

The Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn) is working towards developing Madayn Vision-2040 to be along the lines of Oman Vision 2040, said Hasan bin Marhoon al Marhoon, Director- General of Planning and Business Development at Madayn. Al Marhoon informed that the gross investment volume in Madayn's various industrial cities touched RO 6.6 billion by the end of 2019 marking a growth rate of 1.54 per cent compared to the same period in 2018. **DETAILS ON P13**



P12

THIEM GRINDS THROUGH TWO TIEBREAKS TO REACH US OPEN FINAL



P15

CHINA WOULD RATHER SEE TIKTOK US CLOSE THAN A FORCED SALE



P19

YOUR ULTIMATE OMAN STAYCATION IDEA



OMAN

Rental market under pressure

MUSCAT: Residential and commercial rents in the Sultanate continued to fall due to a combination of factors including the impact from COVID-19 pandemic, drop in expat population and low oil prices. "Expatriates play a significant role in influencing demand for real estate. Market conditions in both the residential and office space rental sectors in Muscat were already in slowdown or recession prior to the COVID-19 pandemic as a result of slow economic growth and negligible net population growth", Ihsan Kharouf, head of Savills Oman, said.

DETAILS ON P5

REGION

Bahrain, Israel normalise ties

WASHINGTON: Bahrain and Israel have agreed to establish full diplomatic relations, the White House announced late on Friday, and the Gulf Arab nation will take part in a ceremony this week in Washington to mark the fresh start. The deal with Bahrain comes four weeks after the UAE reached a similar agreement with Israel, in what White House officials say is a new trend in the Middle East, dubbed a "regional transformation." The move comes despite no progress on peace between Israel and the Palestinians, long seen as the main roadblock towards Arab nations agreeing to recognise the Jewish state. The White House statement announcing the deal made no mention of a Palestinian state. — dpa

INSIDE



PERU CONGRESS OPENS IMPEACHMENT MOVE AGAINST PRESIDENT **P7**



UN CHIEF CALLS ON EU TO SHARE OUT MIGRANTS FROM LESBOS **P8**

WEATHER TODAY

MUSCAT
MAX: 40°C
MIN: 28°C

SALALAH
MAX: 31°C
MIN: 27°C

NIZWA
MAX: 42°C
MIN: 28°C

SUNRISE 05:53 AM

PRAYER TIMINGS

FAJR: 04:37
DHUHR: 12:08
ASR: 15:35
MAGHRIB: 18:18
ISHA: 19:29





NIZWA SOUQ SPRINGS BACK TO LIFE

Shoppers started visiting Nizwa Souq as it was reopened recently after months due to coronavirus restrictions. Traders and shoppers were happy to be back at the souq together, but apart with social distancing. Shopkeepers also ensured that shoppers and staff wore masks and used sanitisers. **DETAILS ON P3**

Afghan peace talks open with calls for ceasefire

DOHA: Afghan government representatives and Taliban insurgents gathered on Saturday for historic peace talks aimed at ending two decades of war that has killed tens of thousands of combatants and civilians. Ahead of face-to-face negotiations in coming days, the warring sides were urged by various countries and groups to reach an immediate ceasefire and forge an agreement that upholds women's rights. The government of US President Donald Trump, who is eager to claim an end to America's longest conflict as he seeks re-election, expressed its intention to use aid as leverage for a deal.

The opening ceremony came one day after the 19th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks on the United States that triggered its military involvement in Afghanistan. Secretary of State

Mike Pompeo urged the warring sides to seize the opportunity to strike a comprehensive peace deal, while acknowledging many challenges lay ahead. "The choice of your political system is yours to make", he told the opening ceremony in the Qatari capital Doha. "We believe firmly that protecting the rights of all Afghans is the best way for you to break the cycle of violence".

The head of Afghanistan's peace council, Abdullah Abdullah, said that even if the two sides could not agree on all points, they should compromise.

"My delegation is in Doha representing a political system that is supported by millions of men and women from a diversity of cultural, social and ethnic backgrounds in our homeland", he said.

SEE ALSO P6

Researchers find potentially active Omani medicinal plant



KAUSHALENDRA SINGH SALALAH, SEPT 12

Researchers in Oman in partnership with international scientists have achieved a rare scientific breakthrough by isolating, characterising, and elucidating three new organic compounds, which were never known before.

The work, published recently in the *Journal of Natural Products*, was done on a local traditional Omani plant known as 'Woodfordia uniflora'.

After two years of extensive research, the teams of Dhofar University's (DU) Research Centre and South Korean University's College of Pharmacy achieved this breakthrough.

Prof Luay Rashan, Principal Investigator at DU Research Centre, said, the organic compounds were screened against two well know pathogenic fungi that are responsible for many infections in humans.

"The first pathogenic fungus is known Candida

Albicans which causes genital infections. Whereas, the second fungus is known as Cryptococcus Neoformans which causes an infection associated with immunosuppressive individuals and usually spread throughout the nervous system".

It was found the three new compounds are active against the two fungi. However, one of these compounds which are named 'Woodfordiamycin' was potentially very active against both fungi especially the second fungus and this activity was 10 times more than the well-known drug used in the clinics named as Fluconazole, said Prof Luay Rashan.

Prof Luay revealed that the synthesis of 'Woodfordiamycin' is underway. For this, an arrangement has been done between the research teams of Dhofar University and Martin-Luther King University, Germany.

TURN TO P2

STICK TO SAFETY NORMS TO AVOID VIRUS SPREAD

SECOND WAVE IS INEVITABLE, BUT WE CAN AVOID IT

SAMUEL KUTTY MUSCAT, SEPT 12

Despite fluctuating COVID-19 infection and mortality cases, the Supreme Committee on pandemic is not mulling any lockdown as of now, said Dr Ahmed bin Mohammed al Saeedi, Minister of Health, asserting that the national economy cannot be shut for long.

"I am sure that we will overcome this pandemic. I am sure that no one wants us to return to the state of closure. Any further decision that might turn to be necessary in future, God forbids, may entail serious losses for the national economy," he said.

The minister made these comments during the weekend press briefing of the Supreme Committee dealing with the pandemic in the Sultanate.

The minister also insisted that people must take extreme caution, and they should exhibit

greater alertness and responsibility in public places to tackle the health crisis.

A second wave of coronavirus is inevitable, but we can avoid it through full commitment to precautionary measures that include wearing face masks and following other healthy habits, the minister added.

"The more we reduce the infection rate in the community by adhering to preventive measures, the more we are able to return to normal life", he said.

While urging institutions to ensure only 70 per cent attendance of employees, Dr Saif bin Salim al Abri, Director-General of Disease Surveillance and Control at the Ministry of Health, asked people who have serious symptoms of infection not to go to offices or other places.

"Hundred per cent attendance of employees at the workplace is violation of the decisions of the Supreme Committee," he said.

“100 per cent attendance of employees at workplace is violation of the decisions of the Supreme Committee”
DR SAIF BIN SALIM AL ABRI
Ministry of Health



Balsams paint Dhofar purple

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
MUSCAT, SEPT 12

Come September, Dhofar is awash in colours mostly purple. Slopes of hills of Mughsayl facing the sea are decked with flowers in full bloom.

But there are the mountains like Aiteen and others which are blessed with floral abundance. And only in September do we get to this sight or in some years may be late August.

Apparently balsam flowers reseed themselves prolifically.

Some of the experts say balsam could have originated from SouthEast Asia. They are considered to be long-lasting blooms, which are a major attraction for butterflies. But in Salalah they appear only during this season — right after the monsoon and are also a photographer's delight.

The mystery is when did this species make their first appearance and why only one colour. In other countries they would be in gardens but in Salalah they grow in the wild.

Balsam comes in different colours but in Salalah's landscape it is just the purple variety. As they multiply easily, to see all of them grow at the same time is a sight that is amazing.

Balsams have not disappointed this year also and have already made their appearance.

Capturing the spectacular sceneries unique to Salalah has been Salim al



Rahbi an expert on wild plants of Oman. "Yes, this year's season is exceptionally beautiful! I have not seen some of the species for many years. Some of the flowers I have come across are Impatiens

Balsamina, Gladiolus Candidus, Oci-mum Obscura, Heliotropium Longflo-rum and one of the beautiful butterflies I came across was Plain Tiger (Danaus Chrysippus)," said Al Rahbi.

Asked why the flowers disappear for the rest of the year, Salim explained, "These plants bloom right after the rain stops as soon as they get the exposure of the sunlight. They are there until the sea-son changes".

Salim regularly introduces his social media followers of his Facebook page to the indigenous species of the Sultanate titled, 'Encyclopedia of Omani Flowers'.

To the question, "Which is his favourite wildflower?" he replied, "Nature is my life. Everything about nature is my favourite. My relationship with nature is since childhood. I am a simple villager from Ibra. I like to share information so people can see and protect the beauty of nature."

Balsams look delicate but are tough plants and can thrive under shades and in moist woods. So the transition period between summer with monsoon and winter in Salalah is ideal. The barks of the trees tend to be stark black after the constant drizzle of the monsoon and in contrast are the splash of colours from these dark green plants and light coloured stems with their purple flowers.

Their seed pods are an attraction too — just touch them and they will burst popping seeds everywhere.

In other parts of the world these flowers are also used by herbalists for the inflammation of the skin and even for snakebites.

And when the weather moves on the plants go too only to return next year.

MoCIIP renews 500 licences

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) renewed over 500 expired licences online for commercial establishments from June to August 2 due to COVID-19.

Khalid bin Khamis al Masrouri, Director of the Department of Audit and Control of Commercial Establishments at MoCIIP said that the decision comes in line with the Supreme Committee's precautionary measures to curb the spread of the virus. As the ministry could not conduct inspection due to coronavirus restrictions, the Ministry decided to open e-platform to facilitate the procedures for renewing the investor's card for one year.

Al Masrouri pointed out that the foreign capital investment law offers an attractive invest-

ment environment for investors. He said the aim of the investment incentives and benefits is to encourage foreign investments in the Sultanate and enhance economic development.

He pointed out that the foreign capital investment law authorises the investor to establish a company in one of the permissible activities by owning the entire capital of the company without minimum capital requirement.

The foreign investor has to adhere to the schedule submitted by him to implement his investment project approved in accordance with the economic feasibility study.

The investor should not make any substantial amendments to the investment project without obtaining approval from the ministry.

Researchers find potentially active medicinal plant

FROM PAGE 1

"We hope to blindly screen the compound first which could be a future antibiotic. We believe it will attract the attention of big names pharmaceutical sector," said an elated Prof Luay.

'Woodfordia uniflora', according to Prof Luay is a flowering shrub unique to the Dhofar Governorate of Oman and is used locally as a sedative and remedy for skin infection.

"However, no study to date has examined the pharmacological properties of this plant, and studies regarding phytochemicals present W. uniflora are limited. The phytochemical screening of the extract of W. uniflora was performed using three new organic compounds, which were never known before."

Prof Luay calls the findings a major achievement for Oman in general and Dhofar University in particular.

He hopes to come out with many more valuable pieces of research in the near future.

Stick to safety norms to avoid virus spread

FROM PAGE 1

According to the minister, the authorities are in contact with most COVID-19 vaccine production firms that reach advanced stages, but no regulatory agency or drug monitoring institution will allow the distribution of the vaccine to humans before proper checks on its validity and safety.

Dr Al Abri said a daily report on the number of cases is being maintained because the ministry detected a rise in the number of infections in governorates where high numbers were not registered before.

Regarding COVID-19 tests for those travelling abroad, he said, "If there are no private institutions to conduct the tests, they can visit any government hospitals and do the test by paying the necessary fee."

OMAN OBSERVER



Be Careful, Be Responsible!

OMAN  DAILY
Observer

For Advertisements
Please Contact with our Team

Head Office

Mohd Al Rashdi

99841230
m.alrahdi86@yahoo.com

Ali Al Maashari

99639264
wadiameeh@yahoo.com

Salalah Office

Bakhit Al Shihri

92998577
bakhit.omandaily@gmail.com

Nizwa Office

Abdullah Al Abri

99429094
nizwaofc@omandaily.net.om

Suhar Office

Musalam Al Saidi

99429192
sohardaily@outlook.com



@omanobserver
www.omanobserver.om

#Living_with_COVID19

Countdown begins for Rub Al Khali walk

SAMUEL KUTTY
MUSCAT, SEPT 12

The stage is set for the epic trek across the across the dunes of Rub Al Khali (the Empty Quarter) in what will be the toughest challenge for a team of former military personnel.

The Grenadier Walk of Oman was officially launched at a function hosted by the armed forces charity Walking With The Wounded (WWTW) in London during the weekend.

Starting on November 20 and ending on December 11, the team, all of whom suffer physical or psychological injuries from their time in service, will trek between 20km and 22km per day. Temperatures will reach 95°F and around 550,000 steps will be taken across the Omani desert.

As reported by London's Charity Today, partners of both the charity and expedition and guests were treated to a special video with soldiers from Prince Harry in his role as the official Expedition Patron. In his message, the Duke of Sussex said, "You represent

Starting on November 20 and ending on December 11, the team, all of whom suffer physical or psychological injuries from their time in service, will trek between 20km and 22km per day across the dunes of Rub Al Khali

the whole veteran community and I have no doubt that through this opportunity you'll demonstrate the resilience, the courage and the talent, that exists within those who have served."

In the clip, Prince Harry also congratulated those taking part, saying: "You represent the whole veteran



The final team participating in Walking With The Wounded Grenadier Walk of Oman.

community and I have no doubt that throughout this opportunity you will demonstrate the resilience, courage

and talent that exists within those who have served."

The event gave those in attendance

the opportunity to hear first-hand from the six team members what The Grenadier Walk of Oman means to

them and why it was important they joined the walk.

An already ambitious trek across the desert will be made even tougher as all the six team members pull a custom-built cart weighing in excess of 300kg with the supplies they will need for the 21-day expedition, testing the team's willpower and teamwork.

Prince Harry, a former soldier, expressed his joy that the event was taking place despite the challenges caused by the coronavirus pandemic. "We are all delighted that the Walk in Oman continues to go ahead, despite the challenging environment we are all faced with at the moment."

Ed Parker, CEO of WWTW, said, "The expedition is not going to be easy but the strength, courage and resolve of the team taking part has and continues to be an inspiration. Each of them faces their own challenges, and have been physically, mentally, or socially disadvantaged since serving, however, together they will cross the Omani desert."

Inflation falls by 1.34 per cent in August

MUSCAT: The Sultanate's Consumer Price Index (CPI)-based inflation declined by 1.34 per cent in August 2020 compared to the same month in 2019, according to the latest data released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) on CPI.

According to the report, the inflation rate in August rose by 0.13 per cent compared to July 2020.

The food and non-alcoholic beverages group witnessed a price rise by 0.40 per cent, health by 0.29 per cent and education by 2.21 per cent. The prices of furnishings, household equipment and routine household maintenance also rose by 0.23 per cent.

However, the prices of housing, water,



electricity, gas and other fuels fell by 0.42 per cent, communication by 0.02 per cent, miscellaneous goods and services by 1 per cent, and restaurants and hotels by 0.32 per cent in August 2020 compared to the same month of 2019.

Meanwhile, among foods and non-alcoholic beverages category, a marked rise was witnessed in the price of fruits, vegetables and meat by 1.98 per cent, 2.72 per cent and 1.49, respectively. However, the price of bread and cereals, fish and seafood, and milk, cheese and eggs fell by 0.08 per cent, 4.93 per cent and 0.49 per cent, respectively. Non-alcoholic beverages registered a price rise of 0.21 per cent. — ONA

Nizwa Souq springs back to life



AMAL AL RIYAMI
NIZWA, SEPT 12

Nizwa Souq thronged with shoppers after it was reopened recently after months without trade due to coronavirus restrictions.

Traders and shoppers were happy to be back in the souq together but apart with social distancing. Shopkeepers also ensured that shoppers and staff wore masks and used sanitisers.

After five months of closure, they were eager to regain the charm of the traditional Friday market, which sells perfumes, incense, rose water, copper products and silverware, fabrics, food, Omani Halwa and spices.

Fish, vegetables, fruits, poultry and meat saw brisk sales as shoppers were on the lookout for bargains.

Ibrahim al Ameri, a merchant, said: "We were very pleased with the opening of this place that we love to be in. This place is so important to our business that we have been worried about it. It is not just a market, it is also a place for people from neighbouring villages to meet and greet."



Customers have returned in steadily increasing numbers to the traditional souqs in the Sultanate after they had previously been temporarily shut down to stop the spread of the COVID-19 in Oman.



We were very pleased with the opening of this place that we love to be in. This place is so important to our business that we have been worried about it. It is not just a market, it is also a place for people from neighbouring villages to meet and greet

IBRAHIM AL AMERI,
A merchant



As part of the fifth package of the reopening of economic activities, shops inside traditional souqs, and fish markets across Oman, were allowed to reopen in the last week of August.

