

Royal Decree establishes Special Office

◆ Dr Hamad bin Said al Aufi is Head of the Special Office ◆



MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on Wednesday issued two Royal Decrees.

Royal Decree No 59/2020 establishes the Special Office.

Article (1) stipulates that an office to be named “the Special Office” shall be set up and that this Office shall report directly to His Majesty the Sultan. Its organisational structure shall be endorsed by a Royal Decree.

Article (2) states that the Special Office's specialisations shall be defined in accordance with the annex attached to this Decree.

Article (3) states that the Special Office shall have a Head (of Office) to be appointed by a Royal Decree and assisted by a sufficient number of employees of various specialties that are relevant to the Office.

Article (4) stipulates that the Special Office and its employees shall be governed by provisions of the Diwan of Royal Court's Financial Law, as well as the Law on Pensions and End of Service Gratuity for Omani Employees of the Diwan of Royal Court -- promulgated under Royal Decree No 86/96 -- and the Law on Diwan of Royal Court's Personnel System promulgated under Royal Decree No 97/97.

Article (5) says that this Decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and be enforced from its date of issue.

Royal Decree No 60/2020 appoints a Head to the Special Office.

Article (1) appoints Dr Hamad bin Said bin Sulaiman al Aufi as Head of the Special Office, along with his current Grade and financial dues.

Article (2) says that this Decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and takes effect from its date of issue.

— ONA

Get ready for the glare of summer

LA KSHMI KOTHANETH

MUSCAT: Starting from Thursday temperatures are expected go up two to three degrees higher than what we have been experiencing until now.

According to Oman Met Office's weather forecaster, while the Sultanate will see a slowing down of local rains, the temperatures are expected to go up in the coming days.

“We will see the temperatures go up to 47 to 48 degrees Celsius in parts of Oman starting from Thursday,” said the weather forecaster.

The humidity in Muscat will be ranging around 20 per cent to 55 per cent, while humidity in Dhofar is expected to be between 75-90 per cent.

TURN ON P2

Guidelines set for workplace meetings

Sultanate reports 738 new cases, 8 deaths in a day

VINOD NAIR

MUSCAT: Eight deaths related to COVID-19 were reported on Wednesday, taking the total toll to 67 from Tuesday's figure of 59. With offices in both private and public sectors getting back to normal, the government has launched a campaign which calls on all institutions and companies to reduce the number of meetings, and only with a minimum number of participants.

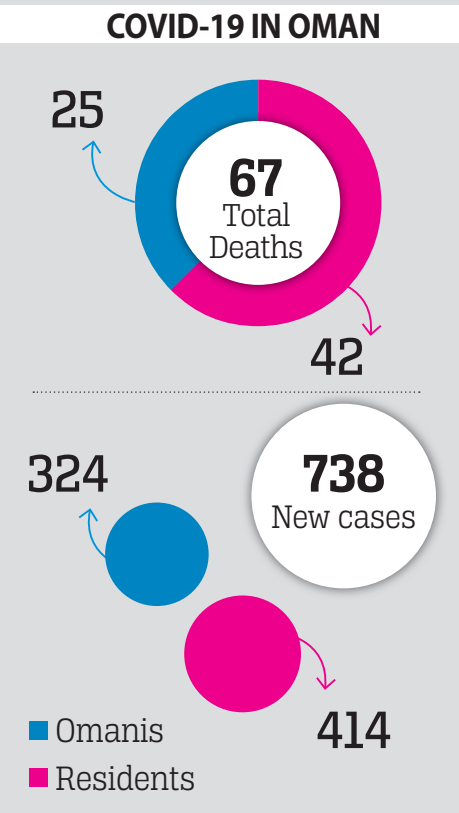
It may be noted that the government has stopped giving

updates on individual death cases from Sunday.

So far 42 residents and 25 Omanis have lost lives due to COVID-19 in the country, of which 34 are in the age group 15-59 and 11 of them are women.

The Ministry of Health announced registration of 738 new positive cases on Wednesday, including 324 Omanis and 414 residents, which brought the total number of positive cases in the Sultanate to 13,538.

TURN ON P2



Guidelines set for workplace meetings

FROM PAGE 1

The number of cases in Al Wusta Governorate has gone up to 110, including 95 from Duqm.

The total number of cases in Muscat now stand at 10,263, including 54 deaths.

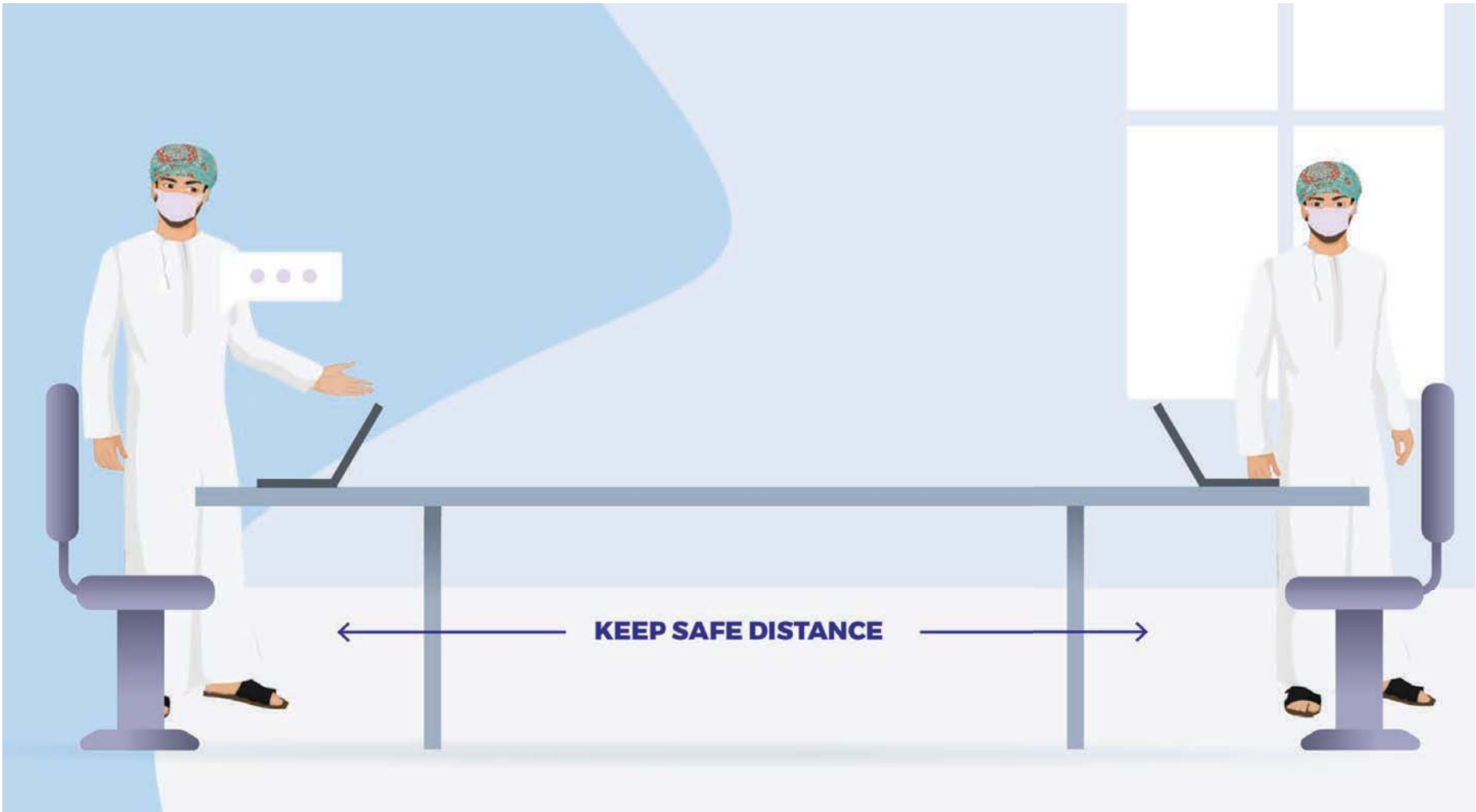
Muttrah tops the list with 4,337 cases with 26 deaths, Bausher 2,383 with four deaths, and Seeb 2,939 with 22 deaths.

