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Oman, along with other countries, on Sunday experienced the annular solar eclipse. The eclipse was witnessed from most parts of the Sultanate. The total duration of the solar eclipse was 3 hours and 6 minutes. A distinct feature of this year’s eclipse was the ‘ring of fire’ or the ring of light which appeared as the moon faced the sun and came between the earth and the sun. This image is a compilation of 9 photos taken between 9:12 am and the last at 9:39 am as the eclipse in Salalah peaked at 9:21 am.
PHOTO BY **KRISHNARAJ JAYARAM**

SEE P4 AND 5

SOPS FOR FOREIGN PROJECTS IN LESS DEVELOPED AREAS

SAMUEL KUTTY

MUSCAT: The Foreign Capital Investment Law offers many benefits for investors including tax incentives for their projects to be set up in the less developed governorates in the Sultanate. According to the law, the executive regulations of which were issued by Dr Ali bin Masoud al Sunaidy, Minister of Commerce and

Industry, the projects can get several benefits like tax exemptions and exclusion from the Omanisation policy for a period of time. While explaining about the policy, Mohammed bin Rashid al Badi, acting director of the legal department of the ministry, said that projects being set up in less developed governorates of the Sultanate can avail many benefits. These include exemptions from the

rental value or return of the right to use the lands and real estate necessary for the investment project for a period not exceeding five years. “They will also be excluded from the Omanisation policy for a period of two years from the date of the actual operation of the project”, he said. According to him, these projects can be exempted from all duties or some of them.

TURN TO P5

53% coronavirus patients recover in Sultanate

ZAINAB AL NASSRI

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Health on Sunday announced 905 new positive cases of COVID-19 in the Sultanate, including 402 Omanis and 503 residents, which brought the total number of positive cases in the country to 29,471. According to the ministry, a total of 2,804 people were tested in the last 24 hours. Three deaths were reported on Sunday, taking the total toll to 131. The ministry also reported that 772 patients recovered from COVID-19 during the past 24 hours, taking the total recoveries from the disease to 15,552 in Oman. With a recovery rate of 53 per cent, the Sultanate recorded its highest recovery since the pandemic began.

World Economic Forum hails Oman’s COVID-19 fight

DAVOS: The World Economic Forum (WEF) reviewed the Sultanate’s experience in facing the novel coronavirus, describing the pandemic as “a true test of the Sultanate’s response to the crisis.” The forum explained in its article that thanks to the community’s awareness, cohesion, and the spirit of initiative and innovation, and as a result of the early measures taken by the government, the Sultanate was able to contain the virus and slow

its spread. The article also reviewed the economic diversification strategy adopted by the Sultanate as part of Oman Vision 2040. It noted the role that non-oil economic sectors have contributed to promoting sustainability and growth. It also highlighted the logistics sector, which despite the closure of the airports, the ports of Suhar, Duqm and Salalah have been operating normally with 200 ships calling per week.— **ONA**



www.pdo.co.om

AUCTION ANNOUNCEMENT

Petroleum Development Oman (PDO), in partnership with Worley Oman, is pleased to announce the sale of the following written-off / scrap materials on “As Is Where Is basis” through an online bidding auction as described in below table:

Auction No.	Material/Equipment Description	Location	Viewing Date	Bid Submission	Online Bidding Date	Cheque Guarantee
A1/2020/IT	Used IT equipment	MINA AL FAHAL	28/6/2020	1/7/2020	9/7/2020	OMR 1,000 (One Thousand Omani Rials)
A1/2020/HOSES	Marine Hoses		28/6/2020			Buyer must provide a guarantee cheque in the amount of OMR 1,000 for each lot awarded
A1/2020/S10K	Assorted Scrap /flowline / tubing /casing (10,000MT)	South of Oman (MARMUL AREA)	MARMUL Auction Yards 28/6/2020	5/7/2020	9/7/2020	OMR 50,000 (Fifty thousand Omani Rial)
A1/2020/S15K	Assorted Scrap /flowline pipes / tubing/ casing (15,000 MT)	SOUTH OF OMAN (RAHAB FARM/ RIMA/ NIMR AND HARWEEL)	RAHAB FARM 28/6/2020 HARWEEL 28/6/2020 NIMR OIS YARD 28/6/2020 RIMA 28/6/2020	5/7/2020	9/7/2020	Buyer must provide a guarantee cheque in the amount of OMR 50,000 for each lot awarded

This auction is open to all Omani registered companies under the Ministry of Commerce & Industries with activities of scrap selling and buying or oman factories using scrap for smelting.

All interested bidders must register for the auction, and can view the bid details and photos of the items offered for sale through the links below:

- IT Equipment: <https://supplychain.requis.com/procure/lots/527>
- Marine Hoses: <https://supplychain.requis.com/procure/lots/528>
- Scrap Steel S15K: <https://supplychain.requis.com/procure/lots/533>
- Scrap Steel S10K: <https://supplychain.requis.com/procure/lots/529>

The measures of the Supreme Committee dealing with the spread of COVID-19 must be followed including but not limited to:

- * Only two people from each company are allowed to attend the material viewing event as per the dates in the table above.
- No permission will be granted for more than 2 individuals to participate in the event, and it will be reported to the authorities.
- * All interested companies must confirm their participation in the material viewing visit by max. 25th June 2020 at 11:00 a.m
- All interested companies must send an email confirmation to the Auction focal point and attaching a copy of their ID card.
- This arrangement is very important, in order for the Auction focal point to arrange the viewing logistics requirements and obtain necessary permits for the visitors.
- * The Auction focal point shall communicate the meeting point at site, material viewing timing / schedule and other logistics details via email and phone call or text messages to all interested bidders.
- * Interested bidders shall maintain physical distancing (2 metres minimum) and avoid physical interaction with others.
- * All Interested bidders shall wear masks, gloves together with normal PPEs such as coveralls,, safety boots, helmets etc. at all times during the viewing times.
- * Temperature testing will be conducted on all participants before entering the yards. All participants must not have any signs or symptoms of COVID-19 at the time of inspection.
- * This auction is as per the PDO HSE Policy detailed in SP-2000 and SP-2001 (Policy can be viewed online in the following link): <http://www.pdo.co.om/hseforcontractors/> (username: pdohse01) (password: contractor01)
- * All HSE rules on safe handling and transportation of materials from PDO sites will be applied.
- * Please ensure that you are familiar with the PDO HSE requirements before participating in this online auction.
- * For any clarification about the auctions or inspections, please contact the Auction focal point at +96892771252 or via email at said.al-adawi@worley.com.



Market area in Salalah locked down till July 7



KAUSHALENDRA SINGH

SALALAH: The market area in Salalah, which was put under isolation on Saturday, over COVID-19 scare would remain under lockdown for another 17 days. The Royal Oman Police on Sunday confirmed that the commercial market area in the Central Salalah area has been kept under isolation and it will remain so till July 7. The market was sealed on Saturday in the wake of the recent spike in COVID-19 cases in Salalah. “The Royal Oman Police would like to draw the attention of all residents in the Wilayat of Salalah that the commercial market area located in central Salalah is under public health isolation as of Saturday morning until July 7. Your cooperation will serve the public interest,” the ROP statement said. The latest COVID-19

bulletin of the Ministry of Health, however, is a big relief for the city, as it reported only one new case on Sunday, making the total number of positive cases in Salalah to 297, whereas the total number of cases in Dhofar stands at 327. Out of 297 positive cases, 49 have recovered. Two deaths due to COVID-19 have been reported in Salalah. Salalah had only 28 positive cases till the end of May. There was a sudden one day spike of 81 cases on June 14, which brought the total to 153. Adherence to COVID-19 protocol in public places is quite decent as most of the people are seen using face masks. In most of the shopping areas, people are allowed to enter only after temperature screening, face mask, and hand gloves. It is mandatory for all the ground duty staff to follow the guidelines issued by the relevant authorities.

RO 100- RO 500 fine for companies violating COVID-19 precautions

SAMUEL KUTTY

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Manpower, while rolling out a number of measures to be followed by the private sector, has resolved to impose fines on violators of COVID-19 precautions.

According to decisions issued by Shaikh Abdullah bin Nasser al Bakri, Minister of Manpower on Sunday, the measures are taken in accordance with the decision taken by the Supreme Committee to contain the spread of coronavirus in the Sultanate. "All private sector enterprises should strictly implement the guidelines and measures issued by the Supreme Committee in combating the Covid-19 pandemic or face fines," the minister said while issuing a statement on the decision.

With fines varying from RO 100 to RO 500, the measures include chalking out an internal contingency plan and maintaining records of workers infected with the virus.