— PHOTOS: SAMI AL HINAI



OMAN CONVENTION
& EXHIBITION CENTRE
مركز عُمان للمؤتمرات والمعارض



TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

The Oman Convention & Exhibition Centre (OCEC) would like to invite competent and experienced companies to participate in the Tendering process for Waste Collection and Disposal.

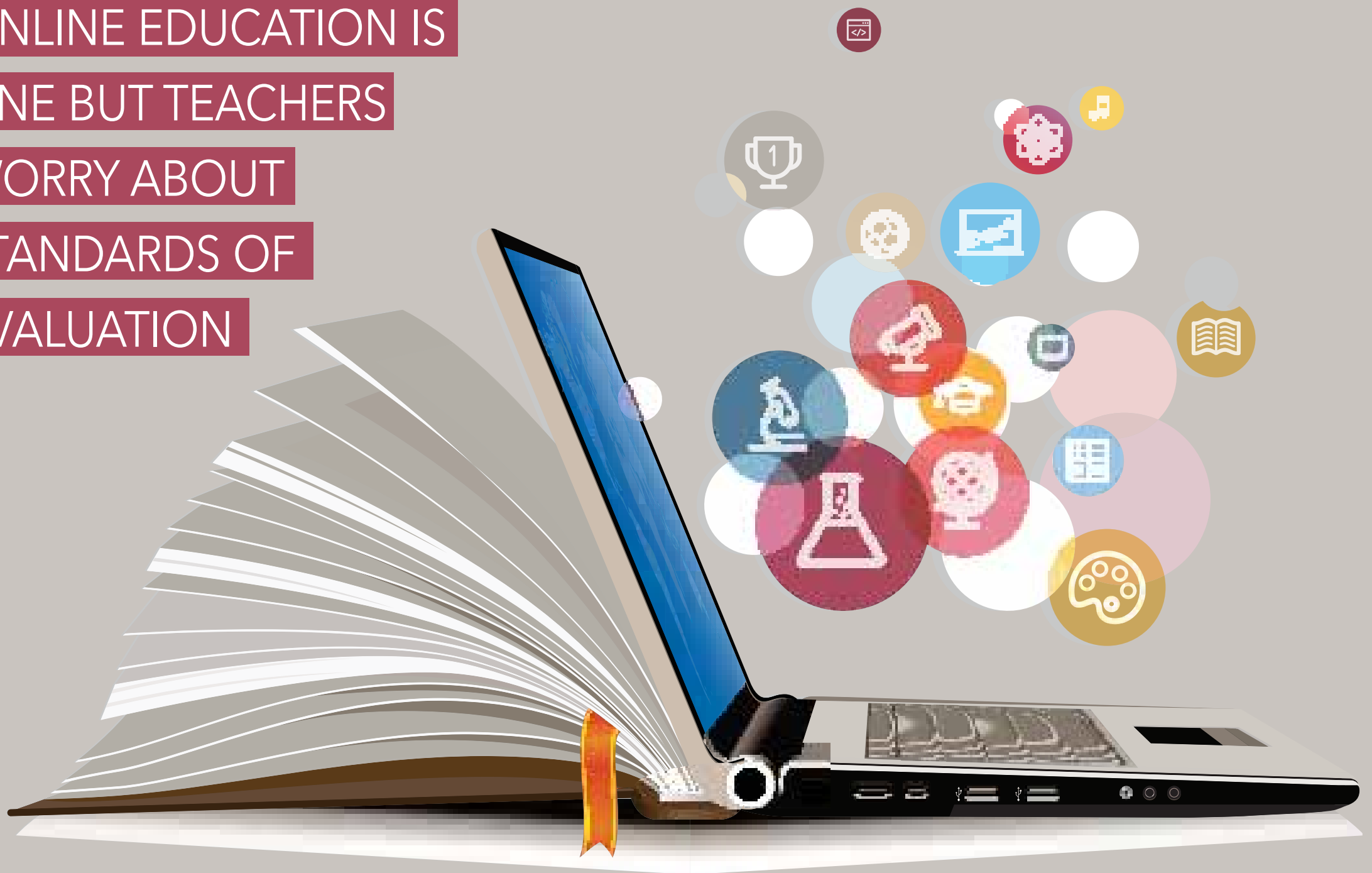
Particulars	Description
Subject	WASTE COLLECTION AND DISPOSAL FOR THE OMAN CONVENTION & EXHIBITION CENTRE
Tender No.	OCEC/2020/03
Tender Fees Payment	30 Omani Riyals (non-refundable) Beneficiary: Oman Convention and Exhibition Center Bank: Sohar International Branch: Qurum - Sultanate of Oman Account No. 005020045872 Swift Code: BSHROMRU Finance Code: 609109900
Tender Document Sale Start Date	13 / 9 / 2020
Tender Document Sale End Date	20 / 9 / 2020
Tender Closing Date	27 / 9 / 2020
Tender Submission	All bidders must submit their offers with the terms and conditions of the tender by sending their bids to the e-mail: aalbalushi@ocec.om Finance Department P.O. Box 1659, P.C. 130, Al Athaiba, Sultanate of Oman Tel: + 930 233 24 968, Fax: + 801 233 24 968 ■ OCEC is not bound to award the contract to the lowest bid or any other bidder. ■ Each Bidder must leave a business card with contact details for required tender communication (company name, contact name, telephone and email) ■ All tender communication will be emailed to this contact person and email address aalbalushi@ocec.om ■ Each Bidder must send a copy of its relevant Ministry of Commerce and Industry registration (except for International Bidders) - Notwithstanding the specific terms in the Tender Documents.
Companies Grade	G 4 and Above
Experience	Local experience Waste Collection and Disposal
Tender Document Collection	Tender documents can be obtained by e-mail after sending the electronic payment receipt during working hours: Sunday – Thursday 8:30am – 3:00pm.

www.ocec.om

f t y i n OmanConvention



ONLINE EDUCATION IS
FINE BUT TEACHERS
WORRY ABOUT
STANDARDS OF
EVALUATION



BLENDED LEARNING A MIXED BAG

VINOD NAIR

The academic year 2020-21 will be different from the past as students and teachers got a taste of online education amid Coronavirus restrictions. With schools in the Sultanate set to reopen in November, is the time ripe for blended learning or just classroom education as COVID-19 cases show no signs of decline.

Many were not prepared for online learning and teaching despite the talk of digital revolution, apps and smart screens. While others lapped it up for its convenience and efficiency.

“There cannot be a permanent alternative to conventional teaching and face to face interaction between teachers and students, but the important point is that we have a solution for any

crisis. Technology companies like Zoom and Google should be appreciated for helping us out with alternatives within a short period,” said a senior teacher of an Indian School in Muscat. “Some teachers, including me, had issues adapting to 100 per cent technology-based teaching. We cannot deprive education for children from education until vaccines are ready.”

Apart from the teaching process, the matter of concern for both teachers and parents is evaluation.

The Ministry of Education in Oman said last week that that evaluation will be a continuous process instead of semester examinations.

“Now on, we have to be always prepared for such a crisis. Final exams of the academic year 2019-2020 were disrupted across the world and students were evaluated based on previous exams. Students can’t take things for granted by burning the midnight lamp,” said

Ameena, an Omani English teacher. She feared that hybrid teaching will lead students to computer-based projects. “Maintaining books for a year is also an important aspect of school life.”

The education systems worldwide continue to be in a limbo as COVID-19 cases surged with the reopening of activities. Nearly 50 schools in Spain registered fresh Coronavirus cases during the first week of classes.

There have been few transmissions within schools that reopened in Germany, but the new cases have been rising in the country recently.

According to studies, while children are less susceptible to severe COVID-19 as compared to adults, they can become asymptomatic carriers of the disease.

While the first wave of the pandemic has not ended in many countries, the second one has reportedly badly hurt countries like Australia and New

Zealand, among others.

Earlier speaking to the *Observer*, Priya Avasthi, a parent, said, “I’m in no rush for schools to open as I would not want to compromise on my child’s health. I respect all government decisions and I know they are doing the best they can to curb the infection. We are all equipped with the necessary tools nowadays to ensure our kids have access to online education.”

Another parent Nisha Kumar said, “It is a dilemma. Children miss their interaction with teachers and classmates. They are catching up with online classes and the new way of schooling. Schools and students have coped well. But the question is how safe is it to go back to the typical school environment? As parents, we cannot help but worry. But they cannot stay secluded either. Children will have to be taught about the new norms.”

Only one hand luggage per person to be allowed

VINOD NAIR
MUSCAT, SEPT 12

A passenger will be allowed to carry one hand baggage including laptop along with another from duty-free shop as part of COVID-19 norms set by the Civil Aviation Authority after the airports reopen on October 1. "This has been done to avoid the accumulation of the hand luggage at security points," the CAA said.

Only travellers will be allowed to enter the departure terminal, while one person will be accompanied for those with special needs.

Passengers must also submit an online form indicating that s/he is free of COVID-19 and

its symptoms. They must come to the airport at least three hours before the flight departure or if possible even four hours.

No traveller suffering from COVID-19 disease or its symptoms specified by the Ministry of Health will be permitted to enter the airport.

All travellers must wear masks properly upon arrival at the airport and during the duration of the trip.

Omanis travelling abroad should have health insurance, including that of COVID-19, of the destination country. The traveller must comply with the procedures of the country he wants to travel to.

Citizens and residents are allowed to leave the Sultanate without the need for a travel permit.

Currently, passengers holding a new visa and approved by MoFA are allowed to enter.

Passengers holding expired resident permit/visa are allowed to enter provided they have MoFA approval.

Diplomatic passport holders do not require prior approval to enter/exit.

Passengers holding employment visa exceeding 180 days stay outside Oman must have clearances from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) and the Directorate-General of Passports and Residency.



Schools gear up for November opening

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, SEPT 12

Private schools in the Sultanate are giving final shape to their standard operating procedures when they resume classes on November 1 after the Ministry of Education (MoE) announced COVID-19 protocol during the weekend.

The MoE has prescribed a set of precautionary measures including physical distancing, wearing masks, washing hands, and spacing inside school buses in addition to tweaking school hours.

The Board of Indian Schools in the Sultanate, the biggest community chain of 21 schools and more than 46,000 students on the rolls, which commenced online classes since April this year, is working on reopening. "We will soon finalise a Standard Operational Procedures based on the ministry's instructions for conducting classes,"



a representative of the Board of Directors said.

He said BoD is awaiting detailed guidelines and instructions from the MoE. The board is planning to roll out a survey among stakeholders to understand their concerns which will help finalise the SOP.

"We will set up wet and dry sanitising mats and sanitiser food

pedal along with partitioned tables in classrooms to maintain social distancing," Thasleem Khan, promoter of Brilliant Youth Private School in Seeb, said. "We have also installed UV based air purifiers in our schools which is one of the first of its kind in Oman to sterilise virus, bacteria and germs in air."

The school hours will be

The Ministry of Education has prescribed a set of precautionary measures including physical distancing, wearing masks, washing hands, and spacing inside school buses in addition to tweaking school hours

curtailed to some 3 hours to 5 hours with 50 per cent to 33 per cent of strength depending upon their density. School buses are allowed to operate at 50 per cent capacity.

Schools are planning to run awareness campaigns for teachers, parents and caretakers.



Rental market under pressure over expats' exit

SAMUEL KUTTY
MUSCAT, SEPT 12

Residential and commercial rents in the Sultanate continued to fall due to a combination of factors including the impact from COVID-19 pandemic, drop in expat population and low oil prices.

"Expatriates play a significant role in influencing demand for real estate. Market conditions in both the residential and office space rental sectors in Muscat were already in slowdown or recession prior to the COVID-19 pandemic as a result of slow economic growth and negligible net population growth," Ihsan Kharouf, head of Savills Oman, said.

In a report published by the property advisor, it said that the ongoing pandemic has further deteriorated the economic landscape.

While the long term impact of the pandemic on the sector is currently unclear, it is evident that there will be increasing challenges over the coming months.

"The impacts of COVID-19 have exacerbated the flaws in what was an already weak market. The projected drop in the number of expatriates in Muscat over the coming months will place the residential market under increased downward pressure in terms of both reduced demand and achievable rental values," said the report.

However, the agency said that better quality residential units are likely to show a more resilient performance.

Cavendish Maxwell said in a research that property rental prices have significantly declined due to the falling number of expatriates in the

Sultanate.

"With increasingly more expats leaving Oman, residential property prices and rents have been impacted. Between December 2018 and December 2019 alone, the total expat population in Oman recorded a year-on-year decline of 2.9 per cent," the real estate agency said.

Current evidence suggests that a net exodus of highly qualified expatriates started in 2016 due to increasing restrictions on expatriate employment. The number of highly qualified expatriates dropped by 17.6 per cent between 2016 and the first quarter of 2020, while the total number of expatriate employees dropped by 6.8 per cent during the same period.

Savills expects that this reduction in the expatriate population will be accelerated by recent events.



إعلان مناقصة Tender Announcement

SINYAR is the new integrated commercial identity for Oman National Transport Company SAOC and National Ferries Company LLC leading land and Maritime public transport operator and the first mass transport operator in the Sultanate. SINYAR has more than 1,600 employees and operates more than 500 buses and 7 ferries across the country.

	Tender Number	Tender Fee	Grade & Specialty
	T-12-2020	100/-	Qualified & Specialized Companies in the Field
Tender Name	توفير خدمات النظافة لمركبات سنيار في مسقط Call Off Agreement for Providing Cleaning Services to Sinyar Vehicles in Muscat		
Project Summary	Within the framework of this tender, Sinyar would like to have a qualified contractor to provide Vehicles Cleaning Services in Muscat for 2 Years		
Start date for tender document distribution	Sunday September 13, 2020	Last date for tender document distribution	Thursday October 1, 2020
		Last date for submission	Thursday October 22, 2020

- Interested specialized company may obtain the Tender Documents from the e-tendering website <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>
- Tender should be submitted online on the given website; no documents can be accepted as manual submission.
- The Tenderer shall register in e-tendering portal to enable purchase and collection of the Tender Documents.
- All correspondence pertaining to Tender inquiry must be online at the e-tendering system.
- Any clarification pertaining to the e-tendering system technical support must be directed to the following helpdesk email ID: etenderhd@ita.gov.om and phone numbers: + 968 24166670 / 24166409

Oman National Transport Company SAOC "Sinyar"
Head Quarter, Ghala
P.O.Box: 911, PC: 133, Al Khuwair, Sultanate of Oman

For more details please send to:
tenders@sinyar.om

Member of



www.sinyar.om | @sinyar_om | sinyar.oman | Sinyar Oman



Historic Afghan talks open with calls for lasting ceasefire, women’s rights

DOHA/KABUL: The Afghan people were looking to the government and the Taliban to achieve peace at historic talks in Qatar, officials said at the formal opening of the negotiations on Saturday.

“We have come here with the goodwill and good intention to stop the 40 years of bloodshed, and achieve a countrywide and lasting peace”, the chairperson of Afghanistan’s High Council for National Reconciliation, Abdullah Abdullah, said at the ceremony in a Doha hotel.

As the government delegation called for a “humanitarian ceasefire”, the Taliban side also started to lay out its demands.

The group said it wanted an “inclusive Islamic system”, and the release of at least 8,000 more Taliban prisoners. Thousands were already released in the lead-up to the talks in Doha.

“If there is determination and intention the issues can be resolved”, said Suhail Shaheen, a member of the Taliban negotiating team.

The head of the Taliban delegation, Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, said that the US must remain committed to the agreement it signed with the group in February, which helped pave the way for the current talks.

The deal envisaged the gradual withdrawal of international troops from Afghanistan.

The chief Afghan negotiator, Masoom Stanekzai, said that the main focus of his team would be establishing a lasting ceasefire.

The “people of Afghanistan should not continue in the negotiations and in conflict simultaneously”, he said.

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo addressed the delegates in his speech: “You carry great responsibility, but you are not alone. The entire world wants you to succeed.”

“We welcome the Taliban commitment



Delegates attend talks between the Afghan government and Taliban in Doha on Saturday. — Reuters

not to host international terrorist groups, including Al Qaeda, nor to allow them to use Afghan territory to train, recruit or fundraise”, Pompeo added.

The Taliban — which had previously ruled Afghanistan — was ousted from Kabul by the US-led invasion in 2001 which followed the September 11 terrorist attacks that year.

Pakistan’s Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi also addressed the gathering via videolink, saying his country supported the talks and that “there was no military solution to the Afghan conflict”.

The Nato military alliance and the European Union both welcomed the launch of peace talks.

Nato, which gives military backing to the Kabul government, said that it would be willing to “adjust” its presence in Afghanistan “if conditions allow” in order to support the peace process.

The alliance’s governing council also called on the Taliban to “take decisive steps toward ending violence”, charging that the movement’s attacks were keeping violence at an “unacceptably high” level.