The government order also called for maintaining the physical distance between the seats.

The campaign emphasised the need for making arrangements before holding a meeting to reduce the risks of the spread of COVID-19.

The suggestions include limiting direct one-to-one interactions and replacing them with electronic meetings.

If the direct meeting is



unavoidable, preventive measures such as excluding employees suffering from influenza symptoms from attending the meeting, and provision of tissue paper and

hand sanitisers to all participants, in addition to not exchanging paper documents during the meeting.

It also called for maintaining the data of all attendees of the

meetings to assist the authorities in the epidemiological investigation and isolation processes, in case there is any reporting of positive cases.

Tender Notice

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

Tender Number	Tender Name	Deadline for Specifications Request	Deadline for tender bids	Tender Price
5/2020	Recruiting a legal consultant for local investment (Three-year contract)	17-June-2020	01- July-2020	25 OMR

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

CORRESPONDANCE:

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

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

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Get ready for the glare of summer



FROM PAGE 1

Places such as Al Amerat, Mad'ha, Fahud, Nizwa, Al Mudhaibi and Ibra touched 46 degree Celsius on Wednesday. On June 5, there are chances of low clouds over parts of South Al Sharqiyah, Al Wusta and Dhofar.

Otherwise it is forecast to be mainly clear skies over most parts of the Sultanate.

Although there was development of clouds over Al Hajar Mountains towards afternoon on Wednesday and chances of late night to early morning low level clouds along parts of the coastal areas of the Arabian

Sea, there will be a change in this factor too, said the weather expert.

The general weather forecast states that clear to partly cloudy skies with chance of rain over Dhofar Governorate, mainly clear skies over the rest of the Sultanate with chance of clouds development and isolated rain occasionally accompanied by thundershower over Al Hajar Mountains and the adjacent wilayat during evening and chances of late night to early morning low level clouds along the coastal areas of South Al Sharqiyah and Al Wusta governorates.



3 held for hunting Arabian gazelle

MUSCAT: Wildlife monitors of the Directorate of Environment and Climate Affairs in Dhofar Governorate in cooperation with Royal Oman Police (ROP) arrested 3 citizens for hunting an Arabian gazelle in the Wilayat of Sadah. Police took legal action against the offenders and seized the crime. The Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs urged the public to report wildlife violations confirming that legal procedures will be taken against the violators.

Tab on post-corona price hike: PACP

OVER 1,610 VIOLATIONS ISSUED AGAINST COMMERCIAL ESTABLISHMENTS

KABEER YOUSUF

MUSCAT: Strict tab on prices post-Corona will be in place dissuading vendors and service providers from hiking prices of essential goods and services, according to the Public Authority for Consumer Protection (PACP).

The PACP has issued 1,610 violations against a number of commercial establishments in different governorates from February 25 to the end of May this year.

The bulk of the violations were related to price hike with 550 violations followed by 372 violations for not displaying price list. Other violations included selling herbals, non-issuance of purchase invoice, pricing discrepancy between the display and checkout, carrying out promotional offers without a permit, carrying out misleading or deceptive ads, non-abidance by the standard specifications, among other things.

Wholesalers and retailers in the market cannot raise the prices of essentials without the permission from the Authority which will validate the circumstances under which a hike is requested by the vendor.

"Suppliers cannot increase the prices of essentials post-Corona without the permission from the Authority and without any reason," Omar bin Faisal al Jahdamy, Vice-Chairman, Consumer Services and Market Watch department at the PACP said.

"Goods predominantly FMCG, and services especially barbers and beauty salons



cannot increase their prices due to the demand expected after Covid-19 period."

He said the market has been under close monitoring and 24X7 alert is in place to report any price hike.

He added that prices of all vegetables and fruits, the demand of which will witness a sudden surge after the 'stay home' term, are well regulated at the Central Fruits and Vegetable Market in Mawaleh too.

"Prices of fruits and vegetables at the central market of Mawaleh are well controlled and no undue hike whatsoever is visible."

The PACP has warned vendors against hiking prices of essentials without the permission of the Authority.

Consumers can, if any trade malpractice or price hike is found at any outlet, get in touch with the Market Watch on toll free numbers 80079009 or 80077997 and report violations.

OMAN DAILY

Observer

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Musalam Al Saidi : Suhar Office	99429192	sohardaily@outlook.com

EXPAT EXODUS MAY LEAD TO RISE IN ABANDONED CARS

SAMUEL KUTTY

MUSCAT: A time that more abandoned cars finding their space in public or private parking lots is not far away. With the sudden and unexpected departure of the expat workforce warranted by the coronavirus pandemic, a large number of cars are expected to be left behind while they leave the Sultanate. The reason is said to be absence of potential buyers, or even if any, sale deed formalities could not be accomplished due to the closure of offices concerned. Niyas Ahmed, who lost his job as a salesman in the Ruwi High Street, says although he found a buyer for his car, due to the closure of the directorate of licensing, he is not able to complete the sale deal. "I have registered with the embassy for the repatriation flight. But how can I leave the car and go as my return to Oman is uncertain," he said. According to the private vehicle transfer law in the Sultanate, all transactions related to buying or selling used vehicles should go through the Royal Oman Police. "The seller must appear in person before the Directorate of Licensing at the Traffic Police Department," stipulates the law. According to the law, all cars must be registered and the registration must be renewed annually. The

