

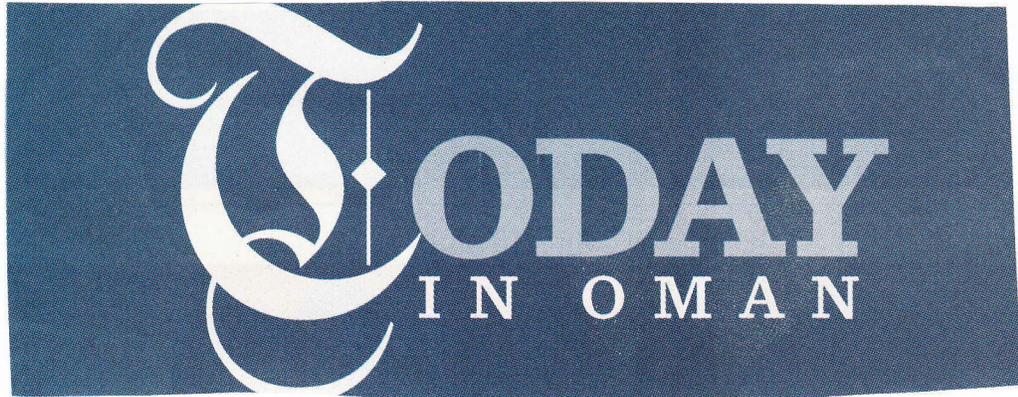
## **E-Campaigning: Electronically Connected**

18th September 2012 Muscat  
21st September 2012 Salalah

(Press Releases)

**Times of Oman**

**Date: 19<sup>th</sup> September 2011**



### SHURA ELECTIONS

**3** Candidates contesting the Majlis Al Shura elections scheduled for October must make the best use of the Internet to interact with their voters, experts say. The suggestion came at the conference 'E-Campaigning: Electronically Connected', held yesterday, highlighting the potential role of Internet based communication tools. Khalid Al Haribi, managing director, Tawasul said, "Engaging with the public is of utmost important for the candidates. Likewise, it gives an opportunity for the voters to get to know their candidates." **>B3**

# E-campaigning gains ground in Shura polls

Since the launch of the website, 170 candidates contesting the Majlis Al Shura elections have uploaded their CVs. The pictures and names of all the 1,000 odd candidates are on the site now

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**MUSCAT:** Candidates contesting the seventh Majlis Al Shura elections scheduled for October must make the best use of the Internet to interact with their voters, experts have suggested.

The suggestion came at the conference 'E-Campaigning: Electronically Connected', held yesterday, highlighting the potential role of Internet based communication tools.

Khalid Al Haribi, managing director, Tawasul said, "Engaging with the public is of utmost importance for the candidates. Likewise, it gives an opportunity for the voters to get to know their candidates."

The workshop was organised by Tawasul, an independent and private think tank, in partnership with Sablat Oman, the popular Internet public forum and website.

Urging the participants, who mostly comprised candidates, to register their CVs on the website <http://www.shura.s-oman.net/>, Khalid asked them to engage with the public in parliamentary affairs through the website, and make use



**TECH BOOST:** Shura candidates participating in the conference in Muscat. - Jun Estrada/TIMES OF OMAN

of the interactive portal.

He said the candidates must understand that the website offers them a unique opportunity to communicate with the public and also to gauge what their voters want.

Since the launch of the website, 170 candidates have uploaded their CVs while the pictures and names of all the 1,000 odd candidates contesting the Majlis Al Shura elections are on the site. The interactive website contains relevant information about the candidates, basic statutes, and election regulations, and gives a lot of importance to civic participation.

"It is also important for everybody to note that the website gives an opportunity for people to create content," said Khalid.

Moosa Abdullah Al Farai, CEO of Sablat Oman, said that by participating on the website, candidates can reach out to the people outside their wilayats. "Besides, they will get more information about what people are doing and thinking in other wilayats."

He added, "Of course, we are aware that the Internet penetration is low in parts of Al Dakhaliya and Al Sharqiya regions. For such areas, our team members are doing their bit to help."

## Nameless characters

On some candidates raising issues about members using their nick names to interact, Moosa said, "Candidates are facing trouble interacting with nameless characters. This is a serious concern because we don't know whether it is a genuine person on the other side. We have to look into this."

All the CVs (profiles) of the candidates have been approved by the Ministry of Interior, he informed. Requests by candidates to add the links of their websites was agreed upon by the moderators of the website belonging to both Sablat and Tawasul.

Moosa hoped that more people would register following yesterday's conference, which also explained to the candidates how to use the website. "I feel the website will play a key role and make a difference in a positive way," said Moosa.

Khalid Mohammed Al Balushi, deputy CEO of Sablat forum, said the website has been registering 4,000 visitors on a daily basis.

"Around 48 women have registered their CVs," Khalid said.

Kalsa Sead Al Toobi, the candidate from Mannah, said she felt encouraged to upload her profile following what she witnessed at the conference.

Speaking in the same context about the responsibility of citizens earlier, Khalid Al Haribi said, "Everybody talks about the responsibility of the government, civil society and the private sector, but sadly, citizens sometimes forget that they too have a social responsibility. We, as citizens, expect everyone else to give us the information but don't want to look for the right piece of information."

"What I am trying to drive home is the idea of public interest. Societies advance when people focus on public interest and not on private interest. Some people in the society who are focusing only on self-interest. When we value our private interest more than the interest of the nation, problems arise. This is the real root of all problems. Narrow ideas will not serve in the interest of the nation. Once we focus on public interest we will prevail."