United Nations chief Antonio Guterres said that “women should participate meaningfully in the process,” although few women are taking part in the talks. Out of the teams of 21 people on each side, the Afghanistan delegation has at least four women, but the Taliban has none.

The first substantive discussions are expected to begin on Sunday. The talks were initially scheduled for March 10, but were delayed until the conclusion of a lengthy prisoner swap between the Afghan government and the Taliban.

In the swap process, some 5,000 Taliban prisoners, and 1,000 Afghan forces’ prisoners were released.

Afghanistan has effectively been at war since the Soviet Union’s invasion in 1979. In the nine years of the Afghan war with the Soviets, at least one million civilians were killed.

In the last decade, at least 100,000 civilians are estimated to have been killed or injured in Afghanistan. — dpa

Filipino cardinal tests COVID-19 positive



Pope Francis with Filipino Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle. — AFP

VATICAN CITY: Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle has become the highest-ranking Vatican official known to have tested positive for the coronavirus.

The Vatican said Tagle, 63, a Filipino who heads the Vatican’s missionary arm, had tested positive when he arrived in Manila on Thursday.

Tagle, who met Pope Francis in a private audience on August 29, tested negative on September 7.

Vatican spokesman Matteo Bruni said Vatican health officials were checking people who had come into contact with Tagle in recent days. He did not say if this included the 83-year-old pope, who is believed to be tested regularly.

He said Tagle did not have any symptoms and would go into quarantine in Manila.

The pope held a series of private audiences on Thursday and Friday. On Wednesday, he held his weekly audience before a limited crowd of about 500 people.

Only about a dozen people have tested positive for the virus in the Vatican, and the few who were hospitalised with symptoms have recovered. — Reuters

CORONAVIRUS IN INDIA



A health worker collects a swab sample from a man to test for the COVID-19, outside a commercial centre in Chennai on Saturday. With total cases of more than 4.65 million, India is the world’s second worst affected country hit by COVID-19, trailing only the United States, which has more than 6.4 million cases. — AFP

Kim Jong Un inspects flood-hit area

SEOUL: North Korean leader Kim Jong Un inspected reconstruction work in a flood-hit area, state media KCNA reported on Saturday, following a series of typhoons and the wettest monsoon that battered several parts of the country.

Kim said the North Korean economy “has faced trouble and distress at the great damage caused by the recent series of heavy rain and typhoons”, according to KCNA. Kim expressed satisfaction on the progress of the reconstruction in Taechong-ri, a village in North Hwanghae province, the report said.

After surveying typhoon damage earlier this week in his impoverished country, Kim told Workers’ Party loyalists they would have to rethink plans for an economy already hobbled by sanctions and more recently restrictions designed to contain the novel coronavirus. — Reuters



Lanka navy plugs fuel leak on fire-stricken tanker

COLOMBO: Sri Lankan military divers fixed a fuel leak from the engine of a fire-damaged oil tanker off the island’s east coast, the navy said on Saturday, in a salvage operation after the huge week-long blaze.

While the navy says no crude oil has escaped the cargo of the New Diamond, leaked diesel fuel had created a two-kilometre-long slick in the Indian Ocean that was visible from the air.

The fuel was seeping into the water through damaged pipes connected to a ballast water intake on the ship’s starboard side, according to a navy statement.

That leak was plugged on Friday along with an inlet on the port side of the Panama-registered tanker, it said.



Sri Lanka’s environmental authorities still fear a marine disaster. — AFP

Dutch salvage company SMIT said its experts had boarded the crippled vessel and found the 270,000-tonne crude oil cargo unaffected by the fire.

“The cargo tanks with the crude are intact”, the firm said in The Hague on Friday. “Discussions are ongoing on the destination of the vessel to transfer the crude”.

Sri Lanka’s environmental authorities fear a marine disaster if the tanker is allowed to transfer its oil to another ship in the country’s waters.

The fire was completely doused on Wednesday, but an unspecified amount of the ship’s 1,700 tonnes of fuel leaked when storage tanks ruptured in the blaze that destroyed the engine room and much of the vessel’s super-structure.

“The Sri Lankan navy, the Indian Coast Guard (ICG) and tug boats that were involved in fire-fighting are still in the area”, the navy said.

It added that an Indian aircraft used to spray chemicals to disperse the diesel slick in the past two days was on standby.

Sri Lanka has asked the ship’s owners to tow it away from the country’s exclusive economic zone, or 370 kilometres (231 miles) from its coast.

The *New Diamond* issued a distress signal a week ago while passing Sri Lanka on its way to the northeast Indian port of Paradip when a boiler exploded, killing a Filipino crewman.

The remaining 22 crew were rescued. — AFP

US expelled 8,800 migrant children under COVID rule

WASHINGTON: The administration of US President Donald Trump has expelled about 8,800 unaccompanied migrant children intercepted at the US-Mexico border since March 20.

The expulsion of the children was carried out under rules that seek to limit the spread of the coronavirus in the United States, shows court documents the Justice Department filed.

Since June, however, the administration had refused to disclose the numbers. But in that month it said about 2,000 children had been expelled from the United States.

Meanwhile, immigration advocates had said that many more immigrant children were likely subject to the rules, but it was unclear how many would be expelled until Friday.

The administration argued that the rules aimed to prevent the spread of the coronavirus inside migrant holding facilities and among the broader US population

On March 21, new border rules came into effect which scrapped decades-old practices under laws meant to protect children against human trafficking and offer them an opportunity to seek asylum in a US immigration court. The administration argued that the emergency rules aimed to prevent the spread of the coronavirus inside migrant holding facilities and among the broader US population.

US officials have, since March 21, been quickly deporting migrants, including unaccompanied minors, but without standard immigration proceedings.

According to immigration advocates, the new regulations put migrants, especially children, at grave risk. — AFP

COLOMBIA PROTESTS



Protesters gather around a fire during a third day of protests over the death of a man in police custody, in Bogota early on Saturday. An apology from Colombia's defence minister for police brutality failed to stop a third night of protests on September 11, after the death of a man in custody sparked deadly rioting in the capital and other cities. — AFP

Trump ramps up big and small-dollar fundraising

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump will embark on a heavier fundraising schedule in coming weeks as his re-election campaign faces a possible cash crunch that has forced it to pull back television advertising in some crucial states.

Trump's campaign started the year with more than 10 times as much money as Democratic rival Joe Biden. But to the alarm of some Republican donors, the former vice president closed the gap as Democratic donors consolidated behind him and the Trump campaign burned through its cash more quickly.

Biden, who leads Trump in most national and battleground state polling ahead of the November 3 election, had about \$99 million in the bank to Trump's \$121 million by the end of July, according to disclosures by each side's campaign. Including money raised by the candidates' national parties, Biden outraised Trump nearly \$365 million to \$210 million in August.

"I am flabbergasted that the money lead we had in February has completely evaporated", said Dan Eberhart, a Republican fundraiser and executive in the oil and gas industry who cut a \$100,000 cheque to the Trump



US President Donald Trump and First Lady Melania Trump after attending the 19th annual September 11 observance at the Flight 93 National Memorial in Shanksville, Pennsylvania. — Reuters

Victory Fund in June.

Trump this week said his campaign had to spend millions on advertisements earlier this year to fight the impression that he mishandled the coronavirus pandemic, which has killed more than 191,000 Americans and devastated the US economy.

A couple of donors questioned whether the campaign's purchase of a multi-million dollar ad during the Super Bowl in February so far ahead of the election, as well as ads in the heavily Democratic Washington, DC market in June,

were more about Trump's vanity than strategy.

Eberhart said some of the campaign's recent actions, including buying ads in few-day increments as opposed to weekly and going dark in some states for a stretch, suggested the campaign now faces a cash pinch.

Bill Stepien, who became Trump's campaign manager in July, told reporters this week that the campaign was "very comfortable and confident in how we're spending and where we're spending." — Reuters

Peru parliament votes to impeach president over leaked tapes

LIMA: Peru's Congress on Friday voted to open impeachment proceedings against President Martin Vizcarra for "moral incapacity" over accusations he tried to obstruct a corruption probe against government officials.

The motion was approved by 65 votes, with 36 against and 24 abstentions. Fifty-two votes were required to open the proceedings early next week.

To remove the president, who lacks a party, 87 votes are required. After Vizcarra appears in Congress next Friday to defend himself, the plenary will debate and vote.

Six out of nine parties — representing 95 of the 130 seats in Congress — have backed the motion.

"I'm not going to quit. I do not run", Vizcarra said in a televised address ahead of the vote in which



President Martin Vizcarra came under fire after leaked audio recordings in which he is heard telling aides to hide details of his office's controversial hiring of a popular singer as a paid cultural adviser. — Reuters

he denied any wrongdoing.

"We are facing a plot against democracy", he said, adding that he had nothing to hide but

that lawmakers should act "with caution, with responsibility, and to take the decision they deem necessary". Vizcarra, in power

since 2018, came under fire after leaked audio recordings in which he is heard telling aides to hide details of his office's controversial hiring of a popular singer as a paid cultural adviser. In the event of impeachment, legislative speaker Manuel Merino will act as interim leader until the current presidential term ends in July 2021.

Vizcarra has won popular support for an anti-corruption crusade that has put him at loggerheads with opponents in Congress, including over a reform banning convicted criminals from standing for election.

The impeachment motion is reminiscent of the one that forced the resignation of his predecessor Pedro Pablo Kuczynski in 2018, after he became embroiled in the Odebrecht bribes scandal.

— AFP

Oregon prepares for mass fatalities as wildfires rage on

PORTLAND: Deadly wildfires raging across Oregon kept half a million people under evacuation alert yesterday even as weary firefighters took advantage of improved weather to go on the offensive against the blazes.

The fires have destroyed thousands of homes in days, making Oregon the latest epicentre in a larger summer outbreak of fires sweeping the western United States, collectively scorching a landscape the size of New Jersey and killing at least 25 people.

At least five people died in Oregon this week. Governor Kate Brown has warned the death toll could grow far higher and said that dozens of people had been reported missing in three counties.

Oregon Office of Emergency Management chief Andrew Phelps said disaster teams searching the scorched ruins of a half-dozen small towns laid to waste were bracing to encounter possible "mass fatality incidents".

The Pacific Northwest as a whole has borne the brunt of an incendiary onslaught that began around Labour Day, darkening the sky with smoke and ash that has beset northern California, Oregon and Washington

with some of the world's worst air-quality levels.

The firestorms, some of the largest on record in California and Oregon, were driven by high winds that howled across the region for days in the midst of record-breaking heat. Scientists say global warming has also contributed to extremes in wet and dry seasons, causing vegetation to flourish then dry out, leaving more abundant fuel for wildfires.

'THE PERFECT STORM'

"This is a climate damn emergency. This is real and it's happening. This is the perfect storm", California Governor Gavin Newsom told reporters from a charred mountainside near Oroville, California.

More than 3,900 homes and other structures have been incinerated in California alone over the past three weeks.

In southern Oregon, an apocalyptic scene of charred residential subdivisions and trailer parks stretched for miles along Highway 99 south of Medford through the neighbouring towns of Phoenix and Talent, one of the most devastated areas. — Reuters



Wildfires have destroyed thousands of homes and killed at least 24 people in Oregon. — Reuters



Muscat Municipality

Announcement No. 46/2020

Companies specialized in the field and registered with **Tender Board**, may obtain tenders documents from the website through the following link: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>) against non-refundable fees as mentioned below starting from the date of this announcement and until the end of deadline stipulated below:-

Tender No.	No. E- Tender	Description of Tender	Tender Fee	Last date to Collect the Tender	Tender Return Date	Grade
PRE/20/057	2020/MM/QS-38	TECHNICAL SUPPORT SERVICES FOR IT SECURITY APPLIANCES (RE-TENDER (E-TENDER)	Rial 25	8/10/2020	26/10/2020	Specialised
PRE/20/083	2020/MM/QS-43	MAINTENANCE OF HOTEL AT MALALEH CENTRAL MARKET (E-TENDER)	Rial 25	8/10/2020	26/10/2020	First

Tender Conditions :-

- Bidders shall submit their offers electronically accompanied with an electronic copy of bond issued by any local bank in Oman addressed to Muscat Municipality. The bond shall be (1%) of the tender value valid for ninety (90) days starting from the date of bids submission. Any tenders which do not meet the required bond shall not be accepted.
- Original Tender Bonds are to be placed in the Tender Box at Muscat Municipality HQ, Ground Floor at the Reception.
- For any inquiries regarding tenders, please visit e-tendering website: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>).
- For technical support of e-tendering system please send an email to (etenderhd@ita.gov.om) or call (+96824166670).



British PM accuses EU of plotting food ‘blockade’

HARMFUL ACT: European Union warns of legal action unless UK withdraws unilateral changes

LONDON: Prime Minister Boris Johnson has accused the European Union of threatening to tear the UK apart by imposing a food “blockade” between Britain and Northern Ireland, throwing new fuel on the fire of simmering Brexit talks.

Writing in Saturday’s *Daily Telegraph* newspaper, Johnson said the EU’s stance justified his government’s introduction of new legislation to rewrite its Brexit withdrawal treaty — a bill that is causing deep alarm among his own MPs.

Talks between London and Brussels on a future trading relationship are deadlocked as both sides struggle to prise apart nearly 50 years of economic integration, after British voters opted for a divorce.

“My assessment is that an unregulated situation (no deal) would have very significant consequences for the British economy,” German Finance Minister Olaf Scholz warned on Saturday after a meeting of EU finance ministers in Berlin.

“Europe would be able to deal with it and these would not be particularly difficult consequences after the preparations we have already made,” he added.

But absent a deal by the end of this year, when the full force of Brexit kicks in, Johnson said the EU was bent on an “extreme interpretation” of rules for Northern Ireland under the divorce treaty both sides signed in January.

“We are being told that the EU will not only impose tariffs on goods moving from Great Britain to Northern Ireland, but that they might actually stop the transport of food products from GB to NI,” he wrote.

“I have to say that we never seriously believed that the EU would be willing to use a treaty, negotiated in good faith, to blockade one part of the UK, to cut it off, or that they would actually threaten to destroy the economic and territorial integrity of the UK,” Johnson said the EU’s stance would “seriously endanger peace and stability in Northern Ireland”, and



Boris Johnson waves as he leaves 10 Downing Street in central London. — AFP

stressed he remained committed to finding agreement with the EU by the end of the year, but the new UK Internal Market Bill was a

“legal safety net”.

MISTRUSTFUL

The EU, however, has threatened Britain with legal action unless it

withdraws its unilateral changes by the end of September, and leaders in the European Parliament on Friday threatened to veto any trade pact if London violates its promises.

Paolo Gentiloni, the EU’s economics affairs commissioner, said it was up to Britain to “re-establish trust” with the bloc.

“And in any case... we are prepared to deal with extraordinary negative outcome of this discussion,” the former Italian prime minister added in Berlin.

The government’s claim that the treaty contains unforeseen problems was undercut by a *Financial Times* report on Saturday that British civil servants explicitly highlighted the potential issues in January, at least a week before Johnson signed it.

Under the EU withdrawal treaty, Northern Ireland will enjoy a special status to ensure no return of a border with EU member Ireland, in line with a 1998 peace pact that ended three decades of bloodshed.

The food dispute centres on the EU’s

refusal so far to grant Britain “third country” status, which acknowledges that nations meet basic requirements to export their foodstuffs to Europe.

The EU is worried that post-Brexit Britain could undermine its own food standards, as well as rules on state aid for companies, and infiltrate its single market via Northern Ireland.

Johnson’s article appeared after he held a chaotic videoconference on Friday evening with mutinous Conservative MPs who are aghast at the prospect of the government tearing up an international treaty.

Senior Conservative backbencher Robert Neill was unimpressed by Johnson’s calls to push the bill through and prevent a renewal of the Brexit infighting that paralysed parliament last year.

“I believe it is potentially a harmful act for this country, it would damage our reputation and I think it will make it harder to strike trade deals going forward,” Neill told Channel 4 News.

— AFP

UN CHIEF CALLS ON EU TO SHARE OUT MIGRANTS



Refugees and migrants react after police threw tear gas during clashes near the city of Mytilene on the Greek island of Lesbos, on Saturday, a few days after a fire destroyed the Moria refugee camp. — AFP

PARIS: The UN secretary-general urged European Union members on Saturday to take in thousands of migrants and asylum-seekers who have been left homeless and destitute in Greece after a devastating blaze at a camp.

The Moria facility on the Greek island of Lesbos, which previously housed up to 12,000 people, was destroyed overnight on Tuesday after an apparent arson attack by migrants who have long complained about conditions there.

“It’s an immense tragedy,” UN chief

Antonio Guterres told French channel TV5monde in an interview broadcast on Saturday. “In my opinion the only solution is transferring these refugees to the continent and I hope there will be European solidarity.”

The former Portuguese prime minister continued: “You can’t expect the country (Greece) on the frontline to resolve everything. There needs to be shared responsibility within the European Union.”