The other ministries and government entities entrusted with the task are the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Regional Municipalities and Water Resources, Muscat Municipality, Dhofar Municipality, Sohar Municipality, Special Economic Zone Authority in Duqm, General Organization for Industrial Zones, and any other competent



authority. "The Ministry of Manpower and the competent authorities shall collect the amount equivalent to the fines and transfer them to the account of the fund allocated to combat the coronavirus pandemic", the statement said. According to the decision, major fines include RO 500 for absence of security guards to monitor and record the entry and exit of workers and visitors from the workers' residence and RO 500 for failure to maintain a special record for workers suspected of being infected with the virus. Other fines include RO 100 for failure to placing awareness

posters in various languages, RO 100 for the absence of the contingency plan to combat the spread of the virus, RO 100 for not wearing masks and providing a hand sanitiser, RO100 for not disinfecting work tools and equipment, RO 100 for not having a thermometer, RO 100 in the absence of signs of social distancing at the work sites or residences of the workers and RO 100 for not training workers about precautionary measures to avoid the virus.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF CAPITAL REDUCTION
In accordance with the provision of Article 150 of the Commercial Law, The Company **SQWR ALGHLYLH (LLC)**, which is registered with the Commercial Registration No. 1287934, hereby announces that it is going to reduce its capital from Omani Rials 250,000.000 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 and Industry within 30 days from the date hereof.

Are you looking for a better and suitable premises to shift your company/offices?
Then please visit our premises. (Seeb, Mabaila 6).
Contact No. 94443222

CONSTRUCTION FIRMS FLOUT COVID-19 RULES

KABEER YOUSUF

MUSCAT: Some construction firms in the capital area are flouting coronavirus precautionary measures at work sites including not following

social distancing and not giving masks for workers, which may have serious repercussions if not checked. The Supreme Committee on COVID-19 has instructed essential services and a group of other services

and trading sectors to resume work with strict adherence to precautionary measures. Some companies, however, have not been implementing the safety measures within the premises which can augment cluster spread, a much-feared form of virus spread. "It has been found that some, mostly small companies, engaged in the construction and maintenance, are not following the safety and precautionary measures against COVID-19," said Shahswar Balushi, Adviser on the

construction sector. "However, the COVID-19 rules need to be strictly implemented and I believe the onus lies on the authorities to enforce the rules," Shahswar, who is also the ex-Chairman of Oman Society of Contractors, said. Hundreds of people work from morning till evening at various construction sites in the region. They neither wear hand gloves nor face masks and if at all they are worn, it's just for namesake which is often pulled down.

OMAN

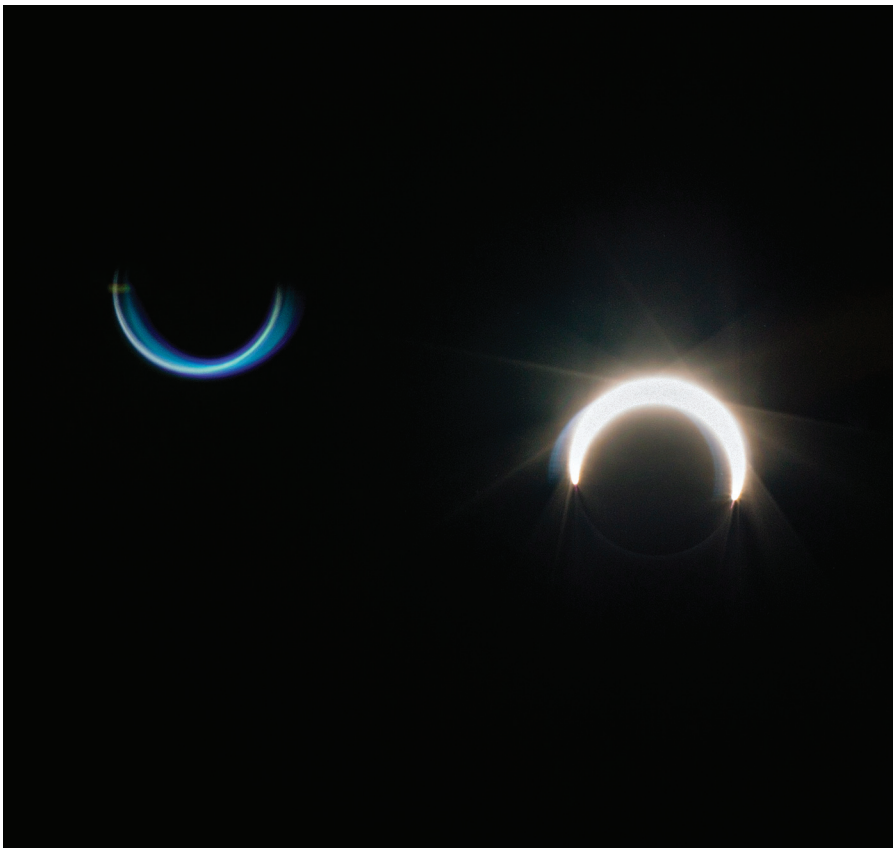
Ring of fire wows Oman

RAY PETERSEN

BIRKAT AL MOUZ:

Yesterday's annular eclipse was sighted and watched by hundreds of thousands, but local photographer Lena Petersen experienced the event with a special optical lens, as many also did, and from the skilled photographer's perspective.

"I don't know how others saw the event," she said, "but having seen the December event from Ras al Ruways, I at least knew what was coming. The earlier eclipse was a much more dramatic event, with clouds, wind and the sea constantly changing the light and conditions, but this time, it was probably more of a scientific event than artistic. I chose to both



Solar eclipse in Birkat al Mouz — Lena Petersen



Solar eclipse in Muscat. — Faisal al Balushi

record the event, and to move around and adjust the photographic perspectives to get images with a point of difference." Lens flare most clearly affects photography of solar

phenomenon, when bright light enters the lens, hits the sensor, and scatters, re-emerging when the source is partly obscured. Photographers seeking dramatic effect adore lens flare as an annoyance, while others feel it adds to the artistry and dramatic effect. "We all look for, and want different things from nature, and photography, which is why, as a hobby, so many people enjoy it, and here we had the perfect opportunity to personalise

a significant force of nature at work," said Petersen. The charming little town of Birkat al Mouz then, high and inland, with a remarkably clear sky, offered enthusiasts and professionals alike, the opportunity to capture this emphatic event in their own way, with their own palette of colour and light as Petersen has done, manipulating the lens flare and refraction, articulating the romance and drama of the event in her own way.

Tenders Notice

Public Authority for Social Insurance (PASI), announces following E-Tenders for 2020:

Tender Number	Tender Name	Deadline for Specifications Request	Deadline for tender bids	Tender Price
7/2020	Build up IT Infrastructure Tools Equipment	05-July-2020	19-July-2020	89 OMR
8/2020	Oracle Sever Platform and infrastructure Expansion	05-July-2020	19-July-2020	25 OMR
9/2020	Enhancing Network Data Center	05-July-2020	19-July-2020	100 OMR

Interested companies registered with Tender Board may obtain Tender document from the E.Tendering website: <http://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om> against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of documents. Tenders should be submitted online on given website. The Tenderer should enclose scanned copy of bank guarantee issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman for the value of (2%) of the Tender value validity for (120) days from the deadline for the tender bids and addressed to Public Authority for Social Insurance. In view of these exceptional circumstances, a copy of the bank guarantee is submit by email at salehmb@pasi.gov.om or IbrahimSM@pasi.gov.om . And hard copy of the same should be submitted later manually to the Administration Department – Purchase and General Services Section / Third Floor, PASI Head Office in Baushar.

CORRESPONDANCE:

1. Tender inquiry : All correspondence pertaining to the TENDER Inquiry must be online at E-Tendering system (<http://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>)
1. E-Tendering system inquiry: All correspondence pertaining to the e-tendering system technical support must be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number: Tel : **+968 24166670** , E-mail : etenderhd@ita.gov.om

PASI is not obliged to accept the lowest or any tender that may be received

PASI
With you .. For You

www.pasi.gov.om | TaminatOman | Contact us 800 77 600 | 91777060





An E-auction Announcement

Ministry of Transportation is announcing an e-auction to sale No.(5) Cranes via Mazad Oman website (www.mazad.om)

AUCTION	PREVIEW PLACE	PREVIEW TIME	THE e-AUCTION TIME
CRANES 5	PORT SULTAN QABOOS - MUTTRAH	SUNDAY 12/7/2020 9 AM TO 12 PM	MONDAY 13/7/2020

Those willing to join the e-auction should follow the following steps:

1. Registering in Mazad Oman web (www.mazad.om)
2. Paying an insurance amount of 5000 O.R electronically in Mazad Oman web
3. Who wins the e-auction is responsible for paying the auctioning amount which is 3% of the compound value
4. Ministry of Transportation and Mazad Oman are do not bear any obligation with respect to the vehicles in the event that the image or description of any Items does not match.
5. The winner should pay the price of the item via e-payment in 3 working days time after finishing the e-auction.
6. The buyer is responsible for transportation of the Items in 2 month. In case of transportation delay, Ministry of Transportation is not responsible for any damage affecting the Items.
7. Any sold Items is not recoverable and its price is not discountable. Any obligation related this issue is not accepted.
8. Successful bidder shall pay custom fees if imposed by (Directorate General of Customs – ROP) and the ministry will not be responsible on this kind of fees.
9. The insurance amount will be forfeited in two cases:
 - i. The buyer does not pay the price during the specified time.
 - ii. The buyer does not transport the vehicle during the specified time.