He explained that the idea is for people to look for the information. "If the information is difficult for you to reach, go and look for it on the Internet or communicate with the people with the right information. Don't expect the government to tell you everything that you need to know."

**Muscat Daily**

**Date: 19<sup>th</sup> September 2011**

# Forum calls for use of social media during Shura election campaign

Contestants, however say that most of those who use Internet are below the voting age of 21

**Our Correspondent**  
Muscat

An interactive forum organised by Tawasul Global Connections in partnership with Sablat Oman and attended by a number of candidates for the seventh Majlis A'Shura elections, called for more use of social media to reach a large pool of voters.

Khalid al Haribi, managing director of Tawasul, said the forum aimed at highlighting the role of social media in getting people interested in the candidates and the electoral process. "Public opinion matters in elections. Networking will help bridge the gap between them and voters," he said.

Tawasul and Sablat Oman recently launched the website [www.shura.s-oman.net](http://www.shura.s-oman.net) as a tool for candidates to communicate with voters.

The website has a special sec-



L-R: Moosa al Farei and Khalid al Haribi (Muscat Daily)

tion on Majlis A'Shura candidates and lists their resumes, campaign activities and their vision on education, economy and Majlis A'Shura's powers.

"It's a citizen's right to get the correct information and social media will facilitate this process. It's also the duty of every candidate to provide the right information and highlight needs of public

interest."

On calls from certain quarters to boycott the election, Haribi said they reflect a negative attitude towards nation building.

"These people cannot call themselves intellectuals if they do not want to get involved in public affairs. It's time to choose the right candidate to show the way instead of boycotting the

However, some candidates felt that social media will have limited impact.

Eng Mohammed al Busaidy, a contestant from Bausher, said most of those using the Internet are below the voting age of 21. "So, I don't think social media will make a difference.

"The impact will be seen in the next term as these people would have attained voting age by then," Busaidy, whose priority is to improve Oman's education, told *Muscat Daily*.

Aida al Hajri, who is contesting from Amerat, said, "Social networking would have been productive if more people used computers. Currently, the number of such people is very low.

"I would not prefer social media over my usual campaigning methods, especially when I know that a majority of the voters do not use the Internet," she said.

election." Moosa al Farei, chairman of Sablat Oman, said use of the Internet during campaigning will help candidates reach a wider audience.

"Through the Internet, candidates will be able to get ideas from contestants in other wilayats and use them as per their needs. This will make campaigning more lively," Farei said.

**Al Shabiba**

**Date: 19<sup>th</sup> September 2011**

## بلادنا

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# ندوة تقنيات التسويق الانتخابي تستعرض جدوى استخدام الأنظمة الإلكترونية

ناقشت عددا من المحاور فيما يتعلق بتفعيل التواصل عبر العالم الافتراضي «الإنترنت»

## موسى الفرعي

غياب رأي المترشحين والأطراف الإعلامية بمختلف أنواعها العالم الافتراضي ساهم به ما في وجود عدد لا نأمل ز من غير الراغبين في المشا بالعملية الانتخابية.



## عائشة الوهيبية

نحن لا نطلب من كل الناخب المترشحين تتبع الدعاية الانتخابية الإلكترونية، ولكن هناك مؤ في مجتمعنا أوضحت بأن الإنترنت سيكون هو المتمص



تقنيات الكترونية،  
جانب من الندوة  
تصوير - جون استرادا

## إعادة الثقة

وحول إمكانية عودة الثقة بين مجلس الشورى والمواطنين من خلال اللقاءات والندوات التي تنظمها المؤسسات بشكل تطوعي قال: ما يتم الآن من لقاءات هو غير كاف، فالمجتمع ترسخت لديه فكرة أن المجلس غير فاعل، مما شكل فجوة بين أعضاء المجلس والمجتمع ولذلك فنحن بحاجة إلى بذل جهد أكبر في إعادة الثقة بين أطراف المجلس، ولعله لو تم إعلان صلاحيات مجلس الشورى في الفترة قبل الانتخابات سيكون له الأثر الكبير في تشجيع المواطن والناخب للذهاب إلى صناديق الانتخابات. كما أن هنالك دورا كبيرا يفترض أن تقوم به المؤسسات الإعلامية ومؤسسات المجتمع المدني خلال هذه الفترة للتقليل من الفجوة وإقناع المواطنين بكل فئاتهم بأن الخيار الاستراتيجي أمامنا هو الذهاب في مسيرة الشورى والرجوع إلى مؤسسات المجتمع المدني أفضل من أن نختار خيارات أخرى مثل الاعتصامات والاحتجاجات وغيرها من السلوكيات الأخرى.

وحول توقعاته للفترة القادمة في ظل التغييرات التي شهدناها قال: الفترة القادمة من خلال الصلاحيات التشريعية والرقابية التي أعطيت للمجلس سيكون له دور كبير في مساعدة الحكومة وفي تصحيح مسار المسيرة ومراقبة أداء الحكومة بحيث تكون هناك جودة في الأماكن التي تقدم الخدمات، كما يكون له دور في مراقبة الموارد والميزانية ومراقبة ومتابعة ما يقر من برامج تنموية في الخطط التنموية بحيث إن كل ما يقر يتم تنفيذه وفق ما هو مخطط له.

## عالم افتراضي

من جانبه أوضح مؤسس ومدير عام موقع سبلة عمان موسى بن عبدالله الفرعي أن غياب رأي المترشحين والأصوات الإعلامية

خلال حديثه لـ (الشبيبة) عقب ندوة تقنيات التسويق الانتخابي والتي نظمتها مؤسسة تواصل موقع سبلة عمان.