WITH THE SUDDEN AND UNEXPECTED DEPARTURE OF THE EXPAT WORKFORCE WARRANTED BY THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC, A LARGE NUMBER OF CARS ARE EXPECTED TO BE LEFT BEHIND WHILE THEY LEAVE THE SULTANATE



registration document is called the mulkia, and should be carried with the driver. Aju Raman, another victim of the coronavirus fallout as he lost his job in a company, said his departure would be possible only after selling his car. "I do not have any bank balance. To felicitate my travel, I have to sell the

car. There are no buyers," he said. There are many more expatriates finding it difficult to leave the country as they do not have any other source to fund their expenses for tickets. "The conditions of many of these people are heartbreaking. Several of them even have families who are stuck in Oman trying to source the money. Due to restrictions, they are unable to find buyers for many of their properties including household items," said Shameer P T K, a social worker. At the same time, if the owner of a vehicle leaves the country without selling his vehicle and is not able to return, it can cause environmental problems, as they will be left abandoned at different places. "Aside from the obvious concerns that they encroach upon public space, abandoned vehicles are also a major environmental hazard," said Kalpesh Mehta, a civil engineer who also volunteers as an environmentalist. When pointed out, an official at Muscat Municipality hoped that a post-2008 situation, when many owners left their cars at public parking slots like airport and flew back to their countries for failure to pay the loan instalments, does not arise. "Neglected cars are a random phenomenon that cities face. They distort the general appearance of the area and are a source of health and environmental damage," he said.



Lunar eclipse on Friday, Solar on June 21

STAFF REPORTER

MUSCAT: The Sultanate's sky will witness an annular eclipse on Sunday, June 21, an event that could be seen only after 83 years in Oman. According to the Omani Astronomical Society, "The sky of the Sultanate will also witness on Friday the penumbral (semi-shadow) lunar eclipse of the moon between the hours of 9:46 pm and into the early morning of Saturday until 1.04 am. The peak will be around 11:24 am." Earth will witness an annular solar eclipse on June 21. A solar eclipse occurs when the moon passes between the earth and the sun, creating what is known as a 'celestial ring'. When this happens, the moon blocks the light of the sun from reaching the earth. The shadow of the moon is then cast on the earth.

Power outage restoration almost finished in Dhofar



SALALAH: The electric current has been restored in most of the areas that were affected by the tropical depression in Dhofar Governorate and the work is under way to fix some minor technical glitches such as low voltage faults in households, according to Ali bin Issa Shammass, CEO of Dhofar Power Company.

The official noted that 8.5 per cent of the electricity grid of Dhofar Governorate was affected by breakdown due to heavy rains and flash floods adding that the electricity network has shown high efficiency during adverse weather.

The call centre of Dhofar Power received more than 4,800 reports of technical failures through mostly related to low voltage faults at households. Electricity has been restored in the most affected wilayats of Mirbat and Sadah except for few areas where the work is ongoing

to repair the damage, the official said.

NO FUEL SHORTAGE

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry has issued a clarification on social media reports about a shortage of fuel in the Governorate of Dhofar.

A statement from the ministry explained that the fuel shortages in some petrol stations was due to the effect of the tropical depression which affected the Governorate of Dhofar causing a technical failure at the company's storage tanks.

The ministry confirmed that, according to the company's statement, the damage has been repaired in the affected tanks and the work is under way to distribute fuel to the filling station adding that the fuel storage capacity at the company's warehouses is sufficient to meet the demand of petrol stations in the governorate. — **ONA**

Oman Air announces flight to London

STAFF REPORTER

MUSCAT: Oman Air will operate a special flight between Muscat — London — Muscat on Saturday, June 20. This is the second flight that will be taking-off to United Kingdom in less than a month.

“For bookings or additional information, please call +96895951000 or e-mail Tawfeeq.ali@omanair.com.” Oman Air said in a statement. From June 8, there will be new rules in place for residents and visitors entering the UK because of COVID-19.

INDIA REPATRIATION FLIGHTS

Meanwhile, an Air India flight with 152 passengers left for Bhubaneshwar and an Air India Express flight with 185 passengers left for Kannur from Muscat on Wednesday.

India began its repatriation effort



on May 7, bringing those citizens with ‘compelling reasons, which include the elderly, pregnant women, stranded students and those with visa issues.

There will be two flights to Kochi and Trivandrum on June 4 and one flight to Chennai on May 7.

The embassy said it will contact the shortlisted people for each flight directly through e-mail/telephone. The cost of tickets will have to be borne by the passengers themselves and air tickets will be issued by the airline only to short-listed persons.

جامعة صَحَار
SOHAR UNIVERSITY

TENDER NOTICE No. 002/2020

Sohar University invites sealed tenders for renting the following Restaurant and Coffee Shops to provide catering services for students and staff from contractors having sufficient experience in relevant filed in Government/Private Organizations.

The tender details are as follows:

Tender	Description	Fee OR	Submission Date
002/2020	Main Restaurant	25.000/-	30/06/2020
	Coffee Shop at Al-Khauboura Building		
	Coffee Shop at Al-Barka Building		
	Coffee Shop at Learning Resources Centre Building		

The tender document can be obtained from Procurement and Contracts Department from 07/06/2020 to 16/06/2020 08:00 am to 02:00 pm at Sohar University Main Campus in Sohar after payment of RO. 25.00/- in cash (Non-refundable) at the cash counter located in the Al Khauboura Building/ Ground floor. The receipt of payment has to be taken to the Procurement and Contracts Department to collect the Tender Document.

Tenderers offers must be submitted in closed envelopes sealed, delivered to the Sohar University premises, tender number shall be written only on the envelope, no indication shall be made, and deadline for submission of offers is 30/06/2020 14:00 hours.

Site visit date will be on 17th & 18th June 2020 from 09:00 am to 12:00 Noon.

Tender should be addressed to Deputy Vice Chancellor - Resources office and deposited in the tender Box at DVC-R Office as given below during office hours 08:00 to 14:00 Sunday to Thursday.

Deputy Vice-Chancellor – Resources Office
Sohar University
P.O Box 44, P.C. 311, Sohar. Sultanate of Oman.
Telephone: 26850100 Ext.: 421 & 289
(Procurement and Contracts Department)

TRAPPED EVACUATED



The Royal Air Force of Oman (Rafo) evacuated a number of citizens after they were trapped due to heavy rain and flash floods caused by the tropical depression in Marmul in the Wilayat of Shaleem and Halaniyat Islands.

An act of bravery saves a family from flash flood

KABEER YOUSUF

MUSCAT: It was not a usual day for Ahmed Sajid who is now receiving accolades of people in Salalah since the rains lashed the city in the afternoon of May 29. Amid relief measures taken by the Public Authority for Civil Defence and Ambulance (PACDA) in the flood-hit areas to save people and reach out to the needy, social worker Ahmed Sajid was busy fetching food and other necessary items to the families living in some inundated areas. On late evening of May 31 Sajid received a call from a distraught family of four seeking help for food and drinking water. A quick team made out of some like-minded people rushed



to the spot to see water and mud everywhere and a few streetlights which were still on despite the rains. Sensing the potential danger of the flash flood and the lives inside the marooned house, the team

ran inside the house and pulled all four people out and rushed to the 4-wheel they had parked outside before the floods enveloped the house. “We had no time to think further but to rush the family to safe place and

inform the PACDA,” Ahmed, who’s act of bravery gave a breather to four souls, said. They were accommodated on the first floor of a 2-story house of a citizen who offered necessary items, food and accommodation before they left the house in the morning. Their car which was abandoned in the action was all damaged owing to the gushing water, and disfigured as mud and sludge were all spread on the seats, and dashboard was in a state of ‘isolation’ before the car was taken to a garage. “Repairs to my car can be done in the coming days but those lives couldn’t have been saved had we not reached on time and if PACDA hadn’t extended a helping hand to us,” Ahmed told the *Observer*.