For more details , visit www.mazad.om or contact us via email info@mazad.om

<http://www.transport.gov.om>

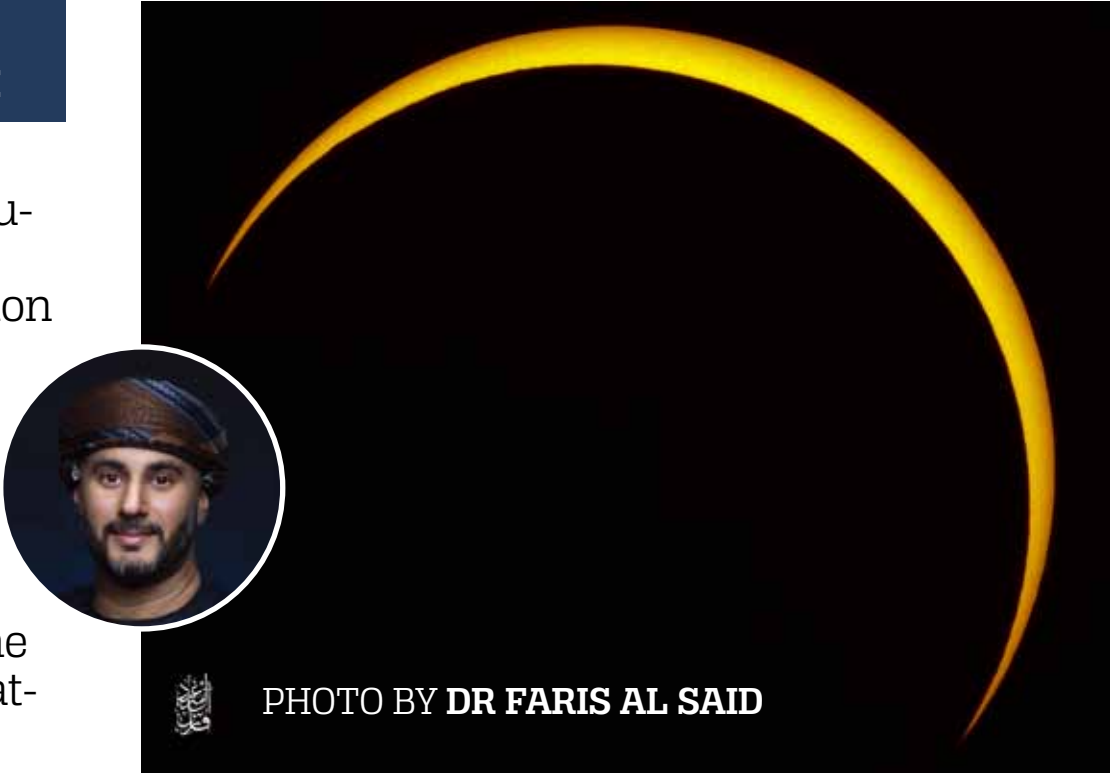
Oman sees a growing number of sky gazers

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH

MUSCAT: The annular eclipse gave immense satisfaction to sky enthusiasts, astronomers and astro photographers in Oman. The much anticipated event turned out to be one of the most celebrated one as all the excitement also attracted the general public. The Oman Astronomical Society (OAS) covered the eclipse live on social media.

"This part of the world does not receive many solar eclipses and on top of it we had the annular pathway going through Oman," said His Highness Sayyid Dr Faris al Said, a member of the OAS.

He is an amateur astronomer and astro photographer who got attracted to astronomy more than ten years even though his field is different as he is an



assistant professor in marketing at Sultan Qaboos University.

The event created excitement on social media and astro photographers were ready with the best of cameras and filters to capture the moment, stationed at different strategic locations on the annular path of the solar eclipse.

Because of COVID-19 many of the enthusiasts chose to capture the moment from their own homes in order to maintain social distancing. "Lots of people are excited about science and technology so it is

a growing community along with everything the government is pushing for. The youth is really into it and it is quite contagious. There is so much talk about space in the world and Oman is growing its satellite strategy and we now have the Dark Sky Reserves in Jabal Shams decreed by the late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos."

June 21st is also the longest day of the year and the official beginning of summer and typically sees the arrival of the monsoon in Dhofar.

Enthusiasts document solar eclipse

KAUSHALENDRA SINGH

SALALAH: Some astronomy enthusiasts in Dhofar watched the rare phenomenon of an annular solar eclipse by setting all possible equipment including telescope, safety glasses, and cameras.

The enthusiasts set the equipment at the right location in Al Najd area under the banner of Dhofar Astronomical Observatory and watched the phenomenon from the beginning till the end.

The Dhofar Astronomical Observatory has some experts who keep a keen interest in astronomy. Sheikh Saeed Jamaan, Muhammed Sohail Akkak, and Dr Awad Saeed al Saadouni are part of the Observatory.

The Observatory, according to Dr Al Saadouni, is equipped with some

astronomical and scientific equipment and digital cameras to document and monitor the solar eclipse as well as live broadcast via social media programmes.

"We took up the responsibility of watching, documenting, and educating a section of viewers about the rare astronomical phenomenon in Dhofar because the Governorate is very important from the viewpoint of astronomy."

Commenting on his experience of viewing the rare eclipse, Dr Al Saadouni said, "It was rare to experience the phenomenon, as the peak here was 87 per cent.

Prof (Dr) Sobeih al Saadi, an expert in physics, astronomy, and space science, thanked the Dhofar Astronomical Observatory for documenting the phenomenon, which holds immense importance for future studies.

Incentives for foreign projects

FROM PAGE 1

"The Council of Ministers can give other benefits to the investment project provided they depend on foreign money remitted from abroad according to the rules made by the Central Bank of Oman, in coordination with the competent authorities", he said.

For this purpose, Al Badi said, it is necessary that the products of the project are not less than 40 per cent Omani if any. "The project would export not less than

30 per cent of its production outside the Sultanate. It also must help in the transfer of expertise, modern technology, and knowledge to the Sultanate", he said.

According to Al Badi, it is also permissible to exempt investment projects from some of the prescribed customs and non-customs duties and fees, without prejudice to the provisions of the Common Customs Law for the states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).

"The exemption will come into effect from the date of the actual operation of the project, provided the import of the machines or equipment, production materials, or other imported materials are necessary for the purposes of the project and consistent with its nature", he said.

The period of exemptions from customs and non-customs duties and fees will be determined separately for each activity.



الشركة الوطنية للمنظفات الصناعية ش.م.ع.ع.
The National Detergent Co. S.A.O.G.

Invitation Announcement for the Extraordinary General Assembly Meeting

The Company board of directors is pleased to invite the shareholders to attend the Extraordinary General Meeting to be held on Sunday afternoon at 3:00 pm dated 28/6/2020 via web platform for General Assembly Meeting which can be accessed through the website of Muscat Clearing and Depository (MCD) (www.mcd.gov.om).

In case that the quorum is not complete, the meeting shall be postponed till Sunday afternoon at 3:00 pm dated 5/7/2020 to discuss the following agenda:

1. Considering of amending the Company Articles of Association as per the requirements of the Commercial Companies Law issued under the Sultanate Decree No. 18/2019 and approval thereof (according to what is attached).

According to the articles of association and the regulations of the General Assembly held by modern technological means as stated by them, we went to bring your attention to the following: Only the legal person shall appoint the natural person to attend the meeting of General Assembly and vote on his behalf by technological means, provided that the given natural person shall be registered at Muscat Clearing and Depository (MCD). Voting on the proposed items of the agenda starts in an earlier date before the meeting by three days till the meeting day. If the shareholder balances have been changed, whether by increase or decrease, voting shall be canceled and the given shareholder shall revoke on the meeting day.

If there are any inquiries, please contact Mr. / Nasser Al-Rawahi at 92869333.



MUSCAT: The Education and Research Committee of the State Council hosted Ahmed bin Hassan al Theeb, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI) on Sunday, to add value to its ongoing study titled, "The reality of scientific research and the role of

Committee reviews efforts of MoCI to support scientific research

private sector companies in supporting and developing it", at its twelfth meeting of the first annual session of the seventh term.

The meeting headed by Hon Mohammed bin Hamdan bin Sulaiman al Toobi, Committee Head was held in the presence of the honourable com-

mittee members, Secretariat staff and the Under Secretary of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and Ministry officials.

Coronavirus spurs science and technology projects in Oman

LIJU CHERIAN

MUSCAT: COVID-19 has spurred many research initiatives across the world including Oman.

"There has been a tremendous impact of COVID-19 on science and technology research in the Sultanate which also has demonstrated its continued commitment to universal health coverage," says Dr Khalid al Rasadi, Director of Medical Research Centre (MRC), Sultan Qaboos University (SQU).

He mentions that there are strong indications that the pandemic will cause the largest economic downturn since the 2008 financial crisis.

Set up in 2017, the primary aim of the MRC centre is to conduct, coordinate and facilitate high-quality research on themes that are highly relevant to Oman and its health issues.

Dr Khalid informs that the fast-rising scholarly work on COVID-19 epidemic with thousands of scientists switching their research interests to the coronavirus all over the globe.

"In less than five months, COVID-19 studies accounted for almost 70 per cent of all coronavirus studies published in the last 50 years with over 24,000 researches from peer-reviewed journals as well as other sources covering everything from virology, epidemiology, diagnostic, technology and economy."

To harness the use of science and technology to mitigate the pandemic and other global challenges like non-communicable chronic diseases, Dr Khalid suggests a four-point plan.