## تسويق الانتخابي

ندوة عددا من المحاور، حيث مدير موقع سبلة عمان موسى الرئيس التنفيذي لمؤسسة العالمية خالد الحريبي الحديث عن اعلام الاجتماعية ومشاركة العامة، ككل من إحصائية الإعلام الجديد معرفة عائشة الوهيبية، ومدير عامة والتسويق سلطان الفرعي ب الحديث حول منظور الشباب لمنتجين والمستهلكين لوسائل ما تحدث مستشار الدراسات ية لتواصل أحمد المخيني عن ادم الاجتماعية والتنمية.

## ام بدوره

العبري: صلاحيات المجلس الأطر المؤطرة لدوره ومهامه، في نطاق الدائرة التي تخصصه، ح المواطن أكبر من ذلك وهذا تحقق بعد أن تعلن صلاحيات يئت تكون للمجلس قدرة على مسؤولين وقدرة على مراقبة

بمختلف أنواعها ساهم بشكل ما في وجود عدد لا نأمل في زيادته من غير الراغبين في المشاركة بالعملية الانتخابية، خاصة أن أعداد الذين ينظرون للأمر بنظرة سلبية لمجلس الشورى وما سوف يقدمه داخل العالم الافتراضي أكبر من عدد الرأي الآخر. في حين أن حضور المترشحين والناخبين في العالم الافتراضي الذي يمثل المنتديات والمواقع الإلكترونية سوف يعكس النتيجة التي نتأملها من ارتفاع أعداد الناخبين والمشاركين في العملية الانتخابية.

## ثقافة الرأي الآخر

وأضاف الفرعي بقوله: ثقافة تقبل الرأي الآخر الذي يخالفنا لم تزل ثقافة غير مترسخة في المجتمع العماني، مع وجود أصوات المترشحين والناخبين المؤيدين للعملية الانتخابية وقيامنا في موقع انتخابات مجلس الشورى بنقل كل ما يطرح من مواضيع ومقالات وتجارب عبر الصحافة أو التلفزيون، من المؤكد مع مرور الأيام القادمة سوف يسهم في قلب النتيجة بزيادة عدد المشاركين في العملية الانتخابية.

## رسائل إيجابية

وحول خطط سبلة عمان للقيام بجانب تنفيذي في المجتمع لتعريف الناس بالعملية الانتخابية، يقول موسى الفرعي: وضع لوائح توعوية بالصور السلبية التي رسمها البعض من القدرة علي متابعة الناخب لمن سوف يصوت أو ما شابه ذلك وتعريفهم بالشكل الإيجابي الذي سوف توجده مشاركتهم في التصويت في العملية الانتخابية هو رسالة من الرسائل التي تشارك بها سبلة عمان بشكل فاعل فيما يخص المجتمع العماني، انطلاقا من الصور السلبية التي نقلها لنا المترشحون في تدشين موقع انتخابات مجلس الشورى من خلال تواصلهم وقربهم من الناخبين، وهذه السلبية لا بد من وجود وسيلة إعلامية تتبناها أو أية مؤسسة تمتلك قدرة على تبني مثل هذه السلبيات بحيث تعتمد إلى إحلال الجانب الإيجابي محلها

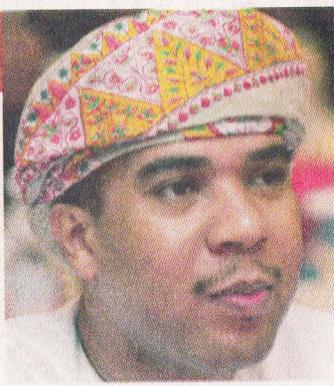
ويقتصر أن تبادل الآن هذه المؤسسات وأن تقوم بواجبها الوطني، وبدورنا نقوم من خلال اللوائح في شوارع مسقط بيث جانب إيجابي، فالناخب ما زال ينقصه الكثير من الثقافات ونعمل على تبسيطها خلال الفترة القادمة بإذن الله.

وفي سؤالنا للفرعي فيما إذا كان الوقت قد تأخر على مثل هذه الحملات قال: ما زالت الفرصة مواتية لوجود عدد من الناخبين الذين قاموا بالتسجيل الانتخابي وتثبيت النظام الإلكتروني في بطاقتهم الشخصية إلا أن لديهم عزمًا لعدم التصويت، لذا نحاول القيام بواجبنا بشكل إيجابي لضمان مشاركتهم في العملية الانتخابية والأهم من ذلك نقوم بعرض ثقافة الانتخابات بشكل عام لدى أكبر شريحة ممكنة نامل الوصول إليها واستيعابها، وهذا ليس للفترة القادمة فحسب إنما لفترات مجلس الشورى على مدى سنوات وفترات قادمة.

## غياب الناخبين

وعن سبب غياب حضور الناخبين كونهم الشريحة المستهدفة من التوعية بواجب المشاركة والتصويت في العملية الانتخابية في الندوات والمحاضرات التي تقدمها سبلة عمان بالتعاون مع مؤسسة تواصل العالمية يقول: لنا دور كمنظمين في غياب الناخبين عن مثل هذه التجمعات بسبب الإعلام والإعلان ربما لم يصل للناخب بشكل كبير مما يستدعي حضور أكبر عدد من الناخبين ومشاركتهم لنا في مثل هذه الندوات، كما أن عددا من الناخبين يعتمدون على المترشحين وحديثهم يدور حول إعطاء صوتهم للمترشح فقط تاركين بقية التفاصيل على المترشح نفسه، إلى جانب أن غياب الناخب في واقع الظروف التي يمر بها المجتمع العماني طبيعي جدا، فمجتمعنا لم يرق لتزاحم الناخب مع المترشح لمعرفة تفاصيل أكثر عن العملية الانتخابية وما بعد العملية، مع أنه لو حضر الناخب في مثل هذه التجمعات لوجد لها فرصة أكبر لالتقاءه بالمترشحين وقياس مستواهم.