VIRUS-HIT MUMBAI LARGELY UNSCATHED BY CYCLONE NISARGA

MUMBAI: Corona-virus-hit Mumbai appeared to escape the worst of Cyclone Nisarga on Wednesday as the first severe storm to threaten India's financial capital in more than 70 years left it largely unscathed after ripping roofs off homes in a nearby coastal town.

Mumbai and its surrounds are usually sheltered from cyclones – the last deadly storm to hit the city was in 1948 – but authorities evacuated at least 100,000 people, including coronavirus patients, from flood-prone areas in the states of Maharashtra and Gujarat.

The storm made landfall near the coastal town of Alibag, around 100 km south of Mumbai, on Wednesday afternoon, meteorologists said.

It then crossed Maharashtra's coast, with its path veering to the east of Mumbai and its power expected to weaken by

Wednesday night, they added.

The cyclone brought heavy rainfall – with winds of 100-110 km per hour and gusts of up to 120 kph.

Mumbai experienced downpours throughout the afternoon, with strong winds toppling trees in some cases.

THE CYCLONE BROUGHT HEAVY RAINFALL – WITH WINDS OF 100-110 KM PER HOUR AND GUSTS OF UP TO 120 KPH

The beach town of Alibag suffered worse damage, with the cyclone tearing roofs off homes and overturning mobile food stalls.

A 45-year-old professor evacuated from his house near the sea said he could see corrugated roofing flying through

the air as Nisarga's powerful winds struck.

"The intensity is very strong and nothing like weather events we've seen before," said Milind Dhodre, who lives in Alibag with his wife and son.

The coastal town is a favoured haunt of Bollywood stars and industrialists, who own holiday homes there.

In Mumbai, police announced fresh restrictions on the city of 18 million people, which was just beginning to emerge from a months-long lockdown, and banned gatherings of four people or more until Thursday afternoon.

India's worst-hit city, Mumbai is home to a fifth of India's more than 200,000 coronavirus cases.

The storm evacuees included nearly 150 coronavirus patients from a recently built field hospital in Mumbai, underscoring the difficulties facing the city ahead of the monsoon season as it struggles to contain the pandemic. — AFP

US crowds defy curfew to protest Floyd's death

WASHINGTON: US protesters ignored curfews overnight as they vented their anger over the death of an unarmed black man at the hands of police, but there was a marked drop in the violence that led President Donald Trump to threaten to deploy the military.

George Floyd died after a white policeman pinned his neck under the officer's knee for nearly nine minutes in Minneapolis on May 25, reigniting the explosive issue of police brutality against African Americans five months before the November presidential election.

Tens of thousands of people took to the streets of cities coast to coast for an eighth night as National Guard troops lined the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington. There was sporadic violence in Washington and Portland, Oregon, with protesters tossing fireworks and bottles answered by police flash grenades and tear gas.

Clashes between protesters and police and looting of some stores in New York City gave way to relative quiet in the early hours of Wednesday. Police told media they made 200 arrests, largely for curfew violations. — Reuters

Giant asteroid to fly by Earth this week

WASHINGTON: Nasa is tracking a giant asteroid which may be taller than the Empire State Building in the US, and it will be flying near the Earth on June 6 (Saturday).

Given the name rock 163348 (2002 NN4), the space rock is believed to be travelling at a speed of 5.2 km a second or 11,200 miles per hour and will pass by near the Earth's orbit this week.

According to a report, it is estimated to be between 250m and 570m – so it could be taller than the Empire State Building (443m or 1453ft) and the London Eye (135m or 443ft) combined.

The International space agency has classed the asteroid as an Aten asteroid, which is a space rock following a very wide orbit around the Sun. — IANS

WORLD

ITALY REOPENS BORDERS TO TOURISTS FROM EUROPE



ROME: Italy reopened to travellers from Europe on Wednesday, three months after the country went into coronavirus lockdown, with all hopes pinned on reviving the key tourism industry as the summer season begins.

Gondolas were ready to punt along Venice's canals, lovers will be able to act out "Romeo and Juliet" on Verona's famed balcony, and gladiator fans can pose for selfies at Rome's Colosseum.

But there were fears many foreign tourists would be put off coming to a country still shaking off a vicious pandemic.

"Come to Calabria. There's only one risk: that you'll get fat," the southern region's governor Jole Santelli said on Sunday as the race began to lure big spenders — or any spenders — back to Italy's sandy shores.

Italy was the first European country to be hit hard by the coronavirus and has officially reported more than 33,000 deaths. It imposed an economically crippling

lockdown in early March and has since seen its contagion numbers drop off dramatically.

With the country facing its deepest recession since World War II, it needs foreigners to return, and quickly.

But it is still reporting hundreds of new cases a day, particularly in the northern Lombardy region, and experts warn the government may be being hasty in permitting travel between regions and abroad.

"We hoped to see some movement from today, but have no foreign tourists booked in for this week or next," said Alessandra Conti, receptionist at the Albergo del Senato hotel which overlooks the Pantheon in Rome.

"We've got a few reservations from mid-June... (but) are still getting lots of cancellations for this summer".

International flights were only expected to resume in three main cities: Milan, Rome and Naples.

And there were concerns that those who usually come in by car,

train or ferry from neighbouring countries would go elsewhere on their holidays.

Switzerland has warned its citizens that if they go to Italy they will be subject to "health measures" on their return. The country will open its borders with Germany, France and Austria on June 15, but not with Italy.

Austria is lifting restrictions in mid-June with Germany, Switzerland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary — but again, not Italy, described last week by Vienna's health minister as "still a hotspot".

Other countries, such as Belgium and Britain, are still advising against, or forbidding, all non-essential travel abroad.

In response to perceived anti-Italian sentiment, Foreign Minister Luigi Di Maio has warned countries not to treat Italy "like a leper".

He said on Saturday he would be travelling to Germany, Slovenia and Greece to persuade them Italy is safe for foreign tourists. — **AFP**

Australia mulls return of crowds to stadiums

SYDNEY: Small crowds at sporting events may be possible in the near future, Australia's deputy chief medical officer said on Wednesday, citing successful efforts to slow the spread of coronavirus. Australia has not reported a death from the disease for more than a week. It has recorded 102 COVID-19 deaths and almost 7,200 infections. With fewer than 20 cases each day, Australia has allowed professional sport to begin, though no crowds are permitted. Australia's national cabinet will on Friday meet to discuss how to further ease social distancing restrictions, including potentially allowing small, spaced out crowds at stadiums.

