the latest company in the US energy sector to succumb to weak crude prices as the COVID-19 pandemic crimps fuel demand.

In a statement on Saturday, Gulfport said it has secured \$262.5 million in debtor-in-possession financing from its existing lenders under its revolving credit facility, including \$105 million in new money that



will be available upon court approval.

Weak demand due to the coronavirus pandemic and a price war between major oil producers resulted in a historic plunge in oil prices. — Reuters

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MONDAY

NOVEMBER 16, 2020

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■ ANNOUNCEMENT

Announcement of Capital Reduction

IN accordance with the provisions of Article 150 of the Commercial Companies Law. The company **Al Mashary Al'alyt Llmoawlat**, which is registered with the Commercial Registration No **126521**, hereby announces that it is going to reduce its capital from RO 255,000.000 to

5,000.000. Whoever has any objection to the foregoing shall present the reasons for such objection to the Secretariat of Commercial Registry at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion within 30 days from the date hereof.

■ ACC AVAILABLE

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ANNOUNCEMENT

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Instrument Technicians	20			Wasim Kazi: +968 93221460
Planning Engineers	4	400 - 500		Khalifa Al Tourshi: +968 99224602

features



A Gifted Artist Inspired by Family

Zakiya al Balushiyah was born to be a gifted artist, competing with her siblings who are creative artists too. All are enjoying a thriving artistic and motivating family environment. Such a rich creative environment marks as well a source of learning platform where family members could exchange expertise and learn from one another...

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Under the elegant arches and domes of an Ottoman-era compound, Joseph Tobjian displays his aromatic Aleppo soap at a trade fair designed to revive Syria's exports-starved arts and crafts... **Story on Page P20**

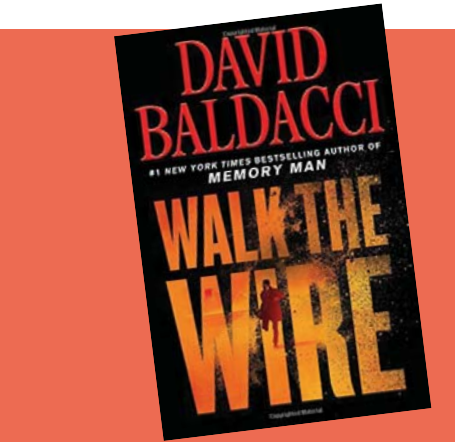
ART



DIVINER INSPIRATION: AUSTRALIAN ARTIST SIZES UP SILOS FOR HUGE MURALS

When Fintan Magee was asked to paint a mural on a trio of 40-metre high grain silos in the small Australian town of Barraba, he decided against an archetypal image of sheep and cattle... **Story on Page 19**

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WALK THE WIRE BY DAVID BALDACCI

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

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MILAN FASHION WEEK TO GO AHEAD WITH DIGITAL CATWALKS

Milan's fashion Week will go ahead early next year with shows likely to continue employing virtual catwalks because of the coronavirus, organisers announced on Wednesday... **Story on Page 19**

CELEBRATE



INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR TOLERANCE

The International Day for Tolerance supports the notion that education is a key factor in preventing intolerance across the human race. On this day, we are encouraged to educate and learn how to practice solidarity between ethnic, social and cultural groups.



A gifted artist inspired by family

BY ABDULAZIZ AL JAHDHAMI

It is incredibly thrilling to be born with talent and artists flair while growing up in an inspiring family to cultivate these talents! Such an abnormal fact that one gets astonished to know that families are having a common blessing and all members are proud of having this genetic legacy.

Zakiya al Balushi was born to be a gifted artist, competing with her siblings who are creative artists too. All are enjoying a thriving artistic and motivating family environment. Such a rich creative environment marks as well a source of learning platform where family members could exchange expertise and learn from one another.

Zakiya has been possibly bestowed a lion's share of luck for being able to master painting and calligraphy alike. She was gifted with this talent since the early days of childhood and has grown up with the passion of practising and preserving both talents. Today, she prides herself for being a brilliant artist, thanks to her family who was and would always be the first spark of inspiration behind her excellence.

Out of her extreme passion and creativity, Zakiya could creatively master both talents, which have an impact on her personally and professionally. Given that, she could demonstrate and promote her attractive art pieces in different local and international exhibitions. Since school days, she was partaking in various art competitions within and outside the school ambience. Hence, Zakiya could believe in herself and she was a talent in the making, who proved it right today.

As a multi-skilled artist, Zakiya is mastering painting, especially with pencil, calligraphy, collage and gifts hand wrapping and design too. Every so often, she could mix these all in a single art piece like in a collage board. A collage is a piece of art that integrates a variety of materials. It often involves glueing things like paper, cloth, or real-world objects onto a canvas or a board and incorporating that into a painting or masterpiece.