## خالد الحريبي



متفائلون بالمشاركة في العملية الانتخابية بنسبة 70 % من إجمالي عدد المسجلين وهي نسبة جيدة جدا مقارنة بانتخابات مجلس الشورى للفترة السابقة التي سجلت بنسبة 62 %.

وأضاف: كما أنني أجد هذا الغياب طبيعيا من قبل الناخب فأبلد تمر بمرحلة نضج ربما في الدورات السابقة سنجد تزامنا، ونحن في موقع سبلة عمان نقوم بعرض أغلب الأمسيات والندوات الثقافية مسجلة على الموقع بحيث يمكن متابعتها وفي مرات عدة يكون البث مباشرا. والآن كل ما يتعلق بالانتخابات نقوم بعرضه على موقع انتخابات مجلس الشورى.

## استخدام التكنولوجيا

من جانبها تعلق عائشة الوهيبية على المستوى الذي وصل إليه مجتمعنا في تقبله للتقنيات الإلكترونية على غرار ندوة تقنيات التسويق الانتخابي بقولها: نحن لا نطلب من كل الناخبين أو المترشحين تتبع الدعاية الانتخابية الإلكترونية، ولكن هناك مؤشرات في مجتمعنا أوضحت بأن الإنترنت سيكون هو المتصدر لعدد من الأمور، وعلى سبيل المثال في فترة الربيع العربي استطاعت السلطنة تحقيق أعلى معدلات مستخدمي اليوتيوب، والفيس بوك. وتلك الأعداد لا يستهان بها، ومن وجهة نظري من الأخرى بنا توجيه الفئة التي تعارض العملية الانتخابية نحو الاتجاه الصحيح وتعريفهم بالحملات الانتخابية ورؤى المترشحين. بالإضافة إلى مساعده

المترشحين في توصيل رسالتهم ورؤيتهم التي يسعون لإيصالها من خلال ترشحهم لعضوية المجلس.

## ما بعد الانتخابات

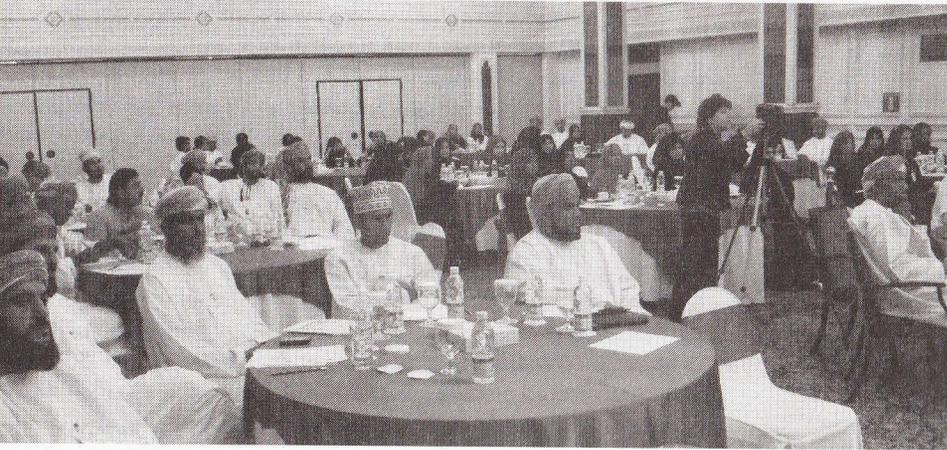
ويخبرنا خالد الحريبي عن خطة موقع انتخابات مجلس الشورى في الفترة القادمة ما بعد العملية الانتخابية بقوله: نسعى من أجل تطوير موقع انتخابات مجلس الشورى لتفعيل دوره في المرحلة المقبلة من خلال جعله مجالا أوسع وأرحب لتواصل عضو مجلس الشورى مع المجتمع العماني ككل ومع ولايته. لأن البنية الأساسية للموقع موجودة والتي من خلالها سننتقل للتواصل ما بين المترشح والناخب إلى عضو مجلس الشورى والمواطن.

ويواصل: كما نعد إلى تواصل إقامة مثل هذه التجمعات والندوات، والحلقات النقاشية فكل مؤسسة تقوم بدورها على حسب مواردها ونحن في مؤسسة تواصل العالمية اخترنا ولايتين الكثافة السكانية فيهما أكثر من 3 آلاف كولاية بوشهر وولاية صلالة. ونحن متفائلون بخصوص المشاركة بنسبة تقدرها بـ 70 % من إجمالي عدد المسجلين وهي نسبة جيدة جدا مقارنة بانتخابات مجلس الشورى للفترة السابقة التي سجلت بنسبة 62%.

**Al Roya**

**Date: 19<sup>th</sup> September 2011**

## ندوة تقنيات التسويق الانتخابي الإلكتروني تبحث تأطير دور وسائل الإعلام الاجتماعية



### مسقط- الرؤية

نظم مركز تواصل وسبله عمان ممثلين بموقع بوابة انتخابات مجلس الشورى أمس إحدى ندوات الإعلام الإلكتروني الجديد والمشاركة المجتمعية بعنوان "تقنيات التسويق الانتخابي الإلكتروني". وناقشت الندوة ثلاث محاور هي: وسائل الإعلام الاجتماعية ومشاركة العامة، ووسائل الإعلام الاجتماعي والشباب باعتبارهم المنتجين والمستهلكين لوسائل الإعلام، ووسائل الإعلام الاجتماعية والتنمية.