Tensions rose on Lesbos on Saturday after hundreds of asylum-seekers protested after a third night

of sleeping rough in doorways and by roads.

Police fired teargas when some of them began throwing stones, a reporter at the scene said.

Efforts in the past to create a quota system for refugees in the EU, which would have seen all members agree to take in migrants from frontline countries such as Greece and Italy, have foundered due to divisions.

Right-wing governments in many member states, particularly in Poland and Hungary, refused to sign up to the scheme. — AFP

Greenpeace ends channel blockade

STOCKHOLM: Swedish maritime authorities have reopened a ship-ping channel to an oil port in western Sweden that was temporarily blocked by a Greenpeace vessel.

An oil tanker was late on Friday able to leave the Brofjorden oil port, Sweden’s largest, Swedish public broadcaster SVT reported.

Greenpeace said the *Rainbow Warrior* remained near the port but has moved from the position where it had been anchored since Thursday evening.

“We put safety first, and opted to move. We’ve anchored some distance away,” Greenpeace Sweden spokeswoman Isadora Wronski said.

She said Greenpeace would continue their protest against plans by Swedish oil company Preem to expand their refinery in nearby Lysekil.

The *Rainbow Warrior*’s initial location prevented two oil tankers from leaving the port, while another oil tanker was unable to dock and unload its cargo of crude oil. Conservationists warn of a large increase in carbon dioxide emissions if the expansion of the refinery goes ahead.

The government led by Prime Minister Stefan Lofven, a Social Democrat, is considering whether to approve the expansion. Members of the Greens, junior partner in Lofven’s coalition, oppose the expansion. In June, the Land and Environmental Court of Appeal said Preem’s plans were in line with the law. — dpa



Spain’s King Felipe and Queen Letizia with daughters Princess Leonor and Infanta Sofia during their visit to the education centre ‘Naum’ in Palma de Mallorca. — Reuters

Spanish princess quarantined

BARCELONA: Princess Leonor, the heir to the Spanish throne, has gone into quarantine after a classmate at her school tested positive for COVID-19, the royal household said on Saturday.

The 14-year-old daughter of King Felipe will be tested for coronavirus like other pupils in her class at the Santa María de los Rosales school in Madrid.

The king and Queen Letizia will continue their royal duties for the moment, a spokesman for the royal household said, as Spain struggles to control a surge

in coronavirus cases.

Eight million Spanish children returned to school last week but some have closed or classes been sent home after pupils tested positive for COVID-19, while authorities in Galicia delayed the start of term by a week for pupils aged 14 to 18.

Spain reported 4,708 new coronavirus infections on Friday, bringing its cumulative total to 566,326, the highest in western Europe, as its total COVID-19 death toll rose to 29,747.

— Reuters

The show must go on: London stage creeps back to life

LONDON: Claire Hutton is excited about stepping foot in a theatre for the first time since the coronavirus brought the curtain down on live shows in London in March.

“I missed it,” she admitted, as she waited to watch the musical “Sleepless”, the first major production launched in the British capital since restrictions were partially lifted.

“I missed the whole experience, even the meal before the show, going to the stage door after the show,” the 36-year-old said.

For self-confessed “massive theatre fans” like Hutton, who was wearing a T-shirt with the slogan “The Show Must Go On”, the six-month wait to see live performances has been hard.

But measures to keep audiences safe aren’t a deterrent.

At the Troubadour, in Wembley Park, northwest London, theatre-goers

had their temperatures taken and were told to wear face masks throughout the performance. Most British theatres are still closed but the pop-up venue in the shadow of the colourful landmark arch of the national stadium has been able to adapt to social distancing rules.

Its 1,200 capacity has been cut to 400 seats, and a one-way route has been put in place along with hand-washing and disinfecting facilities.

The audience didn’t seem to mind. “For a couple of hours, it’s OK,” said Joe Spiteri about the mask requirements. “Then it goes itchy,” he added.

Precautions are taken backstage too. Every day, the production team has a saliva test to determine if they have the virus. Results come back within 45 minutes.

‘GIVE US A DATE!’

“We’re doing more than anyone else to keep people safe within the venue,”



Most British theatres are still closed but the pop-up venue in the shadow of the colourful landmark arch of the national stadium has been able to adapt to social distancing rules. — AFP

said Rowley Gregg, chief operations officer of Troubadour Theatres.

“We’re the only major theatre performance that is putting on a show of this size. You may see that there’s other performances with one individual on

stage.

“But for this, it’s a full-on production with 20 to 25 cast members.” Gregg conceded that an ideal situation would be to have more numbers to help profit margins but said it was a

vital step “to prove... that there is light at the end of the tunnel”.

The situation at the Troubadour contrasts sharply with London’s West End theatre district just 10 miles (16 km) away.

Hit musicals such as “The Lion King”, “Hamilton” or “The Phantom of the Opera” have still not resumed, and tourists who buy most seats are absent.

Outdoor theatre and streaming of shows has been happening but difficulties in enforcing social distancing in older indoor venues, and the effect on bottom lines, is a hindrance.

“We’re at the point of no return,” British composer and theatre impresario Andrew Lloyd-Webber told a parliamentary culture committee earlier this week.

“We simply have to get our arts sector back open and running,” he added, outlining the huge effects on perform-

ers and production crews alike.

An acquaintance, “one of the finest viola players I know”, was now working at a supermarket to make ends meet, he told lawmakers.

“There comes a point now when we really can’t go on much more,” he said, urging the government to commit to a firm timetable for reopening. “Give us a date!” — Debt and lay-offs — Lloyd-Webber’s own production of “Cinderella” that was scheduled to have opened in the coming months, has now been put back until next year.

Theatre closures have forced venues to lay off staff and gone into debt to survive. Others have simply gone to the wall.

The prestigious Royal Albert Hall has taken out £10 million (nearly £13 million, 11 million euros) in loans, and put 80 per cent of staff on furlough. — AFP

I’m a bit claustrophobic today... !

I quite like COVID-19 now, because I understand that for the first time in history, I can do my bit to save mankind by doing nothing. I also understand now that at my age is when work is less fun, and fun is more work. You spend your whole life trying to get the balance right, and if you do... It's for the shortest time! And... I'm being bullied!

At 'stupid-o'clock' the other morning my phone beeped at me, in the middle of a great dream, and what was it? An urgent message from someone? No! It was my pedometer app, that I use to see how active I am each day, sending me a lovely message... not! "Walk and live your life," it seemed to scream at me.

"Walk now!" I don't wanna walk now... I wanna sleep! So, I punched my pillow, lay my head down, shut my eyes as hard as I could, and told myself to go to sleep.

No sooner had I done so than there was a tinfoil rustle and a gentle crash as my packet of antihistamine tablets hit the floor, closely followed by my asthma inhaler, and an empty water bottle. I lifted the pillow from my head... opened one eye... and



Ray Petersen
petersen_ray@hotmail.com

I STARTED MY DAY IN THE USUAL MANNER, THEN AFTER DUE THOUGHT REJECTING, A HEALTHY WORKOUT

sure enough, there was our cat, Persy, looking for some affection, thinking I was playing at 'hiding' from him. Just what I needed. It was clear there would be no more sleep for Ray on this morning! So, I played with Persy for a while till he got bored and disappeared. It was fully daylight by then, so being a former habitual early riser, I started my day in the usual manner, by considering, then after due thought rejecting, a healthy workout. After all, I figure if walking were good for you, every postman I know would be in great shape, but they aren't. Look at rabbits and hares, they hop, skip, run around all day and only eat vegetables, yet they only have a life expectancy of ten to fifteen years. Swimming doesn't work for me either. I don't want to just eat fish, drink water, and end up as fat as a whale! No, I think I'm more a tortoise kinda guy... they are as slow as a wet week, do nothing, and live for hundreds of years. I'm more your jumping to conclusions, pushing my luck, chocolate eating, chips munching kinda guy.

I consider wisely how to take care of my body during these difficult times, and as I always say, "My body is a

temple." The reality is though, it's more like an amusement park! I'm more like the guy wearing the Nike gear, who just can't do it... and the last time I did a push up I can't remember... Well, there was that time I fell over, and I rolled onto my tummy and used my hands to push me up again... so I guess that's... you know... close enough... Honestly, I was worried I would put on weight under lockdown, and not get enough exercise, but while I'm jumping to conclusions, pushing my luck, and exercising my prerogative.

I'm not working at present as my boss wasn't happy with my productivity while I was working from home. I told him a bus stops at a bus station, a train stops at a train station, and I have a workstation. I still don't understand his reaction as he told me to find a new job, Maybe cleaning mirrors? I can see myself doing that! However, I have used my time well, and yesterday made the astonishing discovery that the most effective anti-virus is Norton! But also, we don't have to worry too much, as someone said to me the other day, "Coronavirus won't last long... !" Keep safe, keep well, and I'll see you next week.

SLEEPING ROUGH

Migrants wary of new Lesbos camp despite virus fears

MARINA RAFENBERG

Aided by a Farsi-speaking translator, Greek asylum staffer Michalis patiently explains to a group of Afghan asylum seekers that a new tent camp awaits them on the island of Lesbos.

"You cannot stay on the street. It's dangerous, and I remind you that Coronavirus is everywhere," says the staffer, who declined to give his last name.

Over 11,000 people — including some 4,000 children — have been sleeping rough since the notoriously overcrowded and unsanitary camp of Moria burned down last week.

Most of them are from Afghanistan, with smaller populations from Syria, DR Congo and Iran.

Lacking tents and even basic bedding, they have sought shelter wherever there is room — on the side of the road, in parking lots and even inside a local cemetery.

"This camp will be different than Moria. We promise you the asylum procedure will be faster.

You will be able to leave the island quickly," Michalis says.

Aided by army bulldozers, work crews have worked round-the-clock to erect a makeshift tent camp for 3,000 people a few kilometres from the ruins of Moria.

Alexandros Ragavas, a spokesman for the migration ministry, says vulnerable asylum

This camp will be different than Moria. We promise you the asylum procedure will be faster. You will be able to leave the island quickly

MICHALIS,
Asylum staffer

seekers will be the first to be housed.

"We will give priority to families. It will be tents of six and the camp will be separated by ethnicities. The process of moving people will start today," he said.

Migration Minister Notis Mitarachi last week said asylum seekers would be tested on entry for the novel Coronavirus, and that a "special quarantine" area had been created near the camp for those testing positive.

Officials have blamed migrants for the fires, the first breaking out shortly after 35 people tested positive for Coronavirus and were facing isolation measures.

Only eight of the 35 positive cases have been found. An additional headache for authorities is that the fire also torched registration records and asylum claims, which will now have to be redone from scratch.

But many of the asylum-seekers are wary of being bottled up again after months of Coronavirus lockdown, and fear a re-run of the ethnic gang crime and dismal sanitation standards that plagued Moria. Others say the location of the new camp on a hilltop overlooking the sea bodes ill for winter.

"It's near the sea. How we will (manage in) winter, it will be so cold," asks Omar, an 18-year-old from Burkina Faso.

"We will demonstrate again today. We don't want to be in a closed camp where there is no security and no liberty," says 21-year-old Afghan Mahdi Ahmadi.

Hundreds of migrants gathered near the site of the new camp on Saturday, beating plastic bottles and shouting "No camp" at riot police, following a first protest on Friday. — AFP

IT IS EXHAUSTING

American families stumble through first weeks of virtual school

GABRIELLA BORTER

Meredith Kablick sat next to her five-year-old son Peter at home in Cheverly, Maryland, as he logged on to a Zoom video call for his first week of kindergarten at a French immersion school. Like thousands of parents in the United States this week, the registrar assistant was supervising her child's virtual schooling while working full-time.

As with many schools from coast to coast, classes in the Washington, DC, suburb reopened online to avoid the risk of COVID-19 infection. Chaos marked the first days, said Kablick, a mother of two. Her son and 17 classmates, many unaware of how to mute themselves on the video call, fought to concentrate on their teacher speaking a foreign language with the sound of barking dogs and bickering parents in the background.

"Sometimes it's funny, but sometimes you're just like, how is this going to go on? How can we live like this?" Kablick said. "It's exhausting."

The new school year had held promise of some return to normalcy for American families since the pandemic upended daily life and made much of the spring semester unproductive. But the spread of the Coronavirus over the summer set off a national debate over whether to resume in-classroom instruction. Public schools in Los Angeles and Chicago moved all classes online and New York City has pushed back the start of its blended programme, with in-person and remote classes, after teachers protested against a reopening plan they felt was unsafe.

Health experts have warned against opening where COVID-19 transmission is high. But in-person



THE NEW SCHOOL YEAR HAD HELD PROMISE OF SOME RETURN TO NORMALCY FOR AMERICAN FAMILIES

schooling has a positive psychological impact that virtual learning lacks, and is important for kids who rely on school for meals, US top infectious disease official Anthony Fauci told reporters last month.

Virtual classes have shown a lower quality of learning, a Reuters survey found. While online classes have been smoother than the haphazard online lessons thrown together in March, schools still suffer from web portals crashing, students struggle to upload assignments, and parents sweat to keep their kids focused while working, according to interviews with parents

and teachers this week.

Single working parents and parents of children with special needs have a particularly tough time. Kimberlee Bradshaw Archibald, a public relations professional, opted to keep her two children home when their schools in Ramsey, New Jersey, opened last week. Her children, 4-year-old Gabrielle and 8-year-old Ethan, who has Down's syndrome, need lots of supervision.

This week, while her husband was away, she paced between the rooms where Ethan and Gabrielle were taking separate classes while on a conference call for work. — Reuters



Australia's Josh Hazlewood celebrates with team-mates after taking the wicket of England's Moeen Ali. – Reuters

Hazlewood's WC woe behind him as Australia beat England

MANCHESTER, United Kingdom: Australia fast bowler Josh Hazlewood insisted it was a case of “onwards and upwards” after he starred in a 19-run win over world champions England in the first one-day international at Old Trafford on Friday.

Hazlewood took a miserly 3-26 from his maximum 10 overs that stifled England's pursuit of a target of 295 from the outset, removing opener Jason Roy and Test skipper Joe Root for single figure scores as the hosts limped to 22-2 off the first 10 overs.

This was Australia's first 50-over match against England since a crushing eight-wicket defeat by their arch-rivals in the semi-finals of last year's World Cup at Edgbaston.

Hazlewood, however, didn't play in that match after being controversially omitted from the World Cup squad, with the selectors instead wanting him to regain full fitness following a back injury for the subsequent Test series in England, where Australia retained the Ashes in a 2-2 draw.

Asked if the way he bowled on Friday made his World Cup absence all the more painful, Hazlewood replied: “Nah it's onwards and upwards. That's

a long time ago now, so always looking forward”.

The 29-year-old was close to unplayable during a stunning opening spell of two wickets for five runs in six overs.

“England's top order is probably the form top order in the world in the last three or four years, so I guess going against them is a good measure of where you're at”, Hazlewood said after what was just Australia's third win in 14 ODIs against their oldest foe.

“To keep them down to 20-odd for two in the first 10 was great”.

Meanwhile, England captain Eoin Morgan said Hazlewood had enjoyed a “day out” after his side went 1-0 down in a three-match series that continues Sunday.

“They (Australia) were outstanding, incredibly accurate and they got the ball moving”, he said. “It's not often it happens to us”.

'KEEPING STOKESY'S CHAIR WARM'

Sam Billings kept England in the game with 118, his maiden ODI hundred, after sharing a century partnership with Jonny Bairstow (84) following

the hosts' collapse to 57-4.

Billings was the only member of England's XI on Friday not involved in the World Cup squad, with his inclusion owing much to star all-rounder Ben Stokes still being on compassionate leave with his ill father in New Zealand.

Billings, reflecting on his “mixed feelings” at making a hundred in a losing cause, told Sky Sports he was keen to “keep putting scores on the board” after what was just his 19th ODI appearance in a five-year England career.

The 29-year-old Kent batsman added, however: “I don't think it matters how many runs I get, I know I'm only keeping Stokesy's chair warm for him”.

Morgan, however, insisted Billings had batted brilliantly on the back of “sporadic” chances caused by the fact he, as well as Jos Buttler and Stokes, had often been at No 6 instead.

“But today he (Billings) really stood out in a spot that is really difficult to bat, where you can be thrown in at all different circumstances”, said Morgan.