Zakiya's paintings and calligraphies are reflected in some of her designs of corporate objects. She employs her artistic deliverables in what she does at work in certain cases. This allows her to make the most of her talent as well as it marks

another way of practising her own talent. Imprinting her paintings and calligraphic handwriting on her corporate and personal graphic designs would always bring a distinct attraction indeed!

Likewise, she works on personal requests of paintings for other fans of her creative art pieces. With gifts hand wrapping, lettering words and names of people on their gifts and greeting cards, Zakiya creates happy moments for others around her. In fact, she makes the day for many people with her spellbinding calligraphy and inspiring words on the beautifully wrapped gifts and souvenirs. This reflects Zakiya's belief in calligraphy as a kind of music for the eyes and not for the ears.

"I have not studied arts as many others did, but I was born with the talent, which has grown up with me! Believing in practice makes perfect, I have been practising my skills so often, which made an artist out of me over the years. However, I always strive to learn new techniques, so I could hone my skills and abilities in the arts. This is what I do most to invest in my talents, of course in addition to the freelancing activities I conduct every now and then", Zakiya explained.

Fueling her passion with hope, Zakiya is intending to have her own art exhibition in which she

intends to bring all the family talents together. She believes that such an event would be a platform to showcase all the family art pieces. This marks an opportunity to narrate the story of a family, who shares arts by blood and stands as the source of inspiration to all.





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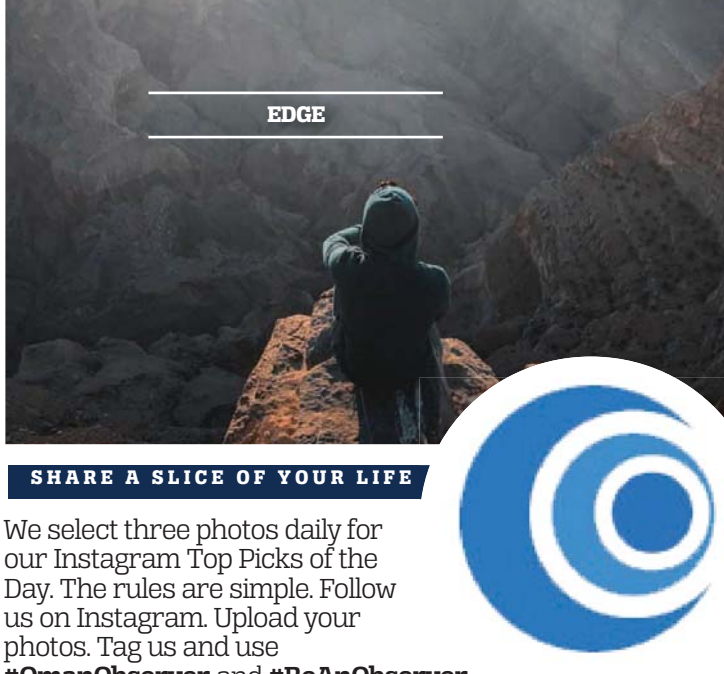
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FASHION

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Milan fashion Week to go ahead with digital catwalk

Milan's fashion Week will go ahead early next year with shows likely to continue employing virtual catwalks because of the coronavirus, organisers announced on Wednesday.

While the men's shows will run from January 15 to 19, women's fashion Week will be held from February 23 to March 1, the Italian Chamber of fashion announced.

The fashion shows "will become more digital or more physical, depending on the evolution of the pandemic", chamber president Carlo Capasa told the Pambianco Summit, a conference for the fashion industry held online this year.

fashion is Italy's second-largest manufacturing industry and has been hard hit by the fallout from the global pandemic.

fashion houses have had to rethink their marketing strategies and boost their digital offerings, and event organisers have been forced to innovate.

Last month, the British Fashion Council cancelled its men's fashion week in London, which had been scheduled for January, because of the pandemic, Brexit and what organisers said was a desire to rethink the event.

Instead, they are encouraging men's designers to take part in the women's week from February 19 to 23.

Milan's last fashion week in September, in which 156 collections were presented between online presentations and physical fashion shows, resulted in some 45 million views, Capasa said.

"This has been an Italian resilience operation," he said, adding that organisers "hope to be able to return soon to the moments of physical encounters".

According to a survey by Confindustria Moda, the sector's main employers' group, the industry in Italy lost 29 billion euros (\$34 billion) in global revenue in the first nine months of the year.

In the third quarter, those companies surveyed recorded a 27 per cent drop in sales, following decreases of 39 per cent and 36 per cent in the second and first quarters, respectively, said Confindustria Moda President Cirillo Coffen Marcolin. — **AFP**



ART

Diviner inspiration: Australian artist sizes up silos for huge murals



WHEN FINTAN Magee was asked to paint a mural on a trio of 40-metre high grain silos in the small Australian town of Barraba, he decided against an archetypal image of sheep and cattle.