### محاور الندوة

وتطرق كل من خالد الصايغ وموسى الفرعي خلال الندوة إلى وسائل الإعلام الاجتماعية ودورها في المشاركة المجتمعية، إلى جانب تصحيح بعض المفاهيم الخاطئة للمواطن منها عدم الوعي والإطلاع على ما يهمه كفرد في منظومة معولا بذلك على دور وسائل الإعلام ومؤسسات المجتمع المدني والمرشح في حال ما أراد أن يجد من يرشحه ويدعمه، وتم فتح باب النقاش للجمهور والرد على تساؤلاته من قبلهم.

وقدمت عائشة الوهبي أخصائية الإعلام الجديد عمان للمعرفة وسلطان بن سالم الفرعي مدير العلاقات العامة والتسويق لرؤية شباب المحور الثاني والذي ناقش "وسائل الإعلام الاجتماعي والشباب" منظور الشباب باعتبارهم المنتجين

والمستهلكين لوسائل الإعلام"، وتم التركيز فيها على الدعاية الإلكترونية وماهيتها، وتحدثت عن استراتيجيات لاستخدام تلك الوسائل، وتوضيح آلية استخدام الدعاية.

وتم طرح رؤية شبابية ووضع نقاط تدعم المرشح، كما ركزت الندوة على أنه في حال أن المرشح لم ينجح في الوصول إلى المجلس في هذه الدورة عليه أن لا ييأس ويكمل المشوار، ذلك أنه قد فتح قنوات للتواصل يجب أن يستمر في التواصل معها والاستفادة من الخبرات التي اكتسبتها في تجربته القادمة.

وجاء المحور الثالث ليناقد وسائل الإعلام الاجتماعية والتنمية، وقدمه أحمد المخيني مستشار الدراسات الاستراتيجية لمؤسسة تواصل، قدم فيها ملامح اجتماعية عامة، وتوضيح أن التنمية تعد حق، والربط بين التنمية والتغذية، وتسييل الضوء على الشباب والهوية ودور الهوية والتقاليد والأعراف في المستقبل، وتوضيح بعض الملامح الاجتماعية للإعلام الجديد من خلال عرض شرائح توضح معدل نمو سنوي في المشتركين بالهواتف النقالة، ومعدل النمو السنوي في المشتركين بخدمة الـ DSL إلى جانب توضيح عدد مستخدمي الفيسبوك في السلطنة.

وأكد المخيني من خلال هذا المحور أن التنمية حق من حقوق المواطنة، ويجب حمايتها إلى جانب ضمان التمتع والتمكين، موضحاً أن التنمية تعتمد على التغذية الراجعة من الخدمات الحكومية

والخدمات التعليمية والتفاعلية والخدمات التجارية والخدمات التكنولوجية من خلال الوعي لإدماج ذوي الإعاقة في المجتمع والتأكيد على أن المشاركة الإلكترونية مسؤولية المواطنة.

### مسؤولية المواطن

وقال خالد بن الصايغ الحربي المدير التنفيذي لتواصل في تصريح لـ "الرؤية" إن الرسالة الرئيسية التي نريد إيصالها من خلال تنظيم هذه الفعالية هي تعريف المواطن بأن مسؤولية البحث عن المعلومة الصحيحة تقع على عاتقه، مشيراً إلى أن هناك ثلاث حقائق تم التوصل إليها وهي أن هناك شريحة كبيرة في المجتمع تتوقع أن تأتيهم المعلومة إلى حيث ما كانوا وهذا يشكل عبأ على عدد من المؤسسات الرسمية ومؤسسات المجتمع المدني ومؤسسات القطاع العام، كما ويشكل عبأ على المرشح.

### دور التسويق الإلكتروني في دعم المرشح

وقال موسى الفرعي مدير موقع سبله عمان إن الهدف من هذه الندوة عكس دور التسويق الإلكتروني في دعم البرنامج الانتخابي للمرشح. وأكد الفرعي أن هناك ثمة سلبيات وإيجابيات، وأن أبرز الإيجابيات هو الخروج من عباءة الولاية والتفاعل مع شريحة أكبر في المجتمع والاستماع لرؤى وتجارب مختلفة والتعرف على طرح جديد من خلال المناقشات التي تتم ويستطيع المرشح

بها أن يدعم برنامجه الانتخابي، وبالإضافة إلى الاتساع والانتشار من دون الحاجة القنوات الرسمية.

ويضيف الفرعي أن السلبيات يتم في وجود قصور في الإنترنت بل عدد بعض الولايات مما يحرم عدد من المواطنين الاستفادة من هذه الوسيلة، أما الأمر الثاني في أن المرشح يضطر للتعرض لبعض على موقعه وهم بأسماء مستعارة، قد يسببها صعوبة في التعامل معهم ويؤدي جهد أكبر حيث أن أغلب هؤلاء دائري أفكارهم تشاؤمية وسوداوية تخالف آرائها بطريقة صدامية.

وأعلن الفرعي أن البوابة ستستمر الإعلان عن نتائج المرشحين، كما أن لديها قريبا صفحات متخصصة لكل ولاية والسلطنة.

يذكر أن الندوة سوف يعاد تنظيمها في ولاية صلالة بتاريخ ٢١ سبتمبر في فندق كراون بلازا صلالة في تمام الساعة والنصف مساء بمشاركة كل من: خالد الحربي المدير التنفيذي لمؤسسة تواصل وموسى الفرعي مدير العام لموقع وسلطان الفرعي مدير التسويق والعلاقات لرؤية شباب، وعائشة الوهبي أخصائية الإعلام الجديد، عمان للمعرفة.