— AFP

SCOREBOARD

Australia	
D Warner b Archer	6
A Finch c Buttler b Wood	16
M Stoinis c Buttler b Wood	43
M Labuschagne lbw Rashid	21
M Marsh lbw Wood	73
A Carey c Billings b Rashid	10
G Maxwell b Archer	77
P Cummins c Morgan b Archer	9
M Starc (not out)	19
A Zampa c and b Woakes	5
J Hazlewood (not out)	0
Extras: (B-8, LB-2, W-5)	15
Total: (For 9 wkts, 50 overs)	294
Fall of wickets: 1-13, 2-43, 3-80, 4-103, 5-123, 6-249, 7-259, 8-273, 9-288.	
Bowling: Woakes 10-0-59-1, Archer 10-0-57-3, Wood 10-0-54-3, Moeen 10-0-59-0, Rashid 10-0-55-2.	
England	
J Roy c and b Hazlewood	3
J Bairstow c Hazlewood b Zampa	84
J Root c Carey b Hazlewood	1
E Morgan c Maxwell b Zampa	23
J Buttler c Labuschagne b Zampa	1
S Billings c Warner b Marsh	118
M Ali c Labuschagne b Hazlewood	6
C Woakes c Maxwell b Zampa	10
A Rashid c Maxwell b Cummins	5
J Archer (not out)	8
Extras: (LB-10, NB-1, W-5)	16
Total: (For 9 wkts, 50 overs)	275
Fall of wickets: 1-7, 2-13, 3-55, 4-57, 5-170, 6-182, 7-223, 8-234, 9-275.	
Bowling: Starc 10-0-47-0, Hazlewood 10-3-26-3, Cummins 10-0-74-1, Zampa 10-0-55-4, Marsh 5-1-29-1, Maxwell 3-0-19-0, Stoinis 2-0-15-0.	

Korda builds two-shot lead at ANA Inspiration



Nelly Korda hits her tee shot on the 16th hole during the second round of the 2020 ANA Inspiration at Mission Hills Golf Club. – USA Today Sports

CALIFORNIA: Nelly Korda carded an impressive five-under 67 to build a two-stroke lead over Mirim Lee in the second round of the ANA Inspiration in Rancho Mirage, California on Friday as she strengthened her bid for a maiden major title.

The 22-year-old American, who began the day one stroke ahead of Chun In-gee of South Korea and Madelene Sagstrom of Sweden, made five birdies and sank putts from 20 feet on the second and 25 feet on the third to remain bogey free across the round. Korda, who fired a first-round 66 on Thursday, moved to 11-under 133 for the tournament, taking a 36-hole lead into the weekend of a major for the first time in her career.

“I did not know what I was doing on those two holes”, Korda said. “My caddie Jason just said, okay, take a deep breath right now, so I was happy those two went in.

“Golf is just about momentum, so you roll one in here and there and

it just makes it a lot easier. South Korean Lee, who began the round in 19th, made seven birdies and also remained bogey-free as she surged up the leaderboard to second. American Lexi Thompson and Denmark's Nanna Koerstz Madsen are tied for third, four shots behind Korda. Thompson, who has just one top-10 finish this year, said re-uniting with childhood coach Jim McLean helped her find her groove at Mission Hills Country Club. “I worked with Jim for a week. He knew my swing better than anybody growing up. I thought let's just go back to old Lexi and see him. We changed a few things”, said Thompson, who won the tournament in 2014.

The ANA Inspiration is usually played in April but was pushed back due to the COVID-19 pandemic and is being held without fans in attendance. The conditions are less than ideal at Rancho Mirage, with temperatures expected to soar above 100°F (37.8°C) during the tournament. — Reuters

Celtics beat Raptors to advance, Nuggets stave off elimination

LOS ANGELES: Jayson Tatum finished with 29 points and 12 rebounds as the Boston Celtics booked their spot in the NBA's Eastern Conference finals with a 92-87 game seven win over the defending league champion Toronto Raptors on Friday.

Jaylen Brown scored 21 points, Marcus Smart added 16 points and Kemba Walker 14 for the Celtics who won the series 4-3 and advanced to their third Eastern Conference finals in the past four seasons.

“If you want to achieve something great, if you want to win, it's not going to be easy”, Tatum said. “That's what we're here for”.

Boston will play the Miami Heat with game one of the best-of-seven series scheduled for Tuesday in the quarantine bubble in Orlando, Florida.

Fred VanVleet had 20 points to lead the Raptors, whose title defence came to a close after battling back from 2-0 and 3-2 deficits in the series.

“We didn't play great in this series. There is no denying that. But pretty much everything else we did this season, we were awesome”, Toronto coach Nick Nurse said.

Kyle Lowry had 16 points before fouling out in the final minute. Pascal Siakam scored 13 points with 11 rebounds as the Raptors turned the ball over 18 times, including a half



Boston Celtics forward Jayson Tatum (0) dribbles against Toronto Raptors guard Fred VanVleet (23) during the first half of game seven of the second round of the 2020 NBA Play-offs. – USA Today Sports

dozen times in the fourth quarter.

Celtics Smart made a clutch block on Siakam late in the fourth with Boston up by just two, 89-87. Lowry fouled out on the other end with 35 seconds to go.

Celtics rookie Grant Williams missed two free throw chances, but Tatum got fouled on the rebound and made one free throw for a 90-87 lead.

VanVleet missed a potential game-tying three with 12 seconds left by putting up an air ball. Walker made two free throws at the other end to seal the victory.

In the Western Conference, Jamal Murray sparked a fourth-quarter rally and rookie Michael Porter made several clutch plays down the stretch as the Denver Nuggets stayed alive with a 111-105 upset of the Los Angeles Clippers.

The Nuggets turned up the heat on the Clippers in the fourth quarter to cut Los Angeles' lead in the semi-final series to 3-2.

Canada's Murray scored a team high 26 points, Nikola Jokic had 22 points, 14 rebounds, five assists and Paul Millsap tallied 17 points for the Nuggets, who were also down 3-1 in the previous series before storming back to win three straight against the Utah Jazz.

Murray was able to bust loose in

game five after being contained for much of the series by a rotating trio of Clippers defenders, including Kawhi Leonard, Paul George and Patrick Beverley.

“We play the best when our backs are against the wall”, said Murray. “It is as simple as that. We came up fighting. They had a good start but we had to fight back”.

American Porter made a series of key plays late in the game including a three-point dagger from 27 feet out with 71 seconds remaining to give the Nuggets a five point lead, 105-100.

Porter, 22, also had a clutch block on Ivica Zubac 35 seconds later and drained four free throws in the final 21 seconds.

Leonard scored a game-high 36 points and George finished with 26 for the second seeded Clippers, who are trying to advance to their first Western Conference final.

Leonard has scored at least 30 points in seven playoff games. He is averaging almost 30 points per game in the postseason but he didn't get much help from the Clippers bench in game five.

Murray rebounded nicely on Friday, making five of seven baskets from beyond the arc after shooting six-of-15 from the field in game four.

— AFP

BOTTAS COMPLETES PRACTICE CLEAN SWEEP FOR MERCEDES

MUGELLO, Italy: Valtteri Bottas completed a clean sweep of Tuscan Grand Prix practice domination when he topped the times for Mercedes in the final session ahead of qualifying on Saturday.

The Finn, who was fastest in both practice sessions on Friday, was quickest ahead of Red Bull's Max Verstappen by 0.017 seconds with his Mercedes team-mate and series leader Lewis Hamilton third, just 0.083 off the pace.

Bottas's best lap was one minute and 16.530 seconds, setting a record for the spectacular Ferrari-owned Mugello circuit being used for Formula One for the first time as it hosts the Italian team's 1000th race celebrations.

Lance Stroll was fourth for Racing Point ahead of last weekend's Monza winner Pierre Gasly of Alpha Tauri and his Racing Point team-mate Sergio Perez, who is due to be replaced next year, when the team is renamed as Aston Martin, by four-time champion Sebastian Vettel.

Charles Leclerc was seventh in the leading retro 'burgundy' red Ferrari ahead of Alex Albon in the second Red Bull, Daniil Kvyat in the second Alpha Tauri and Romain Grosjean of Haas.

Vettel in the second Ferrari was 18th as the team sought to deliver a strong recovery after two pointless weekends at Spa-Francorchamps and Monza.

On a beautiful morning in the Tuscan hills, the air temperature was 27 degrees Celsius and the track was 40 as final practice began, the Haas, McLaren and Alpha Tauri teams leading the way with prompt installation laps.

Bottas was soon out on softs and clocked the first serious timed lap in 1:17.437 as he strove to carry his 'fastest on Friday' form into a meaningful Saturday and a bid to take



Mercedes' driver Valtteri Bottas competes during the qualifying session at the Mugello circuit ahead of the Tuscany Formula One Grand Prix. — AFP

pole position.

After 24 minutes, however, Hamilton trimmed the best time by just 0.022 seconds to top Bottas before Verstappen, on mediums, clocked 1:17.116 to take control for Red Bull, the Dutchman exploiting his car's

handling on the high-speed corners of the picturesque circuit.

In response, on fresh softs, Bottas returned to the top in 1:16.530 with a lap that Hamilton could not match as he took second, 0.083 off the Finn's speed.

It was clear a tight scrap between the two 'black arrows' drivers was in prospect for qualifying later on Saturday with Verstappen also in the mix.

Ferrari's form continued to improve after their encouraging runs on Friday

— Leclerc claiming a top five slot within a second of the leading pace to offer some hope on the weekend when the team celebrate their 1000th F1 race entry.

Vettel, who leaves Ferrari for Aston Martin at the end of the year, briefly

rose to seventh before falling back to 15th with six minutes remaining, 1.6 seconds off the pace.

In the final flurry of low-fuel runs, to simulate qualifying, Verstappen improved to divide the two Mercedes men. — AFP

Al Oruba unhappy with short prep time before league restart



ADILAL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, SEPT 12

Al Oruba club on Saturday announced a clarification on Oman Football Association's decision (OFA) on restarting the footballing season of 2019/2020.

The Sur-based team began their announcement with a thanking note to the Supreme Committee tasked with tackling COVID-19 pandemic as they approved a resumption of the footballing activities after a break of more than six months.

"Al Oruba club will take the required steps that will ensure safe return of the activities in the club taking into consideration the pre-

cautionary measures of all the club's members which is the top priority. The decision which was raised by the Supreme Committee in mid of March on stopping the sports activities aimed to ensure the safety of the players from the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Al Oruba club was unhappy with the OFA decision to resume the remaining three rounds of the league at this tough time of the pandemic after an absence of six months," said the statement.

The official statement of Omantel League's club mentioned that the current time did not allow for league resumption due to different reasons including the health, technical and

financial reasons. "It is too difficult to complete all the process and required procedures during the four and five weeks time until resuming with the three remaining rounds of the league. The technical preparation for the team to the 2019/2020 and 2020/2021 seasons required a proper and series of warm-up sessions besides the friendly matches after a break for half year. Moreover, the team have many foreign players and they need to arrive in the Sultanate and need to adapt to the technical readiness."

The announcement ended by stating that Al Oruba will remain as one of the top teams in the Sul-

tanate and will continue eyeing the top positions despite the challenges. "Al Oruba is one of the top domestic teams that had accomplished different achievements and will continue in this path. We are ensuring that Al Oruba will continue serving the Sultanate's sporting sector including football."

Al Oruba has been positioned in the 13th place in the table order of Omantel League with 23 points. They are among the teams in the danger zone besides Bahla, Oman and Al Suwaiq. Mirbat has already been relegated to the first division league as they have 12 points only at the last place in the order.





follow us @observersportz

www.omanobserver.om

editor@omanobserver.om



sport



NEW YORK: Austria's Dominic Thiem advanced to his second Grand Slam final of 2020, digging out a win over third seeded Russian Daniil Medvedev 6-2 7-6(7) 7-6(5) at the US Open on Friday.

"For sure (it was) the toughest straight-sets win I ever had because could have been easily completely different," said Thiem, who will compete for his first-ever Grand Slam title in the men's final on Sunday against Germany's Alexander Zverev.

Thiem seized the early momentum inside the Arthur Ashe Stadium, handily carrying the first set without dropping a single first-serve point, but a double fault and a forehand error saw him hand Medvedev the break and the early lead in the second.

Thiem, who has lost in three Grand Slam finals and never claimed a major title, spent the remainder of the set playing catch up, converting on a critical break to level the score 5-5 before the 24-year-old Russian dragged it into a tiebreak.

Medvedev kept his energy up as he traded blows with his opponent, triumphing in an epic, 33-shot rally early in the tiebreak, but his efforts came up short.

"He just doesn't miss when I play with his rhythm. So I tried to destroy that a little bit with lot of slices, with also high balls with a

lot of spin. That was what was the plan," Thiem said.

The 27-year-old Thiem, who had a trainer examine his ankle before the third set, slipped and fell twice in the match, unfurling a string of frustrated exclamations the second time he did so. But he regained his cool to survive yet another tiebreak and clinched the affair with a power forehand and a roar.

"I played my best tennis then towards the end of the sets," said Thiem, who saved six of eight break point opportunities during the match, committing a dozen fewer unforced errors than his opponent.

"Both tiebreaks were amazing. Tiebreaks are mentally a tough thing. I don't like them at all to be honest," he said. "I'm really happy to be through. It was a great semi-final."

Medvedev, who fired off a dozen aces on the match, showed shades of his bad boy persona seen in his 2019 run to the US Open final. He offered a sarcasm-drenched apology in the first set after crossing to the other side of the net to lobby for a late challenge, earning a violation in the process.

"I think I killed someone, right?" he said to a tournament supervisor in the stands, adding to the umpire, "My sincere apologies for crossing the net."

— Reuters

THIEM

GRINDS THROUGH TWO
TIEBREAKS TO REACH
US OPEN FINAL



Zverev rallies by Carreno Busta to enter summit clash

NEW YORK: German fifth seed Alexander Zverev overcame a listless start to secure a thrilling 3-6, 2-6, 6-3, 6-4, 6-3 US Open semifinal win over Spaniard Pablo Carreno Busta on a poignant Friday in New York to reach his first Grand Slam final.

Organisers had commemorated the anniversary of the September 11, 2001 attacks before the semifinal with Broadway singer Christopher Jackson performing a trio of songs in front of a display for Black Lives Matter inside Arthur Ashe Stadium.

The German looked headed for certain defeat after committing 36 errors through the first two sets but used his versatile game to pick himself

up and looked like a completely different player the rest of the way.

"I knew that I had to come up with better tennis and I knew that I had to be more stable... but I am through to my first Grand Slam final and that's all that matters," said Zverev.

After Zverev levelled the match at two sets apiece Carreno Busta took a medical timeout to have his back tended to and the German, with a sudden swagger in his step, got the break he needed in the first game before cruising home.

Carreno Busta was locked in early as he held at love to open the match, turned aside a break point on his next service game, and broke twice for a 5-1



Alexander Zverev of Germany returns the ball against Pablo Carreno Busta of Spain in the US Open semifinal. — USA Today Sports

“I knew that I had to come up with better tennis and I knew that I had to be more stable...but I am through to my first Grand Slam and that's all that matters
ALEXANDER ZVEREV
Germany

lead before securing the first set.

Things kept going the Spaniard's way in the second as he pushed Zverev's back to the wall with three consecutive breaks for a 5-0 lead during a lopsided set in which the mishitting German made 22 unforced errors.

But Zverev suddenly looked the more confident of the two as he broke Carreno Busta four times over the next two sets while leaning on his serve to put the pressure on the Spaniard. Zverev, who is bidding to become the first German men's Grand Slam champion since Boris Becker won the 1996 Australian Open, will face second seed Dominic Thiem in Sunday's final.

— Reuters

Instant Banking Services

Transfer money to anyone, anytime instantly through BankDhofar MobilePayments System.

Welcome to the most hassle-free way to transfer money from your account to any other account instantly, with BankDhofar Mobile Payments System.

Instantly transfer Cash to any other wallet in the Sultanate. Quick play and transfer to merchants.

For more information: https://www.bankdhofar.com/en-GB/COVID_19_Preventive_Measures.aspx

بنك ظفار
BankDhofar

the best bank for you 3479 1111 www.bankdhofar.com

Unified COVID-19 health insurance policy on anvil



FIRST-OF-ITS-KIND: A standard version of the policy will be offered to individuals and groups and will cover testing, treatment and hospitalisation (up to a certain limit) resulting from exposure to the virus.

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, SEPT 12

The Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) has joined hands with health insurance companies to support the introduction of a standard unified health insurance policy to cover COVID-19 testing and treatment in the Sultanate.

The product, which is currently the subject of deliberations among insurance companies, will be rolled out once it is reviewed and approved by the Capital Market Authority (CMA), according to a key official associated with the initiative.

Murtadha M J Ibrahim al Jamalani, Chairman of OCCI's Finance & Insurance Committee, said: "We are currently exploring the initiative to launch a special product for COVID-19 insurance coverage in the Sultanate. Discussions have already commenced with insurance companies on the scope and features of the policy. It will be offered to the market once it is certified and approved by the CMA, which is the regulator of the insurance sector in Oman."

Speaking to the *Observer*, Al Jamalani said the proposed policy will be broadly modelled on the lines of COVID-19 insurance products introduced recently in different parts of the world including the Indian market.

Swiss Re, the world's second largest reinsurer, is also credited with launching a standardised product that leaves no scope for ambiguity in the wordings of the policy.