These mainly relate to strengthening the national capacities for science-policy advisory systems, enhance public trust in science and maintain credi-



Dr Khalid al Rasadi,
Director of MRC

bility with the public by honestly explaining the uncertainties and evolving knowledge about the diseases.

The last plan of action relates to protecting science, technology and innovation funding during the epidemics and its aftermath.

The MRC Director who

took charge in November 2019 further states that science and technology continued to support the Supreme Committee and policies of the health authorities on best methods to face COVID-19.

Many research projects, concerning COVID-19, Dr Khalid says are being conducted at different health and non-health sectors institutions and universities covering various topics from virology, epidemiology, diagnostic, technology and economy.

At SQU more than 15 research projects are being conducted on the epidemic which is funded by the research council, Medical Research Centre at SQU and top corporates like Saud Bahwan Group, OQ, Oman Oil Company, Muscat Pharmacy, CC Energy Development (Oman branch), Tethys Oil Oman and MEPME Mitsui E&P Middle East BV.

UK probes park stabbing as terrorism, calling it an atrocity



READING, England: A stabbing rampage that killed three people and wounded three others in the southern English town of Reading was an act of terrorism, police said on Sunday, calling the attack in a sunny park an atrocity.

A 25-year-old man was arrested on suspicion of murder after the stabbings on Saturday evening in Reading, which is about 65 km west of London.

A Western security source, speaking on condition of anonymity, said that the man, who remains in police custody, is a Libyan called Khairi Saadallah.

Britain's most senior counter-terrorism police officer, Neil Basu, said a man had run into Forbury Gardens and attacked people with a knife

before being detained by unarmed officers. He said it had been declared terrorism after detectives worked through the night on the case.

IF THERE ARE LESSONS WE NEED TO LEARN ... WE WILL LEARN THOSE LESSONS AND WE WILL NOT HESITATE TO TAKE ACTION IF NECESSARY

"This was an atrocity," Basu said.

He said there was nothing to suggest anyone else was involved and they were not hunting further suspects.

While the motivation for the attack was far from certain, he said

there was no intelligence that crowded places were at risk. The victims have not yet been identified.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson held a meeting on Sunday with security officials, senior ministers and police to be updated about the investigation.

He said he was "appalled and sickened" by the attack and said Britain would change the law if needed to prevent any future incidents.

"If there are lessons we need to learn ... we will learn those lessons and we will not hesitate to take action if necessary," he said.

Initially police and the government had said the incident did not appear to be terrorism and they were keeping an open mind as to the motive.

— Reuters

IN BRIEF

SERBIANS HEAD TO POLLS IN EUROPE'S FIRST POST-LOCKDOWN ELECTION

BELGRADE: Serbians went to the polls on Sunday to elect a new parliament in Europe's first national election since coronavirus lockdowns took effect three months ago, with the ruling conservatives expected to win a comfortable majority. Polling stations were equipped with face masks and hand sanitisers for use by the country's electorate of almost 6.6 million, many of whom were expected to skip voting — partly because of fears of infection. At 2 pm local time (12:00 GMT), turnout was 26.5 per cent compared with 29.7 per cent at the same stage of voting four years ago, figures released by the state election commission showed.

Putin does not rule out renewed presidential candidacy

MOSCOW: Russian President Vladimir Putin did not rule out the possibility that he will stand again for the post of president, if a referendum confirms the biggest change to the constitution in the country's history. "I have not made any decisions yet," Putin said in a film by state television channel Rossiya 1 broadcast on Sunday. "I am not ruling out the possibility of running for office if the constitution allows. Let's see." Russians are due to vote on the question in a referendum planned for July 1. If Russia's constitution is amended, Putin would be able to stay in power for another 16 years, until 2036.

TALIBAN KIDNAP DOZENS OF CIVILIANS AMID PEACE EFFORTS

KABUL: Taliban militants kidnapped about 60 civilians in central Afghanistan over the past week, officials said on Sunday, with more than half still being held amid efforts by the United States and other foreign powers to start peace talks. The Taliban took the hostages in the central province of Daikundi after a woman escaped a Taliban-controlled village in a neighbouring province, according to the provincial deputy governor, Mohammad Ali Uruzgani. Some 26, including women and children, had been released and tribal elders were mediating to free the remaining civilians, Uruzgani added. A Taliban spokesman denied kidnapping the civilians.

— Agencies

WORLD

Latin America cases pass 2 million as Trump rally defies virus



President Donald Trump went ahead with a campaign rally, ignoring danger warnings by Tulsa health and municipal officials. — AFP

TULSA: Coronavirus infections in Latin America surged past two million, with worst-hit Brazil home to nearly half of the cases as the virus accelerates its spread in the region.

Europe, which has endured months of lockdowns to slow the virus but at a crippling economic cost, was set to further ease restrictions with Spain reopening to tourists on Sunday and Italy enjoying its first Serie A soccer match in 103 days.

In the US, which has been taking stuttering steps to reopen even as 20 states have reported a rebound in infections, President Donald Trump on Saturday claimed his measures had “saved millions of lives” as he addressed his first rally in months.

“Now it’s time to open

up, get back to work,” he told the crowd in Tulsa, Oklahoma, even as six members of his advance team tested positive for COVID-19. The world’s largest economy is taking a beating in a year when Trump seeks reelection.

Trump had downplayed the risk that the evening rally might trigger a coronavirus outbreak, ignoring danger warnings by Tulsa health and municipal officials.

After the president had boasted on Twitter that “almost one million people” had requested tickets for the rally, the 20,000-capacity arena was far from full, with many upper deck seats empty.

The United States remains the country hardest-hit by the pandemic with 119,719

deaths out of 2,254,630 official cases, according to a tally on Saturday by Johns Hopkins University.

With nearly 50,000 deaths and more than one million cases, Brazil is the second worst-affected.

In total Latin America and the Caribbean have 2,007,621 confirmed cases, according to an AFP tally based on official tallies.

The figures were particularly alarming in Chile, where the death toll nearly doubled to more than 7,000 under a revised tallying method, and passed 20,000 in Mexico.

Europe meanwhile chalked up more than 2.5 million cases. Although the spread has slowed, Europe is still the worst-affected continent. — AFP

IN BRIEF

After 14-week lockdown, Spain lifts its state of alert

MADRID: Spain on Sunday is finally lifting its lengthy state of emergency, imposed to curtail one of Europe’s worst coronavirus outbreaks. The country has recorded a death toll of more than 28,000 and more than 245,000 infections. After 14 weeks at home, Spaniards will be able to travel around the country outside the province where they live. As of Sunday, tourists from Schengen countries can enter the country, with travellers from everywhere else allowed back as of July 1.

Morocco opens field hospital after spike in virus cases

RABAT: A new field hospital in eastern Morocco will from Sunday receive around 700 COVID-19 patients following a sharp spike in infections in the kingdom, the government said. Morocco reported a record single-day rise in novel coronavirus cases on Friday after an outbreak was detected in fruit packing plants in eastern Kenitra province, prompting Rabat to tighten restrictions in the region.

China begins phase-2 human test for possible vaccine

BEIJING: Chinese researchers have started a second phase human trial of a possible coronavirus vaccine, the Institute of Medical Biology at Chinese Academy of Medical Sciences (IMBCAMS) said on Sunday, in efforts to further assess effectiveness and safety. About a dozen vaccines are in different stages of human tests globally, as the World Health Organization warns the coronavirus pandemic is accelerating and “the world is in a new and dangerous phase”. However, none of the vaccine trials have passed large-scale, late-stage phase 3 clinical trials, a necessary step before getting regulatory approval for sale.

— Agencies



Women are more likely to work in the highly vulnerable services sector. — AFP

WOMEN BEAR THE BRUNT OF VIRUS FALLOUT

VÉRONIQUE DUPONT

The reverberating economic shock of the coronavirus crisis has delivered a massive setback for women because so many work in the badly exposed services sector, experts say.

The nature of the outbreak means women are more likely than men to lose or quit their jobs in vulnerable low-paying workplaces like conference venues, hairdressing salons, hotels, pubs and restaurants, which faced extensive shut-downs.

School closures during lockdown have exacerbated the situation because more women than men tend to care for and teach their children, even while working from home.

The services sector, covering areas like hospitality and leisure, has been ravaged by lockdowns imposed by governments across the world trying to halt the spread of the disease.

“In the UK and the US, women more likely to lose their jobs because they are more likely to work in services,” said Cambridge University economics lecturer Christopher Rauh.

“When you lose your job you are not just losing income now — but also later on,” he said.

As lockdowns ease and infection rates and deaths fall, the services sector is often the last to reopen because it tends to rely on large numbers of people in close contact.

In Britain, stay-at-home measures began to be relaxed earlier this month but restaurants are expected to reopen only from July 4.

The phased reopening in England started with outdoor markets and car showrooms, and some younger children also returned to school. However, not all primary school children will return before the lengthy summer break that starts in mid-July and runs until the start of September. — AFP

Heal your own wounds!



ABDULAZIZ AL JAHDHAMI
aljahdhami22@gmail.com

The battle with coronavirus is still going on until unpredictable notice! Over the past months since the virus started attacking, people have been living in dark days and nights. If truth to be told, this health crisis drove people crazy for it disconnected the circles of their chain of life. It's becoming so hard for people to socially reunite or connect like the old days! However, eventually life will come back to normalcy.