## **The Week**

**Date: 21<sup>st</sup> September 2011**

Currently, there are a little over 1,000 candidates for the seventh term elections, including 70 women. The last elections were contested by 23 women

On the awareness campaigns run by the government about the elections, some candidates believe not enough has been done

# TIME TO VOTE



The Majlis A'Shura elections scheduled in October will see a significantly higher number of candidates compared to 2007



# TIME TO VOTE

Yousuf Alvi  
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The forthcoming Majlis A'Shura elections scheduled in October will see a significant rise in the number of candidates compared to 2007. The sixth term elections were contested by close to 700 candidates. The number currently stands at a little over 1,000 candidates for the seventh term elections. According to Khalid al Haribi, managing director of the think tank, Tawasul, and a candidate from the Wilayat of Salalah, there were 1,300 candidates just a week ago for the 61 wilayats. "About 300 of these aspirants have backed out so far," Khalid said.

These elections, which follow the protests in parts of the sultanate earlier this year that prompted quick implementation of new policies for the welfare of citizens, are significantly timed. Mohammed Salim al Busaidi, a candidate from the Wilayat of Bausher, said, "These elections are coming at a very crucial time in Oman. People are more aware now of their rights."

Malik al Alabri, a current Majlis A'Shura member from Al Hamra, too said these elections are crucially timed. He believes that the protests have given Oman a new character. "But instead of protesting in the streets, people should let their demands now be known through the Majlis A'Shura. The Majlis is the right channel to redress issues."

Also commenting on the timing of these elections, Aida Slayem al Halgry, a candidate from Al Amerat, said that the Gulf region has seen

many changes since Arab Spring Uprising. "There are more educated contestants and I believe that the people of Oman will choose the right candidates."

On the increased number and the kind of candidates in these elections, Haider Sultan al Lawati, executive branding and media at Omantel, said, "A lot of intellectuals are contesting this year, which is a very positive change. But the rise in the number of candidates could also be because four Shura council members were made ministers some time ago. Some candidates could think that the Shura council will be a short cut for them to become ministers. But there are some candidates who genuinely want to help the people of their wilayat. I would like to use my experience to help the people of my area."

The government's initiatives to help the large number of female candidates has also been noteworthy. "This year, there have been courses specially for the women to teach them how to welcome and talk to people and how to give speeches. This has helped the women candidates immensely," said Fatma Jan Mohamed al Zedjaly, a candidate from Seeb.

The elections in 2007 saw 23 female candidates, which has grown to 70 in 2011. There are no female members in the Majlis currently, Aida said Oman's development and progress cannot be the responsibili-

ty of men alone. "Men and women should work together for the development of the nation."

"Some women have a different point of view as compared to men which can be used to the betterment of society. Apart from that, issues related to women and children can be well addressed by women. So I feel that more women should be a part of the Majlis A'Shura," Mohammed Salim said.

But even though the number of candidates has increased, there is a

negative mindset about the elections in a lot of people, Tawasul's Khalid noted. "Despite all the changes in the past six months, there is a sense of negativity among the people and it is persistent. There are many people in Oman who feel that the Majlis A'Shura is useless as they are not aware of its benefits. There have been several campaigns to make people aware of the purpose of the Majlis A'Shura," Khalid said.

On the awareness campaigns run

## NOW ON

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in co-operation with:





E-Campaign



There have been several campaigns to make people aware of the purpose of the Majlis A'Shura  
- Khalid al Haribi

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

COVER STORY CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

by the government prior to the elections, some candidates believe not enough has been done. Aida said, "There are advertisements in newspapers and televisions on behalf of the government to make the electorate aware about the elections. But it's not enough. I believe that the campaigns should run all around the year. We face problems while campaigning for ourselves as we have to spread awareness about the elections which is not a part of our job."

In what could be a reflection of the public mood towards the elections, Khalid said that out of 522,000 registered voters, around 20 per cent have still not upgraded their ID cards to be eligible to vote. The last date to get the cards updated is September 26. The candidates that *TheWeek* spoke to urged citizens to complete the formalities in order to vote.



There have been courses specially for the women to teach them how to welcome and talk to people and how to give speeches  
- Fatma al Zedjaly



Instead of protesting in the streets, people should let their demands now be known through the Majlis A'Shura  
- Malik al Alabri



Some candidates could think that the Shura council will be a short cut for them to become ministers  
- Haider al Lawati



We face problems while campaigning as we have to spread awareness about the elections which is not a part of our job  
- Aida al Halgry



These elections are coming at a very crucial time in Oman. People are more aware now of their rights  
- Mohammed Salim al Busaidi

**Times of Oman**

**Date: 20<sup>th</sup> September 2011**

# Voters urged to participate in Majlis Al Shura elections

Boycotting the elections will mean **that we would have to wait for four years before the next elections,** says **Tawasul MD,** while questioning the credentials of those calling for the boycott of the election

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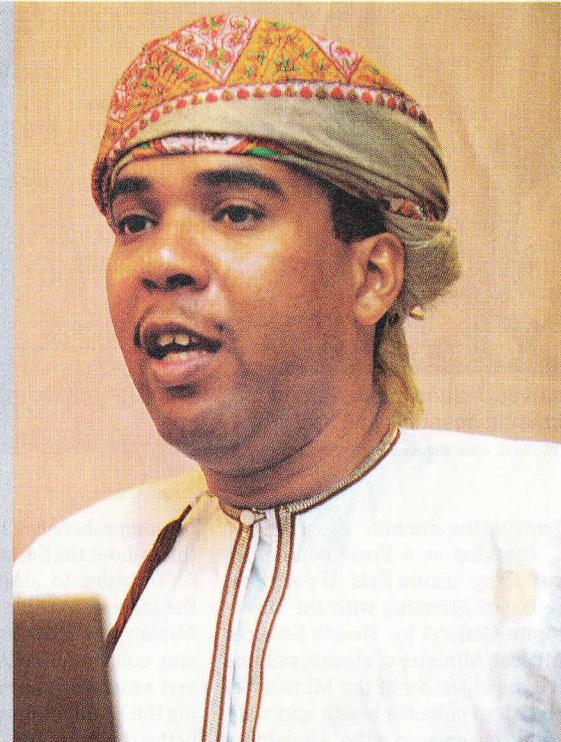
**MUSCAT:** Citizens must not pay any attention to the calls made by certain members of the society to boycott elections, a civil society member has urged.