Explaining the importance of simplified language in policies, the Committee Chairman said: "For



Discussions have already commenced with insurance companies on the scope and features of the policy. It will be offered to the market once it is certified and approved by the CMA.

MURTADHA AL JAMALANI,
OCCI Chairman
Finance and Insurance
Committee

pandemic risks, it is imperative that policy wordings are standardised to reduce the potential for the type of disputes that have marred the reputation of the global insurance industry in its response to the coronavirus."

Insurance firms as well as the market regulator, CMA, have broadly welcomed the Chamber's efforts to promote market segmentation in the insurance sector.

When approved for marketing in the Sultanate, it will be the first insurance product solely dedicated to COVID-19 coverage, said the official.

A standard version of the policy will be offered to individuals and groups and will cover testing, treatment and hospitalisation (up to a certain limit) resulting from exposure to the virus.

Importantly, the proposed policy will be advantageous to Omanis and expatriates alike looking to travel overseas on business or holiday, said Al Jamalani. "With many countries requiring visitors to include COVID-19 coverage in their travel insurance, this product will provide travellers the cover they need when going abroad. It is especially useful for business travellers."

Under the chairmanship of Al Jamalani, OCCI's Finance & Insurance Committee has worked collaboratively with government and private sector stakeholders to help identify solutions to support the sustainable growth of the insurance industry in the Sultanate. Part of this effort is aimed at helping insurance firms and other market players build balanced portfolios, said the Committee Chairman.

Investments in Madayn industrial cities hit RO 6.6 billion in 2019

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 12

The Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn) is working towards developing Madayn Vision 2040 to be along the lines of Oman Vision 2040, said Hasan bin Marhoon al Marhoon (pictured), Director-General of Planning and Business Development at Madayn.

"Through the development of Madayn Vision 2040, we aim at establishing world-class business cities while maintaining the Omani identity.

Madayn aims at emphasising its role in promoting comprehensive and sustainable economic and social development through enhancing public-private partnership in order to develop



and operate integrated business cities," Al Marhoon pointed out.

Al Marhoon informed that the gross investment volume in Madayn's various industrial cities touched RO 6.6 billion by the end of 2019 marking a growth rate of 1.54 per cent compared to the same period in 2018. Besides, the number of workforce at the end of 2019 reached 61,213, with an Omanisation percentage touching 34 per cent.

The number of investing projects in the industrial cities reached 2,313 projects at the end of 2019, of which 1,759 are existing projects, 285 are under construction and 269 projects have been allocated with spaces.

Moreover, the total area of Madayn's industrial cities reached 114,306,724 square metres by the end of 2019 with utilisation rate of 52 per cent of the total investable area. Al Marhoon elaborated that the growth amount in the total volume of investments in all the industrial cities during 2019 amounted to RO 101 million.

Suhar Industrial City had the highest increase in total investments during 2019 compared to the other industrial cities of Madayn. **TURN TO P14**

Announcement of Tender No. (1/2020)

To Manufacture / Supply Modern Fishing Boats

Oman Fisheries Company SAOG invites prospective tenderers -either manufacturers/owners/ suppliers to manufacture / supply (4) modern fishing boats according to the specifications shown in the tender booklet. Establishments and companies specializing in the manufacture or supply of boats inside or outside the Sultanate can enter into tender according to the conditions:

1. The intending bidder to read the terms and condition mentioned in the Tender booklet carefully. He should only submit his bid if he considers himself eligible and he is in possession of all the documents required.

2. Information and Instructions for bidders mentioned on the booklet shall form of bid document.

3. The bid document consisting of detailed specifications, number of boats to be supplied and the set of terms and conditions of the contract to be complied with and other necessary documents can be obtained from Procurement Department at the Company's Head Office in Ghala Industrial Area (wilayat Baushar)

4. The booklet can be purchased on payment of OMR 150 through direct deposit or through NEFT/RTGS at the Bank Account mentioned below and on production of a receipt at the cash section at Ghala Head Office:

Beneficiary name: OMAN FISHERIES CO., SAOG

Beneficiary Bank: Bank Muscat SAOG,

Main Branch- CBD, PO Box 134, Ruwi,- 112, Sultanate of Oman

Account No# 0423011043630057

Swift Code: BMUSOMRXXXX

5. Fully completed bid to be submitted after, indicating the price, in sealed envelopes addressed in the name of the Chairman of the Oman Fisheries Company SAOG.

6. Along with the bid the bidder to submit a guarantee (a cheque approved by the bank) in the name of the Oman Fisheries Company SAOG, for an amount of OMR 500 (Five Hundred Omani Rials), to be returned to those not assigned to the tender.

7. No bid will be approved unless the tender booklet is purchased.

8. Certificate of Financial Turnover: At the time of submission of bid, contractor may upload copy of audited Balance Sheet of last three years or for the period specified in the bid document, reference of the previous and existing customers and further details if required may be asked from the contractor after opening of the technical bid.

9. Oman Fisheries reserves the rights to accept any tender or reject any or all tenders or split up the work between more than one tenders without assigning any reason whatsoever. It is also entitled to cancel the tender at any time before and after the tender. The company is not responsible for any expenses incurred by the bidder.

10. The bidder shall specify (in the tender booklet) the method of communicating with him.

11. The employees of the Oman Fisheries Company SAOG are not permitted to participate in the tender.

12. All the conditions stipulated in the tender booklet are considered an integral part of this announcement and read with it.

13. Bids to be submitted at the Procurement Department on working days from 8 am until 4 pm at the Company's headquarters in the wilayat of Bausher (Ghala Industrial area).

14. The deadline for submitting bids is **Thursday, October 1, 2020 at 3 pm.**

For more information about the tender, please contact
Eng. Hamad Al-Ruqaishi on mobile number +968 98081957.

OMAN FISHERIES



Omani firm takes lead in becoming carbon neutral

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 12

Muscat Livestock & Trading Co LLC (MLS), a leading procurer, processor and marketer of premium meat products, has announced that the company has committed to the United Nations Climate Neutral Now initiative, to support global society in achieving climate neutrality.

This means that the company is estimating, reducing and compensating its greenhouse gas emissions in an effort to make no net release of greenhouse gas emissions into the atmosphere.

MLS has joined stakeholders from around the globe that have promised to effectively help implement the Paris Agreement to accelerate the transformative change needed to reach greenhouse gas (GHG) emission neutrality (i.e. climate neutrality) by 2050, while also supporting the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

“Climate change is happening and action is needed now”, Salim Ahmed Sultan al Dighaishi, Director, MLS said. “We are reducing our carbon footprint and are taking climate



The company is estimating, reducing and compensating its greenhouse gas emissions in an effort to make no net release of greenhouse gas emissions into the atmosphere

action by supporting a worthy green project in a developing country to become Oman's first carbon neutral company”.

“It is more important than ever

to engage everyone in global climate action and to collaborate towards a climate neutral world. We engaged an outside consultant to work with the Climate Change secretariat/

UNFCCC to help us achieve our goal of carbon neutral recognition. We hope that by joining a UN level international campaign we will encourage other organisations in Oman to understand the vital importance of measuring, reducing and offsetting carbon emissions to help tackle climate change now and create a more sustainable future”, he said.

“During the COVID-19 pandemic, many consumers in Oman have found comfort in beef like never before as reflected by traffic to our online store being in the top 2 per cent since launch”, said Nadeem Ahmed, Director MLS.

“We're proud to be recognised as carbon neutral. We acknowledge the influence we have on world culture and the responsibility we have to take an active part in contributing to the realisation of this goal.

We are aware the environmental footprint of cattle has been a contentious issue but with sustainability initiatives such as Climate Neutral Now there's a realisation that the beef industry is making an effort to head in the right direction”, he says.

Ubhar Capital wins Best Brokerage and Best Investment Bank awards

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 12

International Business Magazine (IBM) has awarded Ubhar Capital SAOC (U-Capital) “Best Brokerage Excellence Award Oman” and “Best Investment Bank of the Year Oman” for the year 2020.

International Business Magazine has chosen U Capital based on a number of criteria's including but not limited to number and volume of transactions, services and advisory provided, value added services, innovation, pricing and reputation in the market, and so on.

Anwar al Jabri, Chairman of U Capital said: “We are grateful to be recognised with two prestigious titles by *International Business Magazine* as they are considered one of the most important benchmark for key financial services companies in the region. This coveted recognition is a testament to the ability and efficiency of the U Capital team to offer customised financial advisory services that provide our growing network of top-tier clients with innovative, tailored solutions that promote and sustain capital growth. This award comes as a result of U Capital's successful completion of several investment banking transactions this and last year despite the challenges raised by COVID-19 and low oil prices”.

Lo'ai Bataineh, CEO at U Capital commented: “This award is an evidence to our continuous growth and unrivaled dedication of the U Capital team to meet all clients' requirements. This recognition underlines the leading position of U Capital's Investment



Banking expertise locally and regionally in advising clients across the full range of investment banking services including: Financing advisory, debt capital markets, equity capital markets, M&A advisory, brokerage/research, custodial and other advisory services”.

Bataineh further added that U Capital investment banking team has managed some of the landmark and most successful issues in Oman and with its extensive investor relationships has repeatedly demonstrated its ability to raise substantial amounts from investors across the region. The team has raised more than \$7.5 billion for various companies in the last 15 years. In terms of brokerage, U Capital leads in Oman with brokerage market share of approximately 35 per cent in 2020. U Capital brokerage services span across regional as well as international markets aided with top notch equity research products and services.

Ubhar Capital recently acquired Gulf Baader Capital Markets (GBCM) in Oman. The combination brings together two leading investment services firms in Oman with combined assets under management and custody assets of \$1.3 billion and brokerage market share of 35 per cent in the Muscat Securities Market as of July 2020. The merged entity will continue to focus on four business segments of Asset Management, Corporate Finance, Brokerage and Custody Services covering local and regional markets.

Investments in Madayn industrial cities hit RO 6.6 billion in 2019

FROM PAGE 13

Al Marhoon elaborated that the growth amount in the total volume of investments in all the industrial cities during 2019 amounted to RO 101 million. Suhar Industrial City had the highest increase in total investments during 2019 compared to the other industrial cities of Madayn.

“The total investments in Suhar Industrial City increased by RO 24 million, bringing the cumulative volume of the investments by the end of 2019 in Suhar to RO 2.2 billion compared to RO 2.1 million at the end of 2018. This increase is attributed to the investments of companies that were introduced in Suhar Industrial City during 2019”, he said.

The number of workforce increased by 1,143 workers during 2019 compared to 2018, marking a growth rate of 2 per cent. Al Rusayl and Suhar Industrial Cities account for nearly two-thirds of the total workforce within Madayn's industrial cities. The percentage of the workforce in the two industrial cities is 35 per cent and 28 per cent respectively.

Al Marhoon added that 102 projects have been localised during 2019 at various stages of implementation, noting a growth rate of 4.6 per cent compared to 2018.

Of these projects, 76 per cent are existing projects, 12 per cent have been allocated with spaces, and 12 per cent are under construction. These projects vary in terms of activities, as 58 per cent are industrial projects, 20 per cent are commercial projects, 14 per cent are service and logistical projects, 7 per cent are technical and 1 per cent are housing and real estate projects.

Additionally, Al Buraimi Industrial City topped the other industrial cities in

terms of the total number of projects. By the end of 2019, the number of projects in Al Buraimi Industrial City touched 508, and is followed by Suhar Industrial City with 416 projects.

In 2019, around 9.7 million square metres were added as an expansion to Madayn's gross area. With this expansion, Madayn's total area reached nearly 114 million square metres, compared to 104 million square metres at the end of 2018.

Al Marhoon explained that the year 2019 witnessed the implementation of Madayn's approach of public-private partnership as the management and operation of Al Rusayl Industrial City were transferred to Oman Investment and Development Holding Company (Mubadrah).

With this approach, the development of infrastructure and superstructure in the industrial city has accelerated as phase (2A) was launched at a cost exceeding RO 32 million, as well as the redevelopment and rehabilitation project of the entrances to Al Rusayl Industrial City and the introduction of new entrances to be in line with the business growth and demand at Al Rusayl at a cost of approximately RO 3 million.

Additionally, the logistics project has been completed at Al Rusayl Industrial City at a value of more than RO 1.5 million. Moreover, the company has begun preparing technical and consulting studies for the development of phase (2B) and rehabilitation of the entire old area, which extends to nearly 5 million square metres. Al Marhoon emphasised that by the end of the current year, the experience of privatising Al Rusayl Industrial City will be evaluated from all aspects.



MSM WEEKLY REVIEW

MSM declines amid lower turnover, foreign outflows

The MSM30 Index ended the week down by 1.60 per cent and its main sub-indices were all down as well, led by Financial Index which was down by 1.73 per cent. The Industrial index and Services Index were also lower by 0.60 per cent and 0.39 per cent, respectively. Traded value during the week was lower on w-o-w basis by 61 per cent.

CMA Oman announced that Omanis above 60 years of age will have their loan repayment periods rescheduled to their benefit, while borrowers aged 70 and above will still be eligible for health insurance, because of the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Capital Market Authority has announced. According to the circular, 70 per cent of government employees were expected to retire after completion of 30 years of employment in the public sector.

U Capital Research believes this is a good development for the banking and insurance sector. In terms of banking it will provide them with more credit worthy customers while in terms of Insurance, there will be more premiums for the health insurance companies which was previously untapped or not allowed to be insured.

THE MAX LIMIT FOR RE-DISCOUNTING OF COMMERCIAL PAPERS FACILITY WILL REMAIN AS 25 PER CENT OF A BANK'S NET WORTH

earlier stipulated 20 per cent.

Regarding the risk weight of 35 per cent on claims secured by residential property, it is clarified that there is no change in the criteria provided before.

Furthermore, banks are permitted to include the cost of registration and insurance in the value of the housing property while computing the LTV in respect of all housing loans and accordingly maintain the minimum margin of 10 per cent.

4. Liquidity Coverage Ratio: The minimum standard of 100 per cent for Liquidity Coverage Ratio (LCR) prescribed remains unchanged.

However, in case of genuine liquidity constraint faced by a bank, CBO may consider relaxation on a case to case basis by allowing the bank to operate below the minimum LCR requirement of 100 per cent but not less than a minimum LCR of 75

Oman Public Finance			
(OMR mn)	1H-2019	1H-2020	Change
Oil Revenue	3,075	2,557	-16.8%
Gas Revenue	940	741	-21.2%
Other Revenue	1,500	1,517	1.2%
Revenue	5,514	4,815	-12.7%
Current Expenditure	4,306	4,281	-0.6%
Investment Expenditure	1,098	817	-25.6%
Actual expenditures under settlement	478	487	2.1%
Participation & Support	293	129	-55.9%
Expenditure	6,174	5,714	-7.5%
Deficit	(660)	(899)	36.2%

Source: CBO

CBO has announced a second stimulus package for economic revival and for supporting the banks & FLCs. The following changes are in force with immediate effect.

1. Extension of timeline for existing loan deferment scheme announced on March 18, 2020. This extension is valid until March 31, 2021, without adversely impacting the risk classification of such loans.

2. Enhancing the limit and tenor of Forex SWAP facility provided by CBO: It has been decided to increase the maximum limit of the CBO SWAP facility up to 100 per cent of a bank's net worth, from the current joint ceiling on the SWAP and rediscounting of commercial papers (25 per cent of a bank's net worth), and further extend the tenor of the facility up to a maximum of 1 year.

The max limit for re-discounting of Commercial Papers facility will remain as 25 per cent of a bank's net worth.

3. LTV for Housing Loans: In order to further facilitate the first-time buyers of housing property, it has been decided to reduce the margin to 10 per cent from

per cent.

Banks need prior approval of CBO, and also need to submit a detailed liquidity profile and justifications, indicating the time period sought besides its future strategy, action plan and the timeline for reverting to the maintenance of the minimum LCR of 100 per cent. This is likely to be available until March 31, 2021.

Oman reported revenue of RO 4.8 billion for 1H20 compared to RO 5.51 billion for 1H19, decline of 12.7 per cent. Oil revenue declined by 16.8 per cent while gas revenue decreased by 21.2 per cent.

Expenditure on the other hand also dropped to RO 5.71 billion in 1H20 compared to RO 6.17 billion in 1H19, decline of 7.5 per cent.

Decline in expenditure resulted largely because of drop in current and investment expenditure by 0.6 per cent and 25.6 per cent, respectively.

Overall deficit stood at RO 899 million higher by 36 per cent YoY. Deficit in 1Q20 was RO 36.4 million while the deficit in 2Q20 was RO 863 million.