Coronavirus presented the world with two critical issues; one is the illness caused by the virus itself, COVID-19. The second one is the anxiety and panic that the virus triggered in the minds of virtually everyone who hears about it. Despite the tremendous efforts being made worldwide to overcome this outbreak and solve its puzzle, the fight is still continuing till the vaccine is found.

This virus introduced people to a completely new world of life as they are chased by fear and stress of the virus. This issue is far more widespread than the virus itself, and it will likely persist long after this virus has passed. Coronavirus has become a real alien on earth scaring everyone even doctors, who stand as the frontline warriors and the experts in fighting such aliens. People have had hard time to keep up and got frustrated of staying at home for this long. They have missed their olden days and wanted to get back to work or restart their businesses again. Cheerfully, life have just started reviving its spirit and blooming again as regular decisions are being taken by the authorities locally to open up different commercial activities.

Moreover, the recent decision addressed to employees of government entities to resume work was a call of hope that inspired people to recover their spirit towards life. This was a direction to advise people manage their life while dealing with the virus cautiously. It reflects that life is not about waiting for the storm to pass, but about learning how to dance in the rain.

Moving to the next level of life, we should all realise that there is nothing in life we should be feared; things are only to be understood. It's all about being cautious, adherent to precautionary measures and stop panicking. As the saying goes, “a life lived in fear is a life half lived”. Worry is like a rocking chair; it gives you something to do, but never gets you anywhere. Hence, it is time to understand more about coronavirus, so that one should have less fear. Things could always be better, but they could also be worse. Sometimes, you may have to fight a battle more than once to win it, so always stay alert and cautious!

Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed in this page are solely those of the authors and do not reflect the opinion of the *Observer*.



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Oman arbitration centre to begin hearing disputes before year-end



INVESTMENT-FRIENDLY MEASURE:
ARBITRATION-BASED MECHANISM FOR
DISPUTE RESOLUTION AS AN
ALTERNATIVE TO THE CUMBERSOME
AND LITIGIOUS COURT SYSTEM

al commercial disputes, training courses it holds, and publications it issues."

With the availability of arbitration services in the Sultanate, parties to a commercial dispute need no longer travel outside of Oman to settle their disagreements.

Furthermore, the Oman Centre has set an outer limit of six months for the settlement of disputes brought to it for arbitration.

CONRAD PRABHU

MUSCAT: Oman's dedicated forum for the arbitration of commercial disputes is being prepped to receive cases – referred to it by either local or international parties – starting from the end of this year.

The entity, formally known as Oman Commercial Arbitration Centre, was formally unveiled last year as an independent and financially autonomous body operating under the broad auspices of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI). Its much-anticipated operationalisation will be welcomed by the local and international investor community which has long advocated for arbitration-based mechanisms for the resolution of commercial disputes outside of formal court-based legal forums.

"The Commercial Arbitration Centre is expected to be ready to receive disputes referred to it locally and globally in the last quarter of

2020," said the Implementation Support & Follow-up Unit (ISFU) of the Diwan of Royal Court – a special task force mandated to fast-track projects and initiatives designed to accelerate Oman's economic diversification.

The high-powered unit has played a key role in activating the Centre as part of a raft of initiatives aimed at enhancing Oman's investment appeal internationally. The new centre, which was unveiled last July, provides a much-needed platform for investors and other market players to find time-bound solutions to commercial and economic disputes as an alternative to the court system, where litigation can potentially drag on interminably.

"This initiative aims at establishing a centre that looks into commercial disputes that arise between the parties before going to court," said ISFU in its 2019 Annual Report. "The centre shall be administratively and financially independent, as it will be operated in the future through fees received in arbitration cases of local and international



Port of Salalah

ميناء صلالة

NOTICE TO ATTEND THE EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL MEETING AND ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING

The Board of Directors of Salalah Port Services Co. SAOG (the Company) invites shareholders to attend the extraordinary general meeting (EGM) and ordinary general meeting (OGM) to be held on Monday, 29 June 2020 at 3:00 pm, via the electronic platform for convening general meetings which can be accessed through the Muscat Clearing and Depository Company website (www.mcd.gov.om), if quorum is not met, the second meeting to be held on Sunday, 5 July 2020, at 3:00 pm, to discuss the following agenda:

EGM Agenda

- To consider and approve the amendments to the Company's Articles of Association to comply with the new Commercial Companies Law (RD18/2019).

OGM Agenda

- To elect one member (either a shareholder or non-shareholders) to the Board of Directors of the Company to fill the vacant seat on the board, resulting from the increase in the size of the Company's Board of Directors. Any person who wishes to be nominated shall complete the director's nomination form and submit it to the Company at least five days prior to the date of the meeting. Any form received after the 24 June 2020 will not be accepted.

In accordance with the Company's Articles of Association and the rules for convening general meetings via electronic means issued by the Capital Market Authority, we would like to draw your attention to the following:

- A legal (juristic) person, exclusively, shall have the right to appoint a natural person, as proxy, to attend the general meeting, and vote on decisions taken on his behalf using electronic means. Such natural person must have an investor number registered with the Muscat Clearing and Depository Company SAOC.
- Shareholders will be able to vote for the items set out in the agenda starting from 3 days prior to the meeting date up until the end of the voting process for that particular item presented in the agenda on the day of the meeting. If a shareholder's shareholding is increased or decreased, then such shareholders' votes will be void, and the shareholder will have to vote again on the day of the general meeting.

All invitees are requested to attend the meeting at least half an hour before the stated time.

For any queries relating to the above agenda, please contact Mr. Ashwani Jhamb (+968-23220512/ 99291760 or at info@salalahport.com).

Regards,

Chairman

External Auditor

Legal Advisor

OMANSAT INKS PACT FOR SATELLITE, VSAT SERVICES

MUSCAT: Space Communication Technologies – Omansat (SCT) and Dunes Middle East Company (Dunes) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding for providing Satellite Communication and VSAT services to the different verticals in the Omani market. Dunes will be providing Managed Satellite Services and System Integration, using the latest satellite technologies on Ka-Band from the SCT Earth Station in Al Amerat on the Omani Satellite payload @ 30.5 E. In addition to the Managed Satellite capacity, Dunes will be responsible for the implementation, commissioning and support for the running network on the ground while SCT will provide technical support to any satellite related issues. “This cooperation comes from our belief in supporting medium and small enterprises, especially



that Dunes recently acquired a class III telecom license to provide V-SAT satellite services, it is a young Omani company and we hope that this collaboration will result in the success of the two companies,” Eng Salim al Alawi (**pictured**), Executive Director of SCT. Khuwailid al Hinai, Managing Director of



Dunes Middle East, said “As a young, rising medium enterprise, Middle East Dunes Company is thrilled to have continuous support from Space Communication Technologies. This collaboration opens the door for us to start with the latest technologies in satellite communication era by utilising the latest high-throughput satellites. The

transformation of the market to the latest Ka Band satellite technologies in the Sultanate will make us one of the first companies that contribute to prepare the local market to switch to the Omani satellite services in the near future.” Space Communication Technologies LLC was established by the government of Oman with the mission to spearhead the National Satellite Programme initiative by building national satellite communications infrastructure and developing required capabilities to serve public and private sectors, coping with their immediate long-term telecommunication needs. Dunes Middle East is a local company specializing in the field of digital communication services. It has obtained a Class III license from the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority with the aim of transferring information through satellite connectivity.



MUSCAT: The Ministry of Technology and Communication’s (MTC) Main Technological Innovation Committee for Combating COVID-19, in cooperation with the youth development sector of the 10th 5-Year Plan implemented by the Supreme Council for Planning, organised on Sunday the Youth ICT Lab. The event will discuss opportunities for young Omanis in crafting ICT based solutions designed to help local economic sectors addressed challenges posed by the pandemic. Using online channels, a number of youth

YOUTH ICT LAB KICKS OFF

working groups are focused on three main sectors: education, services and health. They will propose innovative digital solutions to enhance community participation in these sectors. Eng Zaid bin Abdullah al Salmani, Head of the Youth Sector Development Group at the 10 Five-Year Plan, spoke about the importance of this lab, and introduced the tenth five-year plan as it is the first implementation plan for Oman 2040 vision. Dr Salim bin Sultan al Ruzaiqi, CEO of the Ministry of Technology and Communications, stated, “We believe that youth have a great role in the development of various sectors, including the information and communications technology sector, and this cannot be realized without the youth active involvement, hence, we, at MTC, welcome the innovators and

their initiatives through many projects, among which : Sas Center for the Fourth Industrial Revolution, Sas Center for Mobile Apps Development and Sas Center for Entrepreneurship.” Thuraiya bint Muhammad al Harthi, member of the Main Technological Innovation Committee for Combating COVID-10, said: “The committee organizes and directs the specialized national capabilities to provide innovative ICT solutions to address the novel coronavirus in the field of rapid diagnostic and epidemiological investigation, provision of medicine and remote health care in addition to providing health and medication supplies and prevention solutions, and will work to strengthen quarantine procedures, social distancing and finding a unified mechanism to enhance social solidarity.”