Iranian scientist freed by US back in Iran

TEHRAN: Iranian scientist Sirous Asgari has arrived back in Iran after being released from prison by the United States, Iranian media reported on Wednesday.

The Tasnim, ISNA and Mehr news agencies all carried the same photograph on their Telegram accounts of Asgari, wearing a face mask against the coronavirus, being reunited with his family. A US court had in November cleared Asgari of charges of stealing trade secrets in 2016 while he was on an academic visit to Ohio from Tehran's Sharif University of Technology.

The 59-year-old told British newspaper The Guardian in March that

the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agency was holding him at a Louisiana detention centre without basic sanitation and refusing to let him return to Iran despite his exoneration.

Kyrgyzstan to resume domestic flights

BISHKEK: Kyrgyzstan will resume domestic flights and bus circulation between its provinces and allow charter flights from China this month to bring in staff for numerous Chinese investment projects, the Bishkek government said on Wednesday. Kyrgyzstan will also resume domestic flights and public transit between its provinces from June 5. — **Agencies**



Digital advertising for the 2020 election is expected to reach \$1.8 billion, according to research firm Advertising Analytics. — AFP

Amid pandemic, White House race becomes digital dogfight

The 2020 US presidential race is becoming a digital-first campaign as the coronavirus pandemic cuts candidates off from traditional organising and in-person events.

On the surface, President Donald Trump has the edge over Democrat Joe Biden because of the incumbent's extensive digital infrastructure and large social media following.

But Biden has been stepping up his digital presence and is getting a boost from a handful of outside organisations seeking to counter Trump's messaging on social platforms.

Both sides agree that digital will play a critical role in the 2020 White House race as social media have taken the place of rallies and door-to-door campaigning.

"The digital campaign has always been important. What has changed now is that it's the only show in town," said Republican

digital strategist Eric Wilson, who has no direct role in the Trump campaign. Wilson said the Trump campaign's experience since 2016 means it has a head start while Biden has been slow to embrace a digital strategy.

"Voters are consuming politics as entertainment and Biden doesn't seem to grasp his role as a social media influencer and doesn't see any interest in changing that," Wilson said.

Trump has some 81 million Twitter followers compared with 5.8 million for Biden, and similar advantages on Facebook and other platforms.

But Biden and an array of progressive organisations have been working to flood the Internet with messages to neutralise Trump and his supporters.

Digital advertising for the 2020 election is expected to reach \$1.8 billion, according to research firm Advertising Analytics, which boosted its estimates by 13.5 per cent due to the pandemic. — AFP

Empower local companies



ALI AL MATANI
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Local companies have their own worth and value for their contribution to the national economy and multi-dimensional growth of any country. A standard policy is always required for the empowerment of the local companies. Under this policy, organisations concerned help establish local and international economic entities from the scratch. This is the policy which was pursued in Oman to reach to the point where we are today.

Recently, the importance of this philosophy was reaslied when international companies, especially those in the oil and gas sector, started laying off local youth, despite the fact they were assigned projects worth billions of rials. What we expect from the government is to pay attention to the situation particularly in the oil and gas sector from where hundreds of millions of rials are going outside the country in one pretext or the other. Therefore, it is always advisable that the local companies should be set up and they should be assigned with the projects according to their size. With the government support such entities can grow, excel

and get noticed.

There is no doubt that the national companies have proved their worth and usefulness if they got support of the government. Such companies have sustainability in their works and projects. If similar companies come up particularly in the oil and gas sector, after a certain period of support and empowerment, they grow to become international entities.

The growth of these companies would require a process of empowerment. The will to grow these companies should come from within. The government would need to take interest in it. This would require more monitoring and accountability by the agencies concerned for the works and projects which are assigned to foreign companies. If these companies go against the approach of the government, they should be held accountable.

We hope that the government organisations and monitoring authorities would support this sector to prevent any wrong practices which lead to exclusion of national companies, which can accomplish the jobs they are assigned to do.

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

FEATURES

Three weeks to prepare for Oman's second annular eclipse

RAY PETERSEN

Less than six months since the last significant astronomical event in the Sultanate, a rare annular solar eclipse, when the Moon covers the Sun, leaving the outer edge of the Sun exposed, creating what is known as a 'ring of fire,' otherwise known as an annulus, around the Moon, and casting a shadow on the Earth. June 21st beginning at 8:14:07am, with the full annular eclipse at 9:38:32am, and the last at 11:18:45am, according to timeunitarium.com.

The last annular solar eclipse took place on the 26th of December last year when the prime viewing point was identified as Ras al Ruways Beach in South Sharqiya. The Chairperson of the Oman Astronomical Society OAS, Zakiya Al Mukini, a key figure in the wider 'Annular Eclipse

Project,' since taking office little more than a year ago, at the time of the December eclipse advised that the Muscat region will be a better location for eclipse watchers to see and experience the phenomenon on this occasion. "The OAS," she said, "is keen to develop a new generation of astronomers, and also aims to promote astrological photography," and consequently works closely with the Photographic Society of Oman to highlight the natural beauty of the stars and skies, never more obvious than during the ecliptic vision that is an annular solar eclipse. "Similarly," agreed Mazin al Julandani at the same time, "the scientific community, through the likes of prominent academic and astronomer Dr Saleh bin Said Al Sheithani takes significant interest in the event, and maybe only a few of us will be around for the next in 2103," he smiled, "so we should make

the most of the opportunity."

The map of the viewing trajectory shows that the Sifah Marina to Quriyat Port coastline will be optimum, with Manah across to Adam in the interior also being primary viewing spots. In fact, the eclipse this year will be seen by millions from the Central Pacific Ocean in an arc including South East and Central Asia, the Middle East, and Central Africa. The eclipse is not constant as all three elements, the Earth, Moon and Sun are always in motion, and the closer one is to the central path of the shadow, the bigger the eclipse looks. Due to the Sun being higher in the sky as the phenomenon occurs over Oman offers a wonderful opportunity for a prime astronomical experience.

For an annular solar eclipse three astronomical conditions must occur simultaneously. First it must be the time of the New Moon, second, the

Earth, Moon and Sun are aligned in a straight line, and third, the Sun is at its apogee, or farthest distance from the Earth so the Sun is still visible as a ring around the Moon. The eclipse may last as long as three hours from beginning to end, and based on the experience of the December eclipse the annular effect may be around 5 or 6 minutes though astronomers say that it can be anything from a few seconds to more than ten minutes.

Of course, looking at the Sun directly is never recommended, as the Sun's rays can burn the retina, leading to short term, or even permanent vision problems. It is recommended that eclipse glasses or a pinhole projector are used to experience the event without any ophthalmic issues. First on your list though, check with the boss that you can get a good look at what is usually, a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.



INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS

nayana_s_rajesh • Follow
Muscat, Oman



chitrupai • Follow
Al Azaiba Beach



zizo_143 • Follow



Omani graffiti artist paints symbolic George Floyd image on empty Al Batinah wall



YERU EBUEN

IT IS ONE of this generation's most iconic and very horrifying images — a police officer's knee pressing against an unarmed black man's neck — the act so brutal that it would lead to the eventual demise of George Floyd and will send a country into chaos. The viral video has been viewed online millions of times.

Floyd's last words, "I can't breathe!" resonated throughout the United States causing a massive uproar lending a stronger reason for many protesters to march on the streets so that the #BlackLivesMatter movement will finally be taken seriously by the American government. While located thousands of miles away, the protests that have lasted for days now and sweeping some of America's big cities including the surrounding streets of the White

House reverberated in the Middle East into the collective consciousness of people in Oman — both the Omanis and non-Omanis alike. Social media was ablaze with online discussions regarding this perennial problem with many in Oman in agreement that what was going on in America isn't right. In an alley in Harmul, in Al Batinah, a graffiti art bearing the resemblance of George Floyd has been plastered on an empty wall. Posted on Instagram

by @majeed.graffiti, the artwork was ripe with symbolism including the very rope that is tied around Floyd's neck labeled 'racism.' There was a lot to take in — from the tear in Floyd's eye to the two birds, one black and one white in a peaceful kiss of equality, perched on his shoulder — to his infamous last line of "I can't breathe," the graffiti art was proof that even Oman's youth and artists are paying close attention to this global issue. The art, even at its face value, is a clear message that "racism" is not an isolated problem of the United States but just like the Covid19 pandemic, is a global problem that can no longer be swept under a rug and not just in America but also in the Middle East and the young people are noticing it. Quoting the universal message of Prophet Mohammed (pbuh) that there is no difference between an Arab and a non-Arab or a black person from a white person, it is a young artist's tribute to the global movement and a reminder that the young people of Oman are listening and watching and that they too in silence, and through a simple artwork also protest what is without a doubt, a despicable atrocity to humanity happening in the American soil.

BUSINESS



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CONRAD PRABHU

MUSCAT: Shell Development Oman's renewable energy arm, 'Qabas', has plans to develop as much as 300 megawatts (MW) of renewable energy-based capacity to support the green energy requirements of industrial companies operating in the free zone area of Sohar Port.

Envisaged for implementation in a series of stages, the first 25 MW of solar-PV based capacity is expected to be operational before the end of this year, according to Sohar Port and Freezone.

"Sohar Freezone has joined forces with Shell, who will develop up to 300 MW of renewable energy, adding economic value to Oman and our industries. The first 25 MW solar project is scheduled to

come on stream this year," said Sohar Port and Freezone in a tweet on Wednesday.

It follows an agreement signed by Shell in April 2019 for the lease of land for the development of the first commercial-scale solar PV plant in the free zone area. These investments in renewables based capacity, according to Shell, are designed to offer solar power solutions for the free zone's industrial tenants.

Thus, the transition to competitively priced clean energy will help free up natural gas resources for potential use in economically productive initiatives,

CLEAN ENERGY:
The first 25 MW of solar-PV based capacity is expected to be operational before the end of this year.

it has stressed.

Around 600 hectares of land within the free zone have been earmarked by the port for renewable energy schemes of capacities ranging from 10 to 40 MW. Output from these energy farms is proposed to be channeled to various industries operating either within the free zone or the adjoining industrial port.

The first industrial tenant that is tipped to benefit from 'clean energy' from Qabas is Al Tamman Indsil Ferrochrome, which owns and operates Oman's first ferrochrome plant in Sohar Freezone.

Al Tamman Indsil's ferrochrome smelter, which was commissioned in 2013, has an installed capacity of 75,000 metric tonnes per annum (mtpa) of high carbon ferrochrome.

Assisting Qabas in the roll-out of the first 25 MW solar PV plant in the Sohar Freezone are solar PV specialists Sterling and Wilson Solar Ltd, the solar engineering and construction arm of Shapoorji Pallonji Group.

Last week, Sterling and Wilson, one of largest solar EPC solutions provider in the region, announced that it had successfully commissioned the 100 MW solar PV based farm of Amin Renewable Energy Company (AREC) in the south of Oman. Output from the solar farm is committed to Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) under a long-term offtake agreement.

HAYA WATER: NO RISK OF VIRUS EXPOSURE FROM TREATED EFFLUENT

Pandemic safeguards: State-owned utility plans to acquire specialised testing equipment to analyse wastewater samples for potential coronavirus pathogens

CONRAD PRABHU

MUSCAT: Haya Water, the state-owned utility overseeing wastewater treatment services in Oman, has ruled out the risk of exposure to the deadly coronavirus from its treated effluent, which is widely used in public landscaping and municipal gardens, as well as from its compost products.

Eng Hussain Hassan Ali Abdulhussain (pictured), CEO, said the advanced technologies employed by Haya Water in the production of treated effluent from wastewater, as well as compost from sludge, eliminate the risk of any residual coronavirus remaining over at the end of the treatment process.

“Our technical people strongly believe there is no virus left over either in the treated effluent or in the sludge that goes in for composting,” said Eng Hussain.

“The MBR (membrane bioreactor) technology that we use in wastewater treatment has very fine porosity that does not permit viruses to get into the treated effluent. Likewise, heat treatment of the sludge eliminates any potential for viruses remaining over in the compost.”

He made the comments while participat-



“Our technical people strongly believe there is no virus left over either in the treated effluent or in the sludge that goes in for composting.”

ENG HUSSAIN HASSAN ALI ABDULHUSSAIN,
CEO, Haya Water

ing in a webinar hosted by The Business Year on the theme, ‘Power, Water & Sustainability: A Post-Covid-19 reality’, on Wednesday. Fellow panellists included Shaikh Mohammed al Harthy, Executive Vice President — be’ah; and Eng Ahmed Hamed al Subhi, Managing Director — ACWA Power Oman.

While the end products are essentially virus-free, Haya Water is eager to make sure that any

pathogens entering the wastewater system do not pose any risk to the utility’s staff as its courses through vast network, according to the CEO.

The potential for deadly COVID-19 pathogens to be lurking in residential sewage, as well as grey water from sinks and showers, needs to be fully investigated to secure Haya Water’s workers from the risk of contamination, he said.

Towards this end, Haya Water plans to acquire suitable equipment for the testing of wastewater samples drawn from key locations across the network, particularly in suspected hotspots.

“Unfortunately, we do not have the required testing equipment at our labs at the moment, but we are looking at getting this equipment into Oman,” the CEO said.

“We are also looking see what happens to the virus when it enters the networks; does it remain active or is it destroyed? We want to make sure that our staff are safe when they attend to any blockages, sewage facilities, or such problems,” he added.

Omantel launches ‘PlayVOD’

MUSCAT: Omantel has announced the launch of a unique Subscription Video On Demand (SVOD) service, ‘PlayVOD’, in partnership with Digital Virgo, a France-based specialist in Telecom Payment, Monetization and Digital Marketing.