He was referring to the upcoming seventh Majlis Al Shura elections scheduled for October.

"We are aware that the so-called 'intellectuals' have called for a boycott of elections which is wrong. We want to know what the one tangible benefit of boycotting the elections is. We have studied the issue closely and have not found a single tangible benefit. After questioning both the voters and the candidates on this issue we have not found any

“  
People fear that candidates will find out who they have voted for. This is not true. If people have been following the awareness programme of the government, they will know that this is not possible. Last time, 62 per cent of voters went to cast their votes. I hope it will be much higher this time around

**Khalid Al Haribi**  
Managing director, Tawasul



reason to boycott election," Khalid Al Haribi, managing director of Tawasul said, while speaking to *Times of Oman* on the sidelines of the 'E-Campaigning: Electronically Connected' conference.

He reminded the citizens that boycotting the elections would mean that they would have to wait for four years before the next elections.

It may be noted that the number of registered voters for the Majlis Al Shura elections is 522,000.

Around 1,000 candidates are contesting the elections for 84 seats out, of which 70 are women.

"However, it must be noted that around 30 per cent out of the 522,000

voters have to activate the electronic chip in their resident or ID cards to be able to vote in the elections," said Khalid, who himself is contesting the election from Salalah.

As the last date for activating the electronic chip is September 26, Khalid has urged the citizens not to waste an opportunity to cast their votes. "Hopefully, they will activate their electronic chips within the next week," he said.

Khalid also feels that people are not coming forward to vote because they believe that with a Shura without any jurisdiction, the power is of no use. "This is not true and people are being misled," he said.

Khalid also questioned the bonafide of the 'intellectuals' calling for boycott of the election. "We are not sure who are these people calling themselves intellectuals. If we are not participating in public matters, how can you call yourself an intellectual? It's all about positive attitude," he said.

Khalid also urged people to discard the misconceptions they have about voting. "People fear that candidates will find out who they have voted for. This is not true. If people have been following awareness programme of the government they will know this is not possible," he said.

With a big increase in the number

## POLL FACTS

- People should ignore the calls to boycott elections, says civil society member
- 30 per cent out of the 522,000 registered voters have to activate the electronic chips in their resident or ID cards to cast vote
- People have this misconception that candidates will know who they voted for
- 'Election fatigue' is a worry because the large number of candidates has led to too many messages being sent to voters

of candidates contesting the elections, Khalid feels more people should feel encouraged to go and vote. "But, of course, the negative side of this is that there are so many messages out there, what could have led to 'election fatigue'. Some voters are not persuaded by some messages. This could be a negative effect for that. I sincerely hope that people don't give up, but go ahead and cast their votes," he said.

Khalid also hopes that the record of 2007 Majlis Al Shura elections is broken. "Last time 62 per cent of registered voters went to cast their votes. I hope it will be much higher this time around," he said.

# **Hi Magazine**

**Date: 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2011**

# E-LECTION ENCOUNTERS

Among the half-a-million voters who have registered for the Majlis A'Shura elections slated to be held next month, only 10 percent are connected to social networking sites. Does the e-campaign of the young blood stand any chance to the strategies of heavyweights and their tribal allies? **SALIM JOSEPH** finds out



FRIDAY, September 23, 2011

**T**he numbers are not satisfactory. But the data shows a very positive trend towards a most constructive way of nation building, they say. Will this number be of any significance when the nation goes to poll in October to elect the new Majlis A'Shura members? May be yes...but, most probably, no!

The number in question here is of the electronically connected

But not even 20 percent of them have shown any interest in the forthcoming elections.

The recently launched election portal, a joint project of Tawasul and Sablat Oman claims a daily traffic of 4,000 visitors. But among the half-a million eligible voters (who have activated their ID cards to use the electronic voting machines) only 10 percent are connected to social media.

## Playing the community card?

The option left for them is to adopt the traditional methods, which could still have a far better influence on the voters. But do they stand any chance to the heavyweights or the candidates of tribal alliances who are very adept in playing the community card? "Though not as strongly as before, many candidates would

alliances helping candidates to pull through but, in this election, such alliances are being challenged by new candidates. It's not a fair game as there are intimidations, allege some of the candidates.

"However the equations have changed and within the tribal alliances there's always trouble in finding a single common candidate. Do we present the most



their vision and mission.

"We also have to convince them on the need for voting, and their duty to get involved in public matters," Khalid adds.

The election website has been created to raise this awareness and its contents are being created by the visitors. A team of 50 volunteers monitor the forums that represent all the 61 election districts.

**'Election fatigue'**

The Ministry of Interior is yet to announce the final number of eligible voters. The Ministry with the help of Royal Oman Police had launched a drive for activation of ID cards with the help of new mobile electronic voting machines early this year and at the closing of registration recently the figures stood at around 522,000.