BUSINESS

SOHAR INTERNATIONAL APPROVES 3PC DIVIDEND AND BONUS SHARES

MUSCAT: Sohar International hosted the extraordinary general meeting (EGM) and the annual general meeting (AGM) for the year 2019 via the electronic general meeting platform of the Muscat Clearing and Depository (MCD), in which shareholders approved a cash dividend of 3 per cent of share capital (3 baizas per share) and bonus shares of 3 per cent of share capital (3 shares for every 100 shares held).

Commenting on the bank's overall performance, Mohammed Mahfoudh al



Ardhi, Chairman, said: "Sohar International's momentum continues to propel it forward amidst challenging conditions. The vision set forth for the organisation has been validated by the overall performance of the bank aimed at generating sustainable

value and long-term benefits to the stakeholders, community, and the nation at large, complimenting the government's agenda to achieve Oman Vision 2040."

Ahmed al Musalmi, Chief Executive Officer of Sohar International, said: "The year financial results for

2019 are a testament of the compelling value propositions offered by Sohar International (SI), and the progress we have been making on our strategic agenda towards realizing our vision of becoming a world-leading Omani service company that helps customers, communities and people to prosper and grow.

Promoting the spirit of 'winning', the Bank has achieved market leading performance, reflecting SI's growing strengths in its competitiveness in line with its long term strategy."

Riyada cardholders get Ooredoo discount

MUSCAT: Committed to supporting the Sultanate's entrepreneurial community, especially as it navigates its way through the COVID-19 pandemic, Ooredoo is offering a massive 50 per cent off for Riyada (Public Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development) cardholders. Available on Ooredoo Internet Professional (OIP) and Shahry Business eezee new monthly subscriptions, users can take advantage of up to 60 GB of data, speeds ranging from 5 Mbps to 350 Mbps, and a host of other exciting benefits from just RO 2.5 for mobile and RO 22.5 for fixed line.

Sultan bin Ahmed al Wahaibi (**pictured**), Chief of Business and Wholesale Officer at Ooredoo, said, "At Ooredoo, we have designed customised services for SME's and Small Office Home Office businesses (SoHo's) to manage their communications efficiently and cost effec-

tively. As COVID-19 has begun to impact the economy, we know that SMEs in particular, need a little more help. That's why we are offering our support through various special offers and freebies, as well as through our CSR programmes."

Ooredoo's B2B portfolio focuses on providing total communications solutions that support the needs of business big and small. Its popular OIP fixed line packages offer a choice of unlimited internet bundles of different speeds along with voice minutes and international calling discounts.

Meanwhile, Shahry Business eezee provides mobile internet and a wide range of plans, tailored to meet each company's needs. With the new offer, all Riyada cardholders are entitled to 50 per cent off Ooredoo's 12 and 24 month OIP plans as well as 50 per cent off a number of Shahry Business eezee mobile bundles.

Accent on safety at Towell Auto Centre showrooms

MUSCAT: With the worldwide COVID-19 situation continuing to play a role in how we manage our daily movements and personal well-being, Towell Auto Centre (TAC) is taking essential steps to ensure customers stay safe and healthy while visiting their showrooms located across the Sultanate of Oman.

"Experience safe buying. We are ready to serve you!" is Towell Auto Centre's message to customers who would like to view and experience their auto industry brands – including the award-winning Mazda and Geely range of vehicles.

During their visit, in the interest of optimum health, safety, and peace of mind, all Towell Auto Centre customers are

required to sanitize their hands, take a thermal screening check on arrival, and wear face masks and hand gloves. Social distancing protocols also apply at all times throughout the showroom.

The precautions also apply to all Towell Auto Centre team members and administration staff present at the showrooms.

Towell Auto Centre's staff cabins, work spaces, and contact points like door handles and hand rails are also completely sanitized on a regular basis, in addition to the customer reception areas being fumigated. Furthermore, all the vehicles on display around the showrooms are sanitized regularly.

OCEC head elected as UFI Vice-Chair



MUSCAT: Eng Said Salim al Shanfari (pictured), CEO - Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre (OCEC), has been elected as the 1st Vice-Chair of UFI Middle East / Africa.

UFI is the global association of the world's leading trade-show organisers and fairground owners, as well as the major national and international exhibition associations, and selected partners of the exhibition industry. UFI has 802 members from more than 88 countries.

The successful candidates begin their three-year mandate in November. UFI's Chapter Chairs work to deliver events, education, research, and advocacy for the members in their respective region and they represent the respective chapters on both the UFI Executive Committee and the Board of Directors.

A balanced approach towards Omanisation



AHMED AL QASSABI

MUSCAT: The Omanisation drive isn't something new and over the years the government has brought in regulations and restrictions regarding the employment of expatriates. The recent mandate to intensify the Omanisation focus has come at a time where the economy and firms are managing the uncertainty caused by the COVID- 19 pandemic and the oil crisis. While adding the Omanisation drive to the agenda may cause additional considerations it could yet prove to be a key economic continuity and growth strategy in these uncertain times.

Apart from addressing the growing unemployment concern, the Omanisation drive could be the enablement of the country to be become self-reliant in terms of talent availability. The growing need for self-reliance is emphasised due to the current restriction of employment migrations due to COVID-19. While there have been a number of initiatives taken for Omani skills development by the government and firms, there are still sectors and roles which are still dependent on expatriate workers. Sustained interventions and focused investments towards capability building are not only required to address current skills gaps but also to factor in the future of work which is expected to be drastically transformed. Local talent development could play a pivotal role in fulfilling the workforce requirements across sectors and businesses not only in the short-medium term but also for the future.

A large portion of the



Intensifying the Omanisation drive could prove to be a key move for economic continuity and growth plans of Oman but requires a well-planned, balanced approach

AHMED AL QASSABI

workforce population in Oman consists of expatriates, and while a certain percentage of their earnings generated is spent within the country, a significant portion of these earnings are accumulated over a period of time and end up as remittances to other countries. With an increased Omani workforce, there is very likely a higher degree of earnings that is retained in the country, which can directly contribute to economic development.

The government in recent years has increased its focus on developing in-

country based Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and now, coupled with the increasing focus on Omanisation, can enable domestic business to grow. With more local resources available, the supply chain costs associated with goods and services used and produced within the country can be measured.

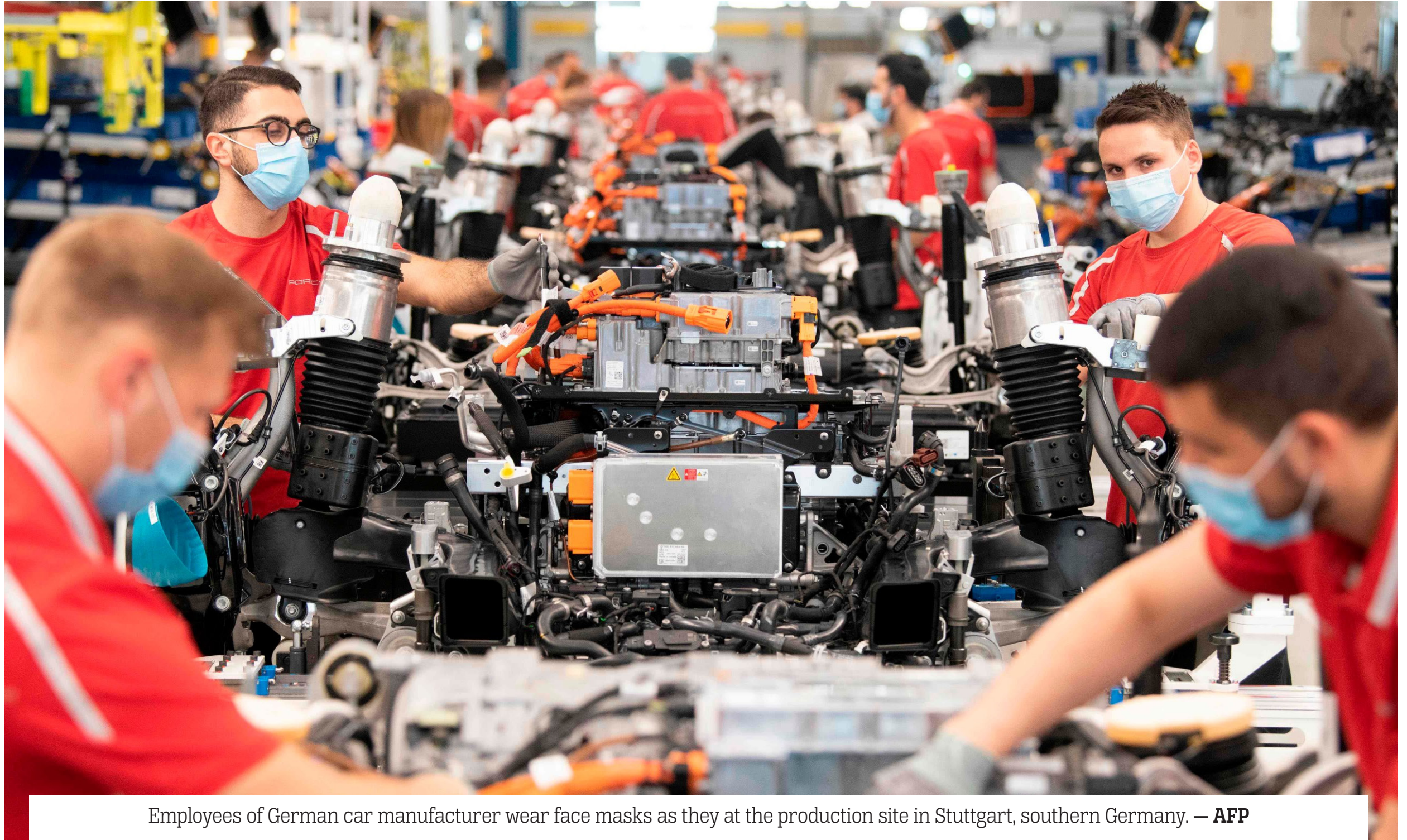
While there are benefits to be gained from the Omanisation drive, the process needs to be balanced as expatriates have significantly contributed to the country's development over the last 50 years. Oman has built a strong reputation as being one of the friendliest and preferred countries for expatriates to work in in the Middle East region. There has also been increasing focus on foreign direct investments, public-private partnerships, travel and tourism. The Sultanate's Vision 2040 lays the foundation for diversifying the economy to various other sectors in order to reduce reliance on oil revenues.