[Courtesy: U-Capital]

Generating an online income for Omanis

After my last column on digital trends in e-commerce I was contacted by several readers. Here I want to share the story of two Omani influencers, hoping to inspire more youth in Oman to find creative ways to embrace entrepreneurship. The first email was from Mahfoudha, a 27-year-old graduate from Sultan Qaboos University. She has multiple social media accounts and she is particularly active on Twitter. However, her income is primarily generated on Instagram, where she has attracted more than 100 thousand followers over the past five years. She shared with me that every

month there are approximately 20 businesses contacting her for a “shoutout”. A shoutout is a popular form of advertising on Instagram, where influencers like Mahfoudha, during their daily stories or through a post in their feed, openly promote a certain product or service. Mahfoudha told me that she started doing shoutouts for RO 10 when she only had 10 thousand followers. Now she can charge up to RO 100 for multiple shoutouts for the same brand. Although Mahfoudha did not disclose the amount of money she can make in a month, with a simple calculation we can guess. She might have managed to generate an income similar to a full-time office job. The other story is from Mustafa,



STEFANO VIRGILLI

stefano@virgilli.com

Social media has reached a degree of popularity that rewards those willing to invest the time and effort

a 21-year-old Omani with a diploma in media. He lives in Nizwa and posts videos about cars on this Youtube channel. Although his videos are in English, his primary audience is in the Middle East. However, he shared with me that his channel also receives a

substantial amount of views from the US. Mustafa also mentioned that through the monetisation structure of Youtube, he can earn up to RO 250 per month. His channel is just a hobby, as he works full time in the public sector, but he wishes to transform his hobby in his profession in the next two years. The examples above show that social media has reached a degree of popularity that rewards those willing to invest the time and effort. Producing good content is essential for the survival of any social media account or a Youtube channel. However, some struggling accounts can at times be a source of income too. In fact, some influencers might have lost passion for their

channel and they might be willing to sell it out at an affordable price. This is called “flipping accounts”. Through third party escrow services, anyone can buy a popular Instagram account or a Youtube channel, inheriting all of the followers. They can then monetize through shoutouts like Mahfoudha, as part of Youtube monetisation system, or even reselling the account after polishing it and revamping it. But not all that glitters is gold. Many accounts have fake followers and purchasing them would not bring any value to the new owner. Therefore, if you found this article inspiring, be aware of the risks as well as the amount of work needed to transform your story into a success.

MARKET ACCESS

Brazil resumes zero-tariff ethanol imports from US

RIO DE JANEIRO: The United States and Brazil said they had reached a deal for the South American country to temporarily resume tariff-free ethanol imports, a political win for President Donald Trump. Ethanol is a key agricultural export for Iowa, a battleground state in the upcoming US election, and the Trump administration had lobbied to retain zero-tariff access to Brazil, a leading market. Brazil had previously exempted up to 750 million litres (200 million gallons) a year of imported ethanol from tariffs. However, it let the benefit expire on September 1, reinstating a 20-per cent tariff. In a joint statement, the two countries said they had agreed to hold trade talks for a 90-day period starting September 14, and return to the previous tariff-free arrangement during that time. The talks will focus on ethanol, sugar — which Brazilian producers want to sell tariff-free in the US — and possibly corn, the two sides said. “The discussions should aim to achieve reciprocal and proportional outcomes that generate trade and open markets to the benefit of both countries”, they said. The US Ambassador in Brazil, Todd Chapman, has reportedly lobbied hard to retain the ethanol exemption. Chapman is now facing an inquiry before the US House of Representatives’ Foreign Affairs Committee over reports he violated a law barring federal officials from engaging in partisan activities by telling Brazilian counterparts that a renewal of the ethanol exemption would help Trump’s re-election chances. Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro has sought to cultivate a close relationship with Trump, whom he openly admires. But Bolsonaro also faces a powerful agricultural lobby at home. Ethanol is big business for sugarcane producers in Brazil, who are pushing for tariff-free access to the US sugar market. — AFP



A gas station worker fills a car’s tank with ethanol in Rio de Janeiro, in this file photo. — Reuters

China would rather see TikTok US close than a forced sale

BEIJING: China opposes a forced sale of TikTok’s US operations by its Chinese owner ByteDance, and would prefer to see the short video app shut down in the United States, three people with direct knowledge of the matter said on Friday. ByteDance has been in talks to sell TikTok’s US business to potential buyers including Microsoft and Oracle since US President Donald Trump threatened last month to ban the service if it was not sold. Trump has given ByteDance a deadline of mid September to finalise a deal. However, Chinese officials believe a forced sale would make both ByteDance and China appear weak in the face of pressure from Washington, the sources said, speaking on condition of anonymity given the sensitivity of the situation. ByteDance said in a statement to Reuters that the Chinese government had never suggested to it that it should shut down TikTok in the United States or in any other markets. Two of the sources said China was willing to use revisions it made to a technology exports list on August 28 to delay any deal reached by ByteDance, if it had to. China’s State Council Information Office and its foreign and commerce ministries did not immediately respond to requests for comment sent after working hours. Asked on Friday about Trump and TikTok, Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian said at a regular press briefing that the United States was abusing the concept of national security, and urged it to stop oppressing foreign companies. Media has reported that TikTok’s



A 3-D printed figures are seen in front of displayed TikTok logo in this picture illustration. — Reuters

prospective buyers were discussing four ways to structure an acquisition from ByteDance. Within these, ByteDance could still push ahead with a sale of TikTok’s US assets without approval from China’s commerce ministry by selling them without key algorithms. ByteDance and its founder Zhang Yiming have been caught in a clash between the world’s two preeminent powers. Trump last month issued two

Chinese officials believe a forced sale would make both ByteDance and China appear weak in the face of pressure from Washington

executive orders that require ByteDance to sell TikTok’s US assets or face being banned in the country, where the app is hugely popular among teenagers. US officials have criticised

the app’s security and privacy, suggesting that user data might be shared with Beijing. TikTok has said it would not comply with any request to share user data with the Chinese authorities.

Beijing has said it firmly opposes Trump’s executive orders and on August 28 moved to give itself a say in the process, revising a list of technologies that will need Chinese government approval before they are exported. Experts said TikTok’s recommendation algorithm would fall under this list. Chinese regulators said last week the rules were not targeted at specific companies but they reaffirmed their right to enforce them. — Reuters

Car buyers, gas recovery push US inflation upwards in August

WASHINGTON: The United States saw inflation climb slightly above expectations in August, driven by sales of used cars and recreation equipment as well as gasoline prices’ continued recovery, government data showed. The Labour Department’s consumer price index (CPI) fell into the negative for three months starting in March as the coronavirus pandemic slammed the global economy, causing a huge drop in crude prices amid oversupply concerns as well as sharp pullbacks in consumer spending in some areas. However, recent months have seen the indicator recover, and August’s month-on-month growth of 0.4 per cent, seasonally adjusted, was down from the 0.6 per cent

rise seen in July. Used cars and trucks drove the growth with a 5.4 per cent gain, while gasoline rose 2.0 per cent, though that was less than its 5.6 per cent rise in July. Recreation jumped 0.7 per cent after spending the past two months in negative territory, while airlines fares rose 1.2 per cent over the month, reflecting consumers’ continued return to spending and travel habits as lockdowns to stop the spread of COVID-19 eased. However, education fell 0.3 per cent, which the Labor Department said was its first decline since the index started in 1993, while personal care fell by the same amount after rising in June and July. — AFP

EU states call for cryptocurrency curbs to protect consumers

BERLIN: Germany, France, Italy, Spain and the Netherlands called on the European Commission to draw up strict regulation for asset-backed cryptocurrencies such as stablecoins to protect consumers and preserve state sovereignty in monetary policy. The finance ministers of the five European Union member states said in a joint statement on Friday that stablecoins should not be allowed to operate in the 27-member bloc until legal, regulatory and oversight

challenges had been addressed. Stablecoins, a type of cryptocurrency often backed by traditional assets, leapt onto policymakers’ agendas last year when Facebook revealed plans for its Libra token. Some central banks and financial regulators, concerned that Libra could destabilise monetary policy, facilitate money laundering and erode privacy, threatened to block it and the project has been delayed and reshaped as a result. — Reuters

www.orbit-oman.com

Towell Auto Lease is now Orbit

Find our new location on the map below.

Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque

OmanOil

W. J. Towell

Al Turki

• Towards Muscat /Ruwi

• Towards SEEB •

Car Rentals/Sales

9679 0596

9679 0594

Service

9661 7160

9429 9319

اوريت ORBIT

Car Rental & Lease

OMAN DAILY

Observer

CLASSIFIED SECTION:

Saada al Rashdi: 95919344

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

Mohammed al Rashdi: 99841230 m.alrahdi86@yahoo.com

94501166

DIRECT: 24649595 — FAX : 24649590

هيدرو ماستر

Hydro Master

Swimming Pools

Construction & Maintenance

9400 4071

Equipment and Accessories for Swimming Pools are available

Rent a Car

abc

RENT A CAR

SPECIAL Rates on New Cars & 4 WDs

RENTING & LEASING

Tours and Airport Transfer

Tel: 24582663

GSM: 95859497,

Fax: 24582664,

abcrent@omantel.net.om

.....

Services

DRIVING instructor:

For those who wish to learn driving cars in Muscat. ☎99074072.

.....

A LEGAL translation office needs

Marketeers. Contact E-mail: oman4n@gmail.com

.....

1. AC maintenance and servicing.

2. Fridge, washing machine and dish washer repairing.

3. Painting and cleaning services.

4. Electrical, plumbing and carpentry work ☎97014234, 99447257, 24290686.

.....

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

.....

For Rent

FLAT for rent in Maabala 3 master rooms. ☎96088926.

.....

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

.....

3 BHK apartment for rent in Al Wattayah behind Honda Showroom consists of 3 bedrooms with 3 bathrooms, a hall, kitchen, store and open sitting space. Contact ☎91724525.

.....

A VILLA with 3 bedrooms and 3 toilets, a sitting room and a kitchen is for rent in North Al Ghubrah, 18 November Street. Contact ☎92433668.

.....

FLAT for rent. ☎95397442.

.....

2 BEDROOM flat Al Khuwair. ☎99322344.

.....

2-FLOOR villa in South Al Maabala, consists of 4 bedrooms, a sitting room, a toilet for every room, kitchen, store and air conditioners. It is located in a place opposite to industrial area and is served government water. ☎99700908.

.....

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

.....

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

.....

EXECUTIVE offices, including ACs/water & electricity in central Ruwi ☎99238012/ 24704994.

.....

Buttercup Rent A Car

AMAZING OFFERS

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

○ Rent for one month and get 5 days free.

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

.....

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

.....

Investment

AN organic jaggery (Al Harifayuh)1 manufacturing industry available for partnership or investment in Hubli India. ☎0091 9742421122.

.....

Manpower

MANPOWER from Philippines. WhatsApp: ☎91206344.

.....

For Rent

SUBSTANTIAL villa at Hay Al Shatti. Suitable for Embassy with residences for the Ambassador and staff. Call ☎99238012/ 24704994.

.....

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

.....

A VILLA in the old Al Filaij, Al Tayibeen District, 5 bedrooms, 6 toilets, a living room, a majlis, two kitchens & a store, building area 333 sqm, land area 637 sqm, the villa is 1 km far from Al Maabelah RO 300.000. Call ☎92111892.

.....

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

.....

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

.....

APPROVED residential for labour camp available. Near Sohar Port. Area 15,000m². Water and electricity available. For contact ☎91577774, 96198460.

.....

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

.....

APARTMENT for rent in Maabala 8 in Muscat. It's the highest one of the other two. 3 rooms with 3 toilets one family room, small store and air-condition. ☎71136222.

.....

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

.....

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

.....

FLATS for rent in Salalah European design, farm view, good situation in the centre near the sea, new flats. ☎92181524 WhatsApp.

.....

INDUSTRIAL land 5,500 sqm in Jufin ☎95490842, 97928817.

.....

For Rent

APARTMENTS for rent in Bausher Al Amin Mosque area 1) Apartments for rent and offices in the district Al Amin Mosque two rooms, hall, kitchen and two bathrooms system RO 250 negotiable equipped and divided offices for rent to companies an area of 600 metres 2). We have furnished and unfurnished apartment rooms for monthly rent all over Muscat to communicate. ☎96444111 or 96672277.

.....

NEW Flats For Rent at Darsait near to Ministry of Sports Affairs, Muntaz area The flats include: 1 Living Room, 2 Bedroom, Kitchen, 3 Toilets, Every room with split A/C, High quality finishing. Rent per flat is RO 320/- Interested persons, please contact. ☎00968-92225523.

.....

FOR rent in Salalah, north Auqadain. Call ☎91711118.

.....

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

.....

FURNISHED flats for rent in Muscat Grand Mall ☎99445771, 93204595 93203481.

.....

TWO new apartment for rent in Al Qurum near Mina al Fahal. ☎94664635, 95850345.

.....

FLAT for family for rent, Alaom Al Akhtar shop, behind Irani Bank, Abu Abdullah ☎99627724, Abu Abdulrahman ☎99315490.

.....

FAMILY flat, air-conditioner, middle Al Khuwair ☎93663380.

.....

HOUSE room, sitting room + kitchen toilet in South Al Maabala, served government water located near Nesto and opposite to Starcare in Al Maabala. ☎99700908.

.....

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

.....

WE have a farm for rent. The fee is RO 1/ metre. The farm is located on Muscat-Yeti road. It is suitable for labour residency or for storage purposes. Contact ☎99639269.

.....

FLATS in Al Wadi Al Kabir near to the Al Kuwaiti Mosque. ☎99425958.

.....

Acc Available

ACCOMMODATION for company personnel/ executives at Qurum Beach Hotel on short/ long term basis. Contact Mr Shafiq ☎99470124/ 24564066.

.....

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

.....

Situation Wanted

PAKISTANI male driver, 8 years experience in Oman, knows Arabic, seeks job. ☎96551602.

.....

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

.....

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

.....

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

.....

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

.....

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

.....

CLASSIFIED SECTION

RUWI

24649594/ 99841230

Behind Royal Oman Police, Adjacent to Dhofar Building, Ruwi.

For Sale/Rent

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

.....

(NEW 3 STOREY VILLAS for sale/ rents WADI KABIR/ AL KHUWAIR), (Shops/offices for rent/ Al Khuwair) (Flats for rent/Wadi Kabir). ☎96596348.

.....

For Sale

Institution Licence contact ☎95595512.

.....

DIESEL Tanker, 1,600 gallon Volvo, 1987. ☎92836774.

.....

FLATS in Al Mabella. ☎99323957, 95490842.

.....

RESIDENTIAL building in Al Hamriya. Income RO 1,200. Required RO 115,000. ☎92273379.

.....

RESTAURANT in an excellent location in Salalah with equipment and workers. ☎93397812.

.....

FOR sale: Extravagant and furnished residences for female students in Al Khuwair, Al Mawaleh and Al Khoudh along with all assets. ☎99001332.

.....

MAINTENANCE: 1. AC Maintenance & Servicing; 2. Fridge, Washing Machine & Dish washer repairing; 3. Painting & cleaning services; 4. Electrical & Plumbing Carpentry work. Contact: ☎99447257, 97014234, 24504281.

.....

JEWELLERY workshop attached with showroom for sale at Walja, Way Number 4301, Al Fursan Street, shop Number 25. ☎24835276, 93035380.

.....

A LOADING and unloading fishing company seeks to hire labourers who have NOC to change sponsorship. Age is 27 years old and less. To connect: ☎90111010.

.....

Buying

AL Awsad Modern LLC, electronic and furniture used. ☎99834373.

.....

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

PEST CONTROL OMAN CO. L.L.C.