The positive trend is that this is much more than the number of voters in 2007, which stood at around 286,000. With more candidates in fray, they could encourage more people to vote this time.

However, there's another discouraging aspect to this, which they call as 'election fatigue syndrome' at Tawasul. "With increased number of candidates, the voters are getting so many messages.

Instead of getting persuaded or encouraged to come and vote, many of them are likely to turn away from the process as they get tired of these messages," Khalid says.

But he foresees a record 70 percent polling against the 62 percent polling in 2007.

Will there be young voters turning up at the polling booths? Ironically, the recent survey by Sablat Oman showed 51 percent of the users saying they are not interested in voting. And young candidates still need the support of elders to ensure their seats in Majlis A'Shura, it seems.

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the future," he asserts.

In order to manage a successful campaign, one must select the appropriate media because the society is composed of several different segments, says Deena Al Balushi, a candidate from Seeb.

"Therefore, different methods of communication should be followed depending on the targeted segment and one shouldn't rely on just one way of communication," she adds.

At present, face-to-face communication is the most effective campaigning approach in Oman, says Khalid admitting that the e-campaign hasn't been effective as it was supposed to be. "But we have to shape up our own future.

If we want to use the internet constructively we have to push people a little bit more and convince them of the advantages - equal access, free access and instant access to information,' he says.

The pathetic scenario now is that all the 1000 candidates are struggling to reach voters, one by one, and this would mean they have to reach 30,000 people in their wilayats and convince them about

**Iman Al Ghafri**

Candidate from Bausher

"My relation with the voters has been strengthening day by day and the social media has been a major contributor. The Bausher community is very active on the internet and we discuss issues of interest that concern us. Their views have helped me in chalking out my electoral programmes. The social media has opened up doors for women candidates, which was not the case in the last elections."



**Dr. Ismail Al Zedjali**

Candidate from Al Musannah

"I am using internet, the social networks and have own page on Facebook. It's effective, people are seeing and they know about my programmes. But a majority of the voters still have no access and we need to build up. I may be able to reach 25-40 percent of my voters through this e-campaign. Probably by the next elections it could be a much stronger tool, effective and more understandable."

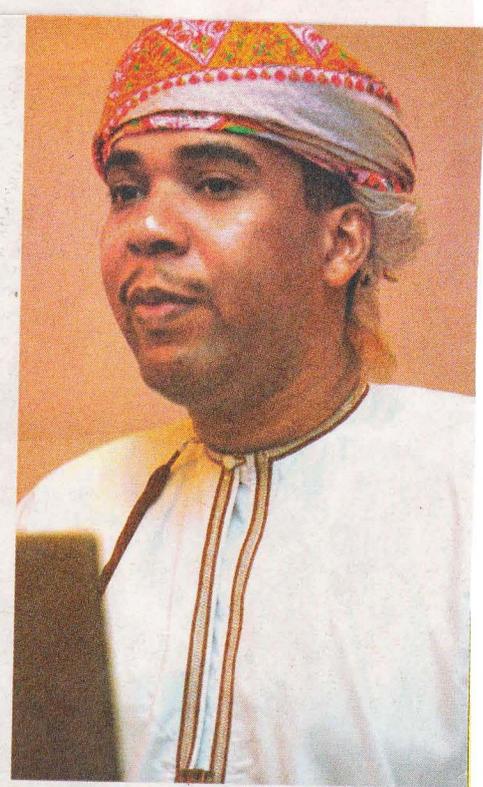




**Moosa Abdullah Al Farai**

Chairman, Sablat Oman

"There's an urgent need for better penetration of internet in the country as e-campaign can be the most effective tool for candidates to communicate with their voters in a developed civil society. However, we now have many smart candidates who are depending on Sablat Oman site and the traffic in their own sites shows that their e-campaign can make a difference."



**Khalid Alsafi Al Haribi**

Candidate from Salalah

"I depend a lot on internet for my campaign. The big challenge we have now in Oman is that we sit idle and do nothing to achieve our goal. We see people around who are not engaged electronically. We have to get them connected. Otherwise what's the use of us being civil society organisations and website forums?"



Participants at the conference 'E-Campaigning: Electronically Connected' organised by Tawasul Global Connections Center in partnership with Sablat Oman held at Intercontinental Muscat



**Deena Al Balushi**  
Candidate from Seeb

"The electronic media and the new technology plays a big role in this elections as they reach the largest possible segment in the shortest possible time in which the candidates can introduce themselves and offer insights and electoral programs, saving a lot of time, effort and money. However, the traditional media and direct communication with the society still play an important role in the campaigns."



**Sheikha Saad Ali Al Mudhafar**  
Candidate from Barka

"I have posted my CV in the website and I think it can have an impact on young minds who have access to internet. But I haven't fully utilized this new tool of communication as my focus had been on reaching out to people through traditional methods. I have volunteers and committees working for me, and the campaign so far has been very good."

able to get their candidates across or whether the new candidates would be able to make inroads, he adds.

**'E-campaign is the future'**  
Even though Tawasul and Sablat Oman have come together to help the new candidates make their voice heard through their portal, they are well aware of the limitations. "Majority of the population still do not have access to internet, a major challenge we face today. Besides, many who are connected have their real identity hidden in the social networks which pose another challenge for candidates while trying to reach out to the voters," says Moosa Abdullah Al Farai, the chairman of Sablat Oman.

However, they still can reach a large number of people, Moosa points out. "Sablat Oman enjoys 250,000 visitors per day and have more than 170,000 active members. This is a great platform for candidates to interact with people or experts from other wilayats as well and build up a better idea for their programmes while contesting the elections. E-campaign, definitely is