These future plans and focus will have a high degree of dependency on global markets and expatriate capabilities. Using a future based planning approach, taking into account the future risks as well as the impact and consequences of current decisions will assist in arriving at the most viable options.

[The writer is Managing Partner (Oman Office) at Deloitte & Touche (ME) & Co LLC]



BUSINESS



Employees of German car manufacturer wear face masks as they at the production site in Stuttgart, southern Germany. — AFP

Germany climbing out of economic slump

BERLIN: Germany has turned the corner on the worst of an economic crisis sparked by the coronavirus pandemic and is now on the path to recovery, the central bank chief of Europe's biggest economy said Sunday.

"We experienced in the last months the deepest economic slump in Germany's (post-war) history," Jens Weidmann told Sunday's edition of the daily Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung.

"The good news is: the trough should be behind us by now, and things are looking up again. But the deep slump is being followed only by a comparatively gradual recovery."

Weidmann, who has never minced his words against expansionary policies ramped through in the past by the European Central Bank, on Sunday also voiced support for the unprecedented economic rescue and stimulus packages unleashed by Berlin to shield German companies and jobs.

Chancellor Angela Merkel's government had stunned observers in March when it unveiled a rescue package worth 1.1 trillion euros,

Chancellor Angela Merkel's government had stunned observers in March when it unveiled a rescue package worth 1.1 trillion euros, smashing through a long-held no new debt dogma to fund the measures

smashing through a long-held no new debt dogma to fund the measures.

Earlier this month, it said it would plough another 130 billion euros into various schemes, including a cut in VAT, to stimulate the economy.

Reacting to comments that Germany, once known as a "frugal" nation, was now dramatically loos-

ening its purse strings, Weidmann said: "The image of the Swabish housewife is often wrongly portrayed."

"She is not saving for the sake of saving, but so that there is money that can be spent sensibly and in case there are difficult times. And that is precisely the case here."

Like nations across Europe, Germany shut schools, shops and sent workers home from mid-March to halt transmission of the coronavirus.

The impact of the health crisis has pushed the economy into a deep recession believed to be the worst since World War II.

After the rate of new infections dropped sharply, Europe's biggest economy began easing restrictions in early May although social distancing rules are still in place and huge events banned.

Nevertheless, the improved health situation and the huge government support have helped lift sentiment, with a closely-watched survey showing confidence among investors surging to its highest level since before the financial crisis. — AFP

SPORTS

‘YANKS, METS TO TRAIN IN NEW YORK IF MLB RESUMES’

NEW YORK: New York Governor Andrew Cuomo announced on Saturday that the Yankees and Mets would train in the state if Major League Baseball attempts to start its coronavirus-delayed season.

The teams confirmed the decision of Cuomo, who said he'd like to stop by to see the teams on the field.

"I think New York now is especially attractive, compared to the other states, because we have such a low transmission rate, and this is a state that is ready, willing and able to partner with sports teams so that they can play," Cuomo said in a conference call.

The Yankees initially planned to venture to their spring training complex in Tampa, Fla., however the Sunshine State has seen a recent rise in positive tests for the coronavirus.

The Mets were undecided between New York



I think New York now is especially attractive, compared to the other states, because we have such a low transmission rate, and this is a state that is ready, willing and able to partner with sports teams so that they can play."

ANDREW CUOMO

and their training camp in Port St. Lucie, Fla. Now, they'll train at Citi Field while the Yankees will be at Yankee Stadium.

"As New York Governor Andrew Cuomo announced this afternoon, the New York Yankees will hold a potential spring training resump-

tion at Yankee Stadium," the Yankees said in a statement. "We will continue to follow Major League Baseball's guidelines and protocols, and we will vigilantly work with Governor Cuomo, Mayor (Bill) de Blasio and their health authorities, as well as with federal officials and Major League Baseball's own medical and infectious

disease experts, to ensure our facility maintains the best possible safety standards.

"The health and safety of our players, staff and employees, and of their respectively families, will always be our top priority."

Cuomo said he really liked the idea of the local teams training in New York.

"To have spring training in New York, that is a really great development," Cuomo said. "It's where I think they should always be, obviously. But in a bleak time, and in a season that obviously has had significant hurdles to deal with, to have a spring training quick camp in New York, that is the first bit of really good news when it comes to baseball that we've had in a long time."

— Reuters



SPORTS



49ERS LT WILLIAMS PASSES PHYSICAL, SIGNS DEAL

SAN FRANCISCO: Left tackle Trent Williams is officially a San Francisco 49er after passing a physical and signing a restructured contract, multiple media outlets reported on Saturday.

Williams posted a photo of himself signing the deal on Instagram.

Multiple outlets reported that around half of his \$12.5 million salary for 2020 converted into guaranteed money.

Williams, who turns 32 next month, is expected to slide in as the starting left tackle after arriving via draft-day trade in April.

WILLIAMS, WHO TURNS 32 NEXT MONTH, IS EXPECTED TO SLIDE IN AS THE STARTING LEFT TACKLE AFTER ARRIVING VIA DRAFT-DAY TRADE IN APRIL. HE'LL BE REPLACING JOE STALEY, THE SIX-TIME PRO BOWLER WHO RETIRED AT AGE 35 EARLIER THIS OFFSEASON.



He'll be replacing Joe Staley, the six-time Pro Bowler who retired at age 35 earlier this offseason.

Williams had made seven consecutive Pro Bowls before sitting out all of 2019 due to a health- and contract-related dispute with the Washington Redskins. He requested a trade that was eventually granted, with San Francisco sending a 2020 fifth-round pick and a 2021 third-rounder in the deal.

The nine-year veteran is scheduled to hit free agency next spring. — **Reuters**



Djokovic wins compliment from James for basketball skills

NEW YORK: Novak Djokovic has charmed many over the years with his exploits on the tennis courts but the men's world number one now also has an admirer of his basketball skills in American great LeBron James.

Djokovic, who has been busy organising an exhibition tennis tournament in the Balkan region while the professional season is suspended due to the novel coronavirus, posted a video of himself trying some

“

Am I ready for a 1:1 @KingJames?

NOVAK DJOKOVIC,
WORLD NO 1

basketball moves on social media.

“

Ha! I’m going to say I think you are!! Beautiful follow-thru on that shot buddy!

LEBRON JAMES,
BASKETBALL GREAT

The video, addressed to James, shows the 33-year-

old Djokovic taking a few dribbles before knocking down a mid-range jumpshot.

“Am I ready for a 1:1 @KingJames?” asked Djokovic, who previously termed Kobe Bryant, the 18-time NBA All-Star who died in a helicopter crash in January, a great mentor and friend.

The NBA star did not take long to respond.

“Ha! I’m going to say I think you are!! Beautiful follow-thru on that shot buddy!” James said in his reply on Twitter. — **Reuters**

SPORTS

FOUR-WAY TIE AFTER THIRD ROUND OF RBC HERITAGE

NEW YORK: Webb Simpson was forced to make some room at the top of the leaderboard after the third round of the RBC Heritage in South Carolina on Saturday, with a four-way tie for first injecting drama into Sunday's finale.

The 2012 US Open champion played a solid round with four birdies and a bogey, but it was not enough to fend off Briton Tyrrell Hatton, who had eight birdies on a day of stellar putting to equal Webb's three-day, 15-under par effort.

"I think I've only missed one putt inside six feet in three days," Hatton told reporters. "Holing out has been really good and been pretty solid from inside 20 feet, which is nice, and I hope that continues tomorrow."

Rounding out the four-way tie for first place were Abraham Ancer and Ryan Palmer, who shot six and five under par respectively, with 11 other golfers all within two strokes of first place heading into the final round.

Daniel Berger, who walked away with the winner's plaid jacket at last weekend's Colonial, hit nine birdies for eight under par, sitting one stroke behind first place.

"I don't think I've ever played this consistent for this amount of time," said Berger. "I feel like I've got a great plan in order to get prepared and play well every week."

The fierce competition on Hilton Head Island, South Carolina, showed there was little rust left to shake off as the PGA Tour returned to action last week after a three-month hiatus due to the coronavirus outbreak.

American Nick Watney withdrew after testing positive for COVID-19 at the second round on Friday, rattling some golfers on the tour.

— Reuters

“

I think I've only missed one putt inside six feet in three days. Holing out has been really good and been pretty solid from inside 20 feet, which is nice, and I hope that continues tomorrow.

TYRRELL HATTON,
BRITAIN



FEATURES

ROHM launches two exciting shows on Youtube

The Royal Opera House Muscat launched a series of free broadcasts on its YouTube channel which can be viewed by audiences anywhere, anytime, at their convenience... **page 20**



PHOTO BY YERU EBUEN

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WHAT'S INSIDE

Bob Dylan releases first original album in almost a decade



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Tunisia rediscovers traditional art of calligraphy



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ROHM launches two exciting shows on Youtube

The Royal Opera House Muscat launched a series of free broadcasts on its YouTube channel which can be viewed by audiences anywhere, anytime, at their convenience. The Magic Flute or Defeating the Monsters will be made accessible for viewing on the 21st June 2020 and Sounds of Summer Blooms will be released on 23rd June 2020.

THE MAGIC FLUTE OR DEFEATING THE MONSTERS

This wonderful interactive opera is based on Mozart's Die Zauberflöte and was commissioned by ROHM and presented by Teatro Sociale di Como As. Li.Co on the 23rd March 2016. Hundreds of school children enjoyed the show, truly engaging with the performance and opening them up to the world of opera and music. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756 - 1791) was a child prodigy, performing to royalty by the age of 5, who in his lifetime wrote over 600

pieces of music, 13 of which were operas. He died in penury in his 35th year. He is probably the most famous classical musician in the world.

The Magic Flute is about a young man who takes on a series of tasks to win the hand, heart and freedom of his love. This interactive production begins as night falls: in his bedroom, a boy is pretending to read a book, waiting for the chance to resume his favorite video game, The Magic Flute, where the hero Tamino, fights an incredible monster to save the beautiful Pamina, daughter of the Queen of the Night. The game becomes reality and the boy becomes Tamino, the fight becomes a fight for his life.

Mozart's Die Zauberflöte is an opera about virtue versus evil, daylight versus night, reason versus irrationality. Mozart delves into the characters, fears and heart's desires to create a story matched by a musical score of drama and lightness. Our version of The

Magic Flute is tailored to draw in younger listeners to opera. Look out for the marvellous arias of Papageno and the Queen of the Night, songs which have become symbolic of Mozart and opera which is accessible to all audiences, young and old, both those new to opera and seasoned fans.

SOUNDS OF SUMMER BLOOMS

As part of our ongoing collaboration with the National Centre for the Performing Arts (NCPA) China NCPA, we are releasing a special concert celebrating the 250th anniversary of the birth of Beethoven on our YouTube channel. The concert was staged as part of their online concert series 'Sound of Summer Blooms' and performed by the Orchestra of the National Centre for the Performing Arts, China.

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)

Ludwig van Beethoven was a German composer and pianist, who is arguably the defining

figure in the history of Western music. Beethoven moved to Vienna in 1792, where he met influential composers like Haydn and began to compose in earnest.

By 1796, he had begun to suffer from tinnitus and to lose his hearing. In the last 10 years of his life, during which time he continued to compose, he was completely deaf.

PROGRAMME

The concert presents two works by Beethoven. Symphony No.1 in C major, Op.21. This was his first symphony, very classical in style which aptly heralds a new dawn and changes ahead for the symphonic form of the day. The second pieces is his Symphony No.6 in F major, Op. 68 also known as the "Pastorale", a beautiful piece inspired by the sounds of nature: Spring, bird-song and the drama and vibrancy of a storm. This type of symphony was a ground breaking form of music at the time. Both pieces have a happy, uplifting feel for audiences to enjoy.



FEATURES

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



Bob Dylan releases first original album in almost a decade

US FOLK AND rock legend Bob Dylan released his first album of original songs in eight years on Friday with the ten-track “Rough and

Rowdy Ways.” Dylan’s 39th studio album, which comes 58 years after his first, features a 17-minute ballad about the assas-

sination of John F Kennedy, as well as a tribute to American electric blues-man Jimmy Reed.

“Rough and Rowdy Ways” is the Nobel winner’s first collection of new material since “Tempest” in 2012, although he has released a number of cover albums in the interim.

It sees Dylan mix gritty blues with folksy storytelling, his signature raspy voice delivering lyrics that switch between bleakly haunting and darkly humorous.

At times he sounds warm, at other times scathing.

In the album’s opening song “I Contain Multitudes,” the 79-year-old grapples with mortality.

He starts by singing tenderly, “Today and tomorrow and yesterday too / The flowers are dying like all things do.”

Later he says: “I sleep with life and death in the same bed.”

Dylan was asked about the lyrics in a recent interview with The New York Times, his first since he won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2016.

“I think about the death of the human race. The long strange trip of the naked ape,” he replied.

“Not to be light on it, but everybody’s life is so transient. Every human being, no matter how strong or mighty, is frail when it comes to death. I think about it in general terms, not in a personal way.”

The songs run through 20th century pop culture, touch on myths and refer to historical and fictional

figures — some light, others tragic.

In “I Contain Multitudes,” Dylan cites Indiana Jones, Anne Frank and the Rolling Stones in the same verse.

“Murder Most Foul,” first revealed in March, retells the shooting of President Kennedy in Dallas, Texas while describing the evolution of 1960s counter-culture.

The song, which rose to the top of the Billboard chart, is packed with artist name-drops including the Eagles, Charlie Parker, Stevie Nicks, Woodstock and The Beatles.

‘ABSOLUTE CLASSIC’ -

Dylan — some of whose most-loved songs from the 1960s and 70s addressed police brutality and racism, such as “Hurricane” — also mentions the Tulsa race massacre of 1921.

The “Birdman of Alcatraz,” a convicted murderer who became a respected ornithologist raising birds in prison, gets a mention, too.

Recounting Kennedy’s slaying, Dylan sings: “We’re gonna kill you with hatred, without any respect / We’ll mock you and shock you and we’ll put it in your face / We’ve already got someone here to take your place.”

In “False Prophet,” the album’s six-minute second track, Dylan sounds cocky and unapologetic as he addresses his own mythology.

“I ain’t no false prophet / I just said what I said / I’m just here to bring vengeance on somebody’s head,” he sings over a slow blues riff.— **AFP**

FEATURES



Tunisia rediscovers traditional art of calligraphy

TUNISIA'S PRESIDENT has become a surprise champion of Arabic calligraphy in his country, shining a light on the artistic tradition as Arab states lobby for its recognition by UNESCO.

President Kais Saied sparked both admiration and mockery on social media when images emerged of hand-written presidential letters on official paper not long after he took office in October last year.

An academic with a keen interest in the art form, Saied had studied with well-known Tunisian calligrapher Omar Jomni.

To prove that Saied had penned the documents himself, the presidency released a video showing him writing in a guest book.

The president “writes official correspondence in maghrebi script and private letters in diwani”, Jomni said, referring to two forms of Arabic calligraphy.

Maghrebi script is a form of the older, angular style of Kufic calligraphy, while diwani is a more ornamental Ottoman style popular for poetry.

The president’s “recognition” of calligraphy has warmed artists’ hearts,

Jomni said, giving them hope for a brighter future for an art form that was like “a closed book”.

NOT JUST A ‘TECHNICAL SKILL’

Calligraphy in Tunisia lacks the prominence it enjoys in some other Arab countries — such as in the Gulf — and its National Centre of Calligraphic Arts, created in 1994, risks closing its doors.

With a lack of instructors, courses will likely have to end this year, according to the institute’s head, Abdel Jaoued Lotfi.

“There are not enough professional calligraphers in Tunisia,” said calligraphy master Jomni, who is in his sixties.

“You can count them on one hand and they are working in precarious conditions.”

Sixteen Arab countries, including Tunisia, Egypt, Iraq and Saudi Arabia, have prepared a proposal to have Arabic calligraphy inscribed on the UNESCO list of humanity’s intangible cultural heritage.

It’s a chance to consider calligraphy “as a whole culture and living heritage... and not just as a simple technical skill”, said Imed Soula, a researcher overseeing Tunisia’s submission to the UN cultural body.

He said Tunisia’s fading calligraphy practice, which

traditionally saw artists tackle surfaces like copper or stone, was also linked to the growing use of new technologies, some of which have moved it away from its performing-art dimension.

But Jomni said calligraphy in Tunisia suffered from “the brutal and chaotic marginalisation of Islamic culture during the ‘60s, whose repercussions we still feel today”.

UPDATING TRADITION

The country’s first president, Habib Bourguiba (1957-1987), dismantled and divided up the Islamic University of Ez-Zitouna after a power struggle with its clerical leadership.

Books and manuscripts from the institute, then Tunisia’s main Arab-language university and one of the most important in the Muslim world, were seized.

Tunisian calligrapher Mohamed Salah Khamasi studied there at the start of the 20th century and laid down the foundations for calligraphy in the country, passing his knowledge on to several generations.

Following the 2011 revolution that set Tunisia on the road to democracy, a young generation of calligraphers is now calling for a reinvention of the art form to reflect the spirit of the times — “so that it doesn’t get rusty and outdated”, Karim Jabbari said.— **AFP**