The new service, available in five languages, offers Omantel customers access to a rich library of more than 3,000 movies and TV series, mixing international and regional content.

To access the library, Omantel customers need to subscribe to the Premium SVOD service using Direct Carrier Billing (DCB), whereby intending subscribers can make purchases on their smartphones and devices by charging payments to their mobile phone bill.

The inaugural launch of PlayVOD in Oman builds on Zain’s groupwide agreement with Digital Virgo, following Omantel’s system integration with Zain Group’s Application Program Interface (API) platform and the deployment of Direct Carrier Billing technology.

Commenting on this partnership, Aladdin Abdullah Bait Fadhil, Acting Vice President at Omantel’s Consumer Business Unit said, “The launch of PlayVOD in Oman is another example of Omantel’s pioneering approach to delivering compelling user experiences to our customers, fulfilling our strategy of enabling a digitally enriched society.

PlayVOD allows our customers to watch videos without any constraints, whenever and wherever, with the platform offering English and Arabic content. Customers can enjoy streaming and downloading video content through PlayVOD for 200 Bz per day.”



BUSINESS

GULF ISLAMIC INVESTMENTS
INVESTS IN INDIAN HEALTHCARE



MUSCAT: Gulf Islamic Investments LLC (GII) has invested in the \$200+ bil-

lion Indian healthcare sector by buying a significant minority stake in a portfolio of healthcare companies including a virus test manufacturing company. This is in continuation to several planned by GII in healthcare, with multiple opportunities already in the pipeline across the US, Europe and India and its

existing investments in healthcare wearable space – Valencell and Nymi – where GII is a significant investor. Healthcare has been identified by GII as an attractive, non-cyclical and growing sector propelled by several trends such as ageing, lifestyle diseases, and lately the COVID-19 pandemic.

Driven by strong tailwinds – the sector growing in India by 15-20 per cent per year, increasing government healthcare expenditure, a shortfall of 2.5m hospital beds, and health insurance coverage expected to grow by 23 per cent per year until 2024 – the investment is expected to generate attractive returns.

Win cash prizes with
Maisarah's Mobile
Banking App

MUSCAT: Within its efforts to encourage customers to conduct their transactions through Mobile Banking App, Maisarah launched its Mobile Banking App Competition, where customers using the app will get chances to win monthly cash prizes worth RO 150 for two winners per month. Milad Abdul Redha al Ajmi - Head of Maisarah Product Segments and Channels at Maisarah Islamic Banking Services said: "Maisarah's Mobile Banking App is one of the best apps in the banking sector with exclusive user-friendly features. Customers may conduct their transactions 24/7 at their convenience, and with this competition we aim to encourage customers to benefit from the services we provide them through our mobile banking app including; Instant Transfer, Bill Payments, Mobile Top-up, Cheque book Request and cardless cash among other services. The more they use these services the more chance they will get to win monthly cash prizes, worth RO 100 for one customer with highest number of monthly transactions and RO 50 for a customer with second highest number of monthly transactions." The competition continues until November 30, 2020, and it is open for all Maisarah Retail customers including minor and joint accounts.



Ooredoo revamps
Fibre Home Internet

MUSCAT: Ooredoo has reduced its popular Fibre Home Internet plans when taken with a 12 month contract. The plans start at just RO 35 per month for a speed of 100 mbps, then 300 mbps for RO 45, and 1 gbps for RO 100, plus unlimited data, a 10 per cent discount on international calling, unlimited Ooredoo fixed minutes, and free modem and installation. With Ooredoo's high quality network, which is geared up for speed and reliability, combined with an awesome digital experience, staying connected has never been easier. Feras bin Abdullah al Sheikh (pictured, Director of Branding and Communications at Ooredoo, said, "Our aim at Ooredoo has always been to give our customers plenty of ways to enjoy the internet, with a choice of plans at prices to suit all budgets. This is especially important now as people are staying at home because of COVID-19, and we are happy to be playing our part in keeping them connected whilst doing so. Supported by a great network, our newly-priced plans tick all the boxes for great internet experience at home." Ooredoo's Fibre Home Internet plans offer users unlimited streaming, downloads and uploads with fast, uninterrupted and buffer-free internet in fibre coverage areas. Existing customers on the RO 28 plan can also upgrade their plan to enjoy a higher speed, through the Ooredoo app.



Bank Nizwa wins
top accolade

MUSCAT: Establishing itself as one of the leading Islamic banking institutions globally, Bank Nizwa was recently awarded the prestigious title of the Best Islamic Financial Institution in 2020 in Oman by Global Finance. Recognising excellence across the Islamic Finance industry globally, winners of Global Finance's 2020 Islamic Finance Awards received the awards based on their improved financial performance together with a widened product portfolio, enhanced service, technology investment, and growth in their banking and market reach. Khalid al Kayed, CEO of Bank Nizwa said: "We attribute our success to the dedication of our employees, the unfaltering support from our shareholders, and the continued loyalty that our customers have shown us. We will take every success as a motivation to continue to lead the industry, rolling out innovative products that will benefit our clients." "The title is not just an indicator of our success as a bank, but it also signifies the increase in customer confidence in Islamic banking as a whole. We are proud to be the drivers of this change. Even with the current set of economic challenges, statistical reports show that Islamic banks have fared better than conventional banks."



JAPAN'S FACTORY OUTPUT SLUMPS AS PANDEMIC HITS AUTO SECTOR



Employees wearing protective masks and face guards work on the automobile assembly line at the factory of Mitsubishi Fuso Truck and Bus in Kawasaki, Japan. — **Reuters**

TOKYO: Japan's factory output slid faster-than-expected and retail sales tumbled the most in more than two decades in April, as the coronavirus pandemic wrecked both foreign and domestic demand for the country's autos and other manufactured goods.

The bad numbers suggest the recession seen in the world's third-largest economy over the six months to March is likely to deepen in the current quarter as government-imposed lockdowns disrupted supply chains and kept consumers shut in at home.

Official data showed factory output slipped 9.1 per cent in April from the previous month, the biggest drop since comparable data became available in 2013 as automakers and iron and steel manufacturers suffered sharp declines.

That was a much larger decline than the 5.1 per cent drop in a Reuters forecast.

"Output will probably pick up from June onwards but it will be necessary to remain on guard for a second wave (of coronavirus infections)," said Takeshi Minami, chief economist at Norinchukin Research Institute.

"The pace of a rebound will likely continue to be sluggish."

Automaker production fell by a third from the previous month. That led the

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government to downgrade its description of overall production to "decreasing rapidly" for the first time since November 2008, from just "decreasing" previously.

Nissan Motor Co plans to slash production capacity and model range by about a fifth to help cut costs by 300 billion yen (\$2.79 billion), following a slide in sales, the automaker said.

Separate data showed retail sales tumbled at their fastest pace since March 1998 as the nationwide state of emergency led service-sector businesses such as restaurants to close.

Retail sales plunged 13.7 per cent in April from a year earlier, heavily weighed by slumping demand for general merchandise, clothing and vehicles. The gloomy data comes after Japan's economy fell into recession for the first time in 4-1/2 years in the first quarter.

The government this week lifted the state of emergency and approved a second \$1.1 trillion stimulus package, bringing the total pledged to save the economy from the pandemic to \$2.2 trillion.

Japan was already trying to shake off weak demand before the outbreak after the government raised the nationwide sales tax to repair its public debt burden.

The largest component of the government's new stimulus package was a loans programme for smaller firms in immediate need of cash to keep the lights on. Other government data showed worsening conditions in the jobs market, suggesting such support for small- and mid-sized firms remained much-needed to prevent further losses. — **Reuters**

BUSINESS

Global shares hit 3-month highs on economic recovery hopes

LONDON: World shares hit three-month highs on Wednesday and the dollar fell for the sixth day running as easing lockdowns and hopes for more monetary stimulus gave investors confidence, despite civil unrest in the US and rising COVID-19 tolls.

The MSCI world equity index, which tracks shares in 49 countries, rose to its highest since March 6, having gained throughout the Asian session.

The index is down more than 7 per cent year-to-date, amid pandemic lockdowns that have pushed many economies into contraction.

MSCI's main European Index also held near three-month highs and European bourses opened higher, with the STOXX 600 up over 1 per cent and back to levels not seen since March 6.

In China, Japan and South Korea, where COVID-19 is relatively contained, stock indexes have recovered substantially to be only about 5-6 per cent below

IN CHINA, JAPAN AND SOUTH KOREA, WHERE COVID-19 IS RELATIVELY CONTAINED, STOCK INDEXES HAVE RECOVERED SUBSTANTIALLY TO BE ONLY ABOUT 5-6 PER CENT BELOW THIS YEAR'S PEAKS.



A man wearing a protective mask inside the Shanghai Stock Exchange building. — Reuters

this year's peaks.

There are some signs of recovery in business activity as governments restart their economies, albeit in the knowledge that easing lockdowns too early could trigger a second wave of COVID-19.

A closely-watched survey

of service sector activity in China recovered to pre-epidemic levels in May.

Broader economic optimism supported risk-sensitive currencies and pushed down the dollar, which hit a three-month low against a basket of comparable currencies.

"In a scenario where there's no meaningful recurrence of the virus, and progress is made on treatments and vaccines, we expect the US dollar's weakness to continue," said Mark Haefele, investment officer at UBS Global Wealth Management. — Reuters

Brent oil rises to \$40 amid hopes for output cuts, pandemic recovery

TOKYO: Oil rose on Wednesday, with Brent at \$40 for the first time since March, as optimism mounted that major producers will extend production cuts and a recovery from the coronavirus pandemic will spur fuel demand.

Brent crude futures for August rose 43 cents, or 1.1 per cent, at \$40 a barrel, by 0252 GMT. The contract climbed to as high as \$40.42, the highest since March 6, after gaining 3.3 per cent.

US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude futures gained 68 cents, or 1.9 per cent, at \$37.49 a barrel. It rose to as much as



An employee looks on at Saudi Aramco oil facility in Abqaiq, Saudi Arabia.

— Reuters

\$37.88, also the highest since March 6. The con-

tract ended the previous session up 3.9 per cent. Both

benchmarks have risen sharply in recent weeks from the lows of April, buoyed by a continuing recovery in China, the epicentre of the virus outbreak, while other economies are slowly opening up after lockdowns to contain its spread.

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (Opec) and other major producers including Russia, a group known as Opec+, may extend production cuts of 9.7 million bpd, or about 10 per cent of global output, into July or August, sources said.

— Reuters



Big Three join #Blackout Tuesday campaign against racial injustice



LONDON: Roger Federer, Rafael Nadal and Novak Djokovic were among the tennis players who joined the #BlackOutTuesday campaign against racial injustice, as protests continue over the death of George Floyd, an unarmed black man who died in police custody.

Floyd died after a white policeman pinned his neck under a knee for nearly nine minutes in Minneapolis on May 25.

Men's world No. 1 Djokovic posted

black screenshots on his Twitter and Instagram pages with the message "Black Lives Matter", and was joined by Federer and Nadal, the other members of the "Big Three" of men's tennis.

Grand Slam winners Maria Sharapova, Petra Kvitova and Stan Wawrinka were among other players who signalled their support for the campaign.

African-American teenage phenomenon Coco

MEN'S WORLD NO. 1 DJOKOVIC POSTED BLACK SCREENSHOTS ON HIS TWITTER AND INSTAGRAM PAGES WITH THE MESSAGE "BLACK LIVES MATTER", AND WAS JOINED BY FEDERER AND NADAL, THE OTHER MEMBERS OF THE "BIG THREE" OF MEN'S TENNIS.

Gauff and Japan's Naomi Osaka have also expressed their anger over Floyd's death.

Replying to Federer's Instagram post, the 16-year-old Gauff commented: "Click the link in my bio to get resources on HOW YOU CAN HELP! THANK YOU."

Osaka, whose father is Haitian and mother is Japanese, said people should be doing more than posting "the black square".

The United States Tennis Association (USTA) posted a black screen shot as

well as a statement against racism on its social media handles.

The USTA, organisers of the U.S. Open Grand Slam, said it was "extremely disappointed, angry, and heartbroken" at the hardships faced by communities of colour in the United States.

"The African-American community is an integral part of our tennis family and the USTA stands unwaveringly against racism and injustice of any kind," it added.

— Reuters

SPORTS

HAMILTON
OVERCOME
WITH RAGE
OVER
RACIAL
INJUSTICE

LONDON: Formula One world champion Lewis Hamilton said he is “completely overcome with rage” about racial injustice in the wake of the death of George Floyd. It is the second time this week that Britain’s six-time world champion has spoken angrily about the death of Floyd, an unarmed black man who died on May 25 during an arrest in Minneapolis.

“This past week has been so dark. I have failed to keep hold of my emotions,” Hamilton said in a statement posted Tuesday on his social media accounts.

“I have felt so much anger, sadness and disbelief in what my eyes have seen,” he continued, after days of protests that have gripped cities across the US prompting curfews and the use of force by law enforcement agencies.

“I am completely overcome with rage at the sight of such blatant disregard for the lives of our people.”

Earlier this week Hamilton lashed out at leading figures in his “white-dominated” sport for not speaking out.

“I see those of you who are staying silent, some of you the biggest of stars yet you stay silent in the midst of injustice,” he said.

It prompted several top drivers to express outrage and support. On Tuesday Formula One issued its first response.

“We stand with you, and all people in the fight against racism,” a Formula One statement said. “It is an evil that no sport or society is truly immune from.

“And it is only together we can oppose an eradicate it. Together we are stronger.” Hamilton questioned why it needed protests for the police officer who knelt on Floyd’s neck for more than eight minutes, Derek Chauvin, to be arrested. — AFP

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LEWIS HAMILTON
F1 WORLD CHAMPION