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

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

COCKROACH

BEDBUG

RODENT

FLIES

TERMITE

SNAKE

Tel: 24787606, 24787503

Direct Line: 24786077

GSM: 99382355, 99172309

pcomctom@omantel.net.om

P.O. Box 565, Al Wadi Al Kabir 117, Sultanate of Oman

ESSCO

QUALITY, RELIABILITY & DURABILITY

Job Vacancies

Position:

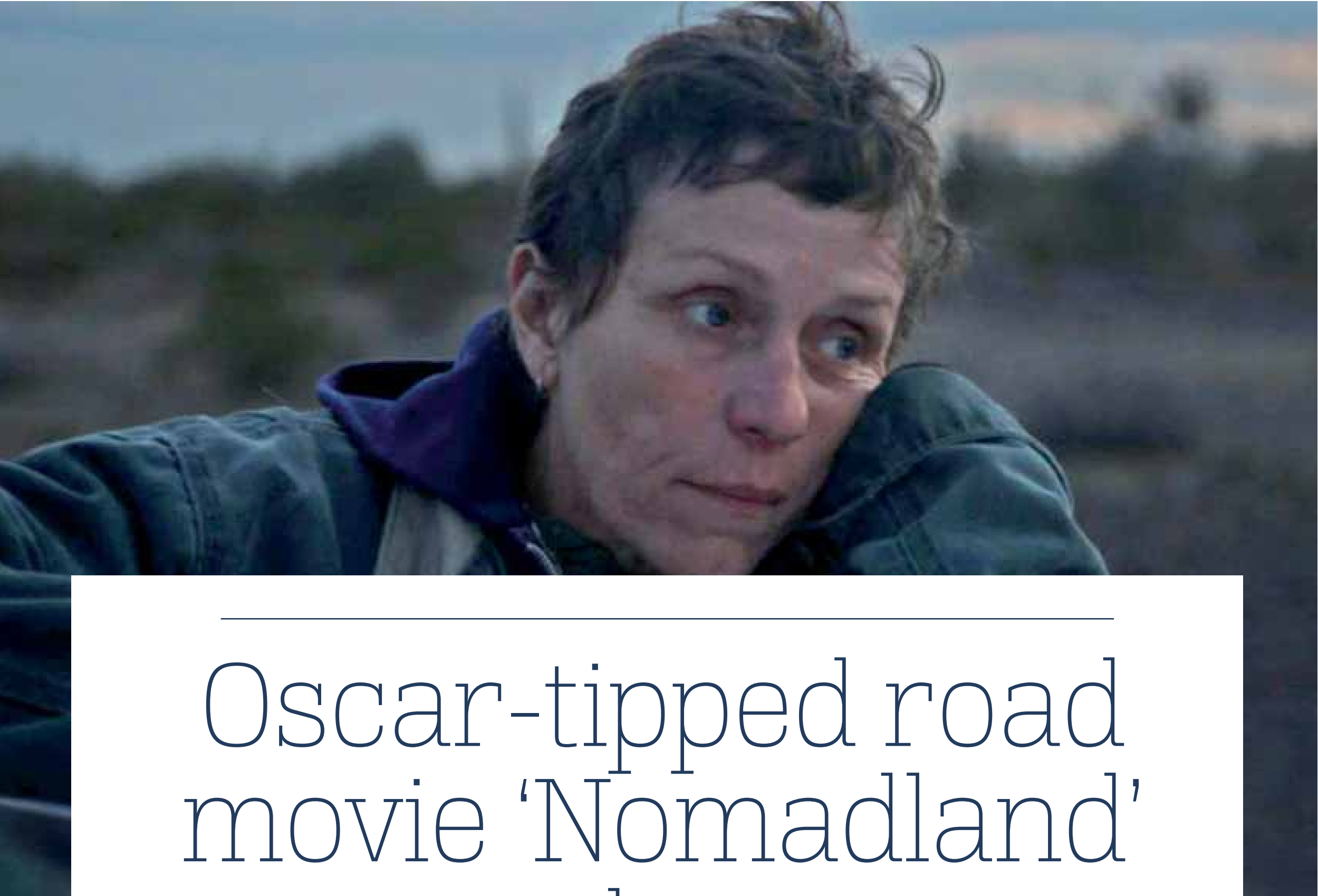
Administration Section Head (HR/Finance)

Experience:

• Not less than 7 years of Experience in Oil & Gas Industry.

• Omani National.

Interested candidates, please share your cv with supporting documents to Recruiting@esscollc.com on or before 20th September, 2020.



Oscar-tipped road movie ‘Nomadland’ races between global festivals

Frances McDormand's Oscar-tipped road movie "Nomadland" raced from Venice to Toronto to California on Friday as major global festivals joined forces to jump-start the pandemic-struck film industry.

The movie about a community of elderly, nomadic idealists who roam across America in worn-out vans was greeted by raucous honking horns and flashing headlights at a drive-in US premiere in Pasadena, on the outskirts of Los Angeles.

Hours earlier, double Oscar-winner McDormand had received loud applause in Venice for her role as a widow forced to take to the road after a mine closes, wiping her tiny community from the map.

"I told my husband... when I turned 65 I was gonna change my name to Fern, start smoking Lucky Strikes, drinking Wild Turkey and hit the road in my RV. I got to do that four years early," McDormand told the California screening.

Speaking to an audience of Hollywood industry and press — unable to travel to foreign festivals this year due to coronavirus — McDormand said living on the road in basic conditions during filming had taught her humility.

"I didn't know how to take a dump in my five-gallon bucket," she joked.

The movie has received glowing reviews, with the Hollywood Reporter calling it "a unique portrait of outsider existence" and Variety a "tender ode to American independence." It's fast-rising



The movie about a community of elderly, nomadic idealists who roam across America in worn-out vans was greeted by raucous honking horns and flashing headlights at a drive-in US premiere in Pasadena, on the outskirts of Los Angeles

director Chloe Zhao will oversee next year's Marvel superhero epic "Eternals." In regular years, movie festivals compete to host world premieres of such buzzy titles.

But a truce has been struck in 2020, with Toronto festival co-head Cameron Bailey telling AFP it "didn't make sense to be competitive this year, with so much at stake." The night's California screening was organized by the

Telluride festival — one of several forced to entirely cancel its regular screenings due to a pandemic that has delayed the Oscars and halted filming across Hollywood.

—Heartbreaking' — Also debuting in multiple timezones this week was "One Night in Miami," an adaptation of a play imagining a heated 1964 motel room conversation between Malcolm X, Muhammad Ali, Sam Cooke and Jim Brown.

Director Regina King ("Watchmen") told a Toronto festival virtual press conference she "wanted to do a film that was a love story with a historical backdrop." As well as depicting the four men's real-life friendship, the movie examines how each coped with the hostility faced by successful African-American men in the civil rights era.

Completed in the wake of George Floyd's killing and mass anti-racism protests this summer, the movie's themes are "just as relevant now as they were 60 years ago," added King.

Halle Berry, another Academy Award-winning actress showing her debut feature as director in Toronto, said it was "heartbreaking" no other black woman had won the best actress Oscar since her triumph for "Monster's Ball" almost two decades ago.

She stars as a former martial arts fighter struggling to regain custody of her son in "Bruised," reportedly purchased by Netflix Friday, hours before its Toronto premiere.

The Venice film festival concludes Saturday, while Toronto runs through September 20.

— AFP



INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



salim.alhadi • Follow



LIFETIME PASSION



theimagegrapher • Follow

Nizwa Souq, Oman



HAND CRAFTED



sooraj.jayaraj • Follow

Salalah, Oman



AVIAN BEAUTY

SHARE A SLICE OF YOUR LIFE

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



COOK LIKE A CHEF

Get full stories online at www.omanobserver.com

Quinoa beetroot salad



LUXURIOUS DINING

The luxurious Al Bustan Palace reopened its door to much anticipation. Kicking the opening in high gear, the Palace has made major changes and upgrades to their restaurants and kitchens to meet the government requirements of the new normal. To allow everyone to taste some of the delicious dishes they have in store for their guests, the busy chefs of the Al Bustan Palace are sharing some of their best menus for everyone to copy at home.

PREPARATION AND COOKING INSTRUCTIONS:

Preheat the oven to 200 degrees C/392 F.
Place the beetroot on a large baking tray, add the salt and pepper then pour over the olive oil.
Make sure all the beetroot is covered in oil.
Roast in the oven for 30-40 minutes. Cut in cubes and reserve for service.
Thoroughly rinse the quinoa before cooking. Put the quinoa in a saucepan. Pour in 2 cups of water.
Cover and bring to the boil and then simmer for about 12-15 minutes until all of the water is absorbed. Then drain the quinoa to make sure any excess water is removed and place in a bowl. Cool and store in the refrigerator.



ABOUT THE CHEF

CHEF ANOOB
ASHRAF

Executive Sous Chef
Al Bustan Palace, Muscat

Hailing from the Southern part of India, Chef Anoo has developed the passion at a very early age from his father who managed to transform daily meals into something delicious and beautiful. He officially began his culinary journey right after finishing 12th grade and joining a culinary institute. By 18, he was already working for his first job at Le Meridian Hotels. After 3 years, he travelled to Malaysia working for an Indian and Thai restaurant until he decided to join The Oberoi Groups of hotels in India a year later. Further developing his skill for Indian cuisines, he would embark on his Middle East journey in 2008 landing in Jeddah for Rosewood Hotels. He worked with Award-winning French Australian and Moroccan Chefs and also learned a lot about Arabic cuisine and the European Cuisine as well finally becoming a junior sous chef in 2010. He joined The Ritz Carlton Hotels in Doha in 2011 as Assistant Chef de Cuisine. He joined Al Bustan Palace in 2015 and from Chef de Cuisine would rise into the ranks and become the Executive Sous Chef for Al Bustan Palace in 2016. From the renovations to the reopening of the Palace, Chef Anoo has been instrumental in rebuilding the entire culinary team. As of today, Chef Anoo also specialises in Fully Buy out Indian Weddings, exclusive weddings and gala dinners.



INGREDIENTS:



- 1 pc Medium-sized beetroot
- 15 gms Walnuts
- 1 tsp Maple Syrup
- A pinch of Chinese five-spice powder
- 30 gms Quinoa
- 60 gms Mesculin greens
- 45 gms Feta cheese (Cubed)
- 3 pcs Grapefruit segments
- 3 pcs Orange segments
- 3 pcs Lemon segments
- 1 tbsp Fresh mint
- Dressing
- 2 tbsp Extra virgin olive oil
- 1 tbsp Balsamic vinegar
- 1 tsp Dijon mustard
- 6 gms Maldon sea salt

TO MAKE
THE DRESSING:

Whisk together the balsamic and Dijon mustard. Then whisk in the olive oil, add the salt and pepper.
Mix the walnuts with maple syrup and roast in a pre-heated oven until crisp. Sprinkle the walnuts with five-spice powder and salt.
To assemble the salad, mix the leaves in a large serving bowl, add the mint. Then add the beetroot, Quinoa and crumble over the walnuts and feta.
Drizzle the dressing over the salad. Add the citrus segments and scatter over the maple walnuts.
Serve cold.

ENTERTAINMENT

‘Wonder Woman’ movie sequel delayed two months to December



LOS ANGELES: The Warner Bros movie studio on Friday postponed the debut of superhero sequel “Wonder Woman 1984” until Christmas Day as many theatres remain closed due to the coronavirus pandemic. The film starring Gal Gadot had been scheduled for release in cinemas on October 2 but will now debut on December 25. It was the next big-budget Hollywood movie slated for theatres. “Because I know how important it is to bring this movie to you on a big screen when all of us can share the experience together, I’m hopeful you won’t mind waiting just a little bit longer,” director Patty Jenkins said in a statement. Movie studios have been shuffling their schedules for months as the industry tries to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, which forced theatres around the world to shut their doors in March.

Cinemas have slowly reopened with capacity limits, and moviegoing is rebounding in countries such as China, the world’s second-largest film market. But in the United States, theatres remain closed in major moviegoing hubs including Los Angeles and New York. Warner Bros, owned by AT&T Inc, tested the market with the release of Christopher Nolan’s thriller “Tenet” in late August. The movie, which cost more than \$200 million to produce, had generated global ticket sales of \$146.2 million through last weekend. The next upcoming Hollywood blockbuster is “Black Widow” from Walt Disney Co’s Marvel Studios. It is currently due to debut in theatres on November 6. James Bond movie “No Time to Die,” from Comcast Corp’s Universal Pictures and MGM Studios, is scheduled for November 20. — **Reuters**



YOUR ULTIMATE OMAN STAYCATION IDEA



STAFF REPORTER

The airport will finally become operational again by October 1, 2020, as per the directives of the Supreme Committee vs COVID-19 but as clarified by Oman Air, they will initially be flying to 12 cities from the said date with the rest to follow in the coming days or weeks.

Travelling abroad however still present numerous challenges and while it's easy to enter some countries without restrictive COVID-19 security measures, a lot of the countries all over the world still have a quarantine period which means that you could be wasting about 14-days of your travel days housed in an isolated location.

It may take a few more weeks before a clear and comprehensive global travel guideline is put in place. For now, it is safer and more convenient to do more local travel than facing the uncertainties of out of the country trips.

Talking of local trips, Oman is blessed with lots of staycation options. With the challenge posed by COVID-19, a staycation is also a much-needed lifeline for the ailing industry.

Sarah Khaled has an impressive resume when it comes to selecting the best hotels for staycation having worked with some of the best and most luxurious hotels within the region. Currently the Marketing Communications Director of Shangri la Barr al Jissah, she outlined some of the things to think about when selecting your next staycation destination.

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

Travelling with family is very different from travelling alone or just with your partner. When you have kids or have elderly parents, driving more than 2 hours can be quite a huge ordeal so an ideal #staycation would be within Muscat when you also have to balance work in between.

Shangri la Barr al Jissah is one of the perfect places for a quick weekend getaway. Located amidst scenic mountains with direct access to its private beach, it caters to those who want a relaxing stay. Outside of the hotel, the nearby villages of Qantab and Yiti are ideal for hikes especially making a great choice for the adventurous types yet want to be housed in a comfy, scenic hotel.

SAFEGUARD AGAINST COVID-19

The staff of every hotel is the enforcer of COVID-19 security measures. Across the country, everyone is required not only to do temperature checks or sanitation or regular cleaning protocols but also proper enforcement of social distancing meas-

ures. In Shangri La, the hotel has made sure that they have proper entry and exit points for guests. The management also ensures that there are no chokepoints and guests have more spaces that will help ensure they don't get infected with COVID-19 while they are relaxing.

"We are very particular about sanitation. We have a 24 hour wait time for the rooms so they can be thoroughly cleaned and sanitised by our staff. The safety of our guests is our utmost priority and we make sure of this in all aspects of the hotel operation," shared Sarah.

Advanced bookings are essential. Guests must fill in a health declaration form before arrival and must present booking confirmation at the resort's entrance.

DIVERSITY IN HOTEL ACTIVITIES

From kayak to jetski, from football to beach volleyball, from beach swimming to pool swimming, Shangri la is ripe with physical and entertainment activities.

There are only five turtle nesting sites in the Sultanate of Oman and the protected beach of Shangri-La Barr Al Jissah Resort & Spa is among them. The area has always been a turtle nesting site. Each year, approximately 100 female turtles return to the resort's beach to lay their eggs, where each nest contains up to 120 eggs.

During the luxurious staycations, guests have a high chance of witnessing the little hatchlings of the endangered Green Turtle and the most frequent visitor, the critically endangered Hawksbill Turtle. The hatching and release of these tiny creatures take place from mid-April until September and it is a very special experience, guided by the resort's dedicated turtle rangers, which guests highly appreciate for lasting holiday memories.

PROMOS AND PACKAGES

When it comes to hotel staycation, the price also matters. Are the location and destination worth the price and the overall enjoyment of the people involved? If you have kids, are there activities catered for kids to enjoy?

According to the hotel, Shangri-La Staycation rates start from RO58 excluding service charge and taxes. Guests are guaranteed room upgrade and complimentary breakfast, complimentary meals for children below the age of 6 years old, 50 per cent off meals for kids between the ages of six to 15 years old, 50 per cent off a second room, 20 per cent off food and beverage, complimentary parking and they can also avail of early check-in at 11 am and late check-out at 4:00 pm. For inquiries and bookings, email the reservations team at reservations.slm@shangri-la.com or call +968 24776262.

features

Twitter Facebook Instagram YouTube | follow us @omanobserver | www.omanobserver.om | observerfeatures@gmail.com



Your ultimate Oman staycation idea

There's no hope of seeing a significant increase in international travel soon and quarantine measures abroad can be challenging for those pushing for travel to a different country. With the tourism industry greatly affected by the pandemic, staycations provide a much-needed lifeline for the ailing industry. Here are a few suggestions from an industry expert on how to select a good staycation destination.... **P19**

DAILY PICKS

TRADITION

OSCAR-TIPPED ROAD MOVIE ‘NOMADLAND’ RACES BETWEEN GLOBAL FESTIVALS

Frances McDormand's Oscar-tipped road movie "Nomadland" raced from Venice to Toronto to California on Friday as major global festivals joined forces to jump-start the pandemic-struck film industry... Story on **Page 17**

EAT

QUINOA BEETROOT SALAD

The luxurious Al Bustan Palace has reopened its doors including its different restaurants. Chef Anoob for this edition is suggesting a light and heart starter that is easy to prepare to surprise your family with. Story on **Page 18**

READ

THE ONE AND ONLY BOB

BY KATHERINE APPEGATE. ILLUSTRATED BY PATRICIA CASTELAO

In this sequel to "The One and Only Ivan," Bob sets out on a dangerous journey in search of his long-lost sister.

ENTERTAINMENT

‘WONDER WOMAN’ MOVIE SEQUEL DELAYED TWO MONTHS TO DECEMBER

The Warner Bros movie studio on Friday postponed the debut of superhero sequel "Wonder Woman 1984" until Christmas Day as many theatres remain closed due to the coronavirus pandemic... Story on **Page 18**

CELEBRATE

CELIAC AWARENESS DAY

Did you ever wonder why some people order gluten-free food? Chances are, many of them suffer from the condition of Celiac disease which affects the lower intestine and leads to poor nutrient absorption. To celebrate today, read more about celiac disease.