Instead he painted a water diviner, a practice still used in parts of Australia where proponents believe they can find ground water with two metal rods or, as pictured in the mural, sticks.

Painted last year, it is one of dozens of large-scale murals to appear across rural Australia, turning sides of buildings, water tanks and old grain silos into striking canvases.

"Painting walls is a bit like surfing, every wave is different, every wall is different. That's the biggest challenge for me," Magee said from his art studio in Sydney's inner-western suburbs.

"Scaling and the technical things are just part of the job now."

Many of the works were painted during a long drought that devastated communities and led to widespread water restrictions including in agricultural towns like Barraba in central New South Wales.

Magee said that during a research trip he saw a diviner working with water bore drillers during the drought, which only started to ease early this year.

While broadly considered street art, the sheer size of the murals makes them a phenomenon of their own.

Many artists use cherry picker cranes or lifts to reach their canvases, go through hundreds of litres of paint, and spend weeks on their murals.

"It wasn't really until the last three or four years that projects have been growing bigger and bigger — more stuff happening in Sydney and Melbourne and also the silo thing has exploded," said Magee.

The size has one great advantage over other forms of art — it's almost impossible for passersby not to take it in.

"It's absolutely gorgeous — it wasn't here last time we came through," said Cathy Skinner, one of several people who stopped at the Barraba mural when Reuters visited last week. "I think he looks like Prince Harry, I think he's wonderful," Skinner said of the water diviner.

The resemblance to the British prince is often remarked upon. Magee said while he didn't see the likeness, other than the red hair, people were free to come to their own conclusions.

"I don't see why Prince Harry would be divining in central New South Wales, but who knows, he might have been through town on a royal trip one time," he said. — **Reuters**



Damascus fair offers hope for exports-starved Aleppo artisans

Under the elegant arches and domes of an Ottoman-era compound, Joseph Tobjian displays his aromatic Aleppo soap at a trade fair designed to revive Syria's exports-starved arts and crafts.

The soap maker is among more than 130 merchants taking part in the state-sponsored fair in Damascus for small businesses from Aleppo, northern Syria.

"I've spent my entire life around laurel oil and soap. Their scent does not leave my lungs," Tobjian told AFP.

"We're in Damascus looking for an alternative to foreign markets, after exports stopped," he said, soap bottles and natural cosmetics lining the table in front of him.

The 61-year-old said he was surprised by the high number of visitors at the fair, including Damascus traders interested in his beauty products.

Aleppo, Syria's pre-war economic hub, is famed for its ancient crafts, hit hard by the conflict that broke out in 2011.

Goods ranging from traditional soaps, furniture and garments to made-in-Syria marshmallows are on show in the capital's Tekkiye al-Sulaymaniyah complex.

The Tobjian family fled to Canada from Aleppo in 2012, leaving behind a soap workshop that employed about 40 workers in its heyday.

Unhappy with life in exile, the Syrian Armenian family returned in 2018 to find both their workshop and city in ruins.

They relocated to a modest workshop and employed two workers to resume production of Aleppo soap, once a top export also popular among tourists.

"We inherited this craft from our fathers and grandfathers," said Tobjian, wearing a T-shirt bearing the image of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

"We must do everything we can to revive our workshops and factories."

A TOUCH OF ALEPPO

Aleppo's centuries-old covered bazaar, situated in its Old City, a Unesco World Heritage Site, once teemed with thousands of stalls.

The Old City saw some of the heaviest battles of Syria's war, before Russian-backed regime forces recaptured rebel-held districts of Aleppo in December 2016.

A gradual government-led restoration programme has revived parts of Aleppo's bazaar but the scars of war remain.

In Aleppo's industrial zone, the largest in Syria, most factories and workshops were also ravaged by fighting.

With state support, some 70 small workshops have reopened but business is slow amid an economic crisis compounded by Western sanctions and the collapse of the Syrian



pound against the dollar.

"The war destroyed the infrastructure of industries in Aleppo," said Alaa Hilal, director of the week-long Damascus fair.

Western sanctions, which hinder fuel imports, have also made it tough for factories to operate.

This is why Aleppo craftsmen are looking "for opportunities to make sales, sign contracts and market their products in Damascus", Hilal said.

Western sanctions have pushed Syrian businesses to find alternatives.

At the fair, Sonali Ghazal shows off marshmallows scented with rose water or pistachios from Aleppo.

"We managed to make marshmallow in Syria, and we gave them an Aleppo touch," the 42-year-old teacher said.

Sonali said she used to buy them for her students before marshmallows vanished from the market because of the war and sanctions.

She came up with a home-grown alternative, "but this time, with the flavour of Aleppo pistachios".—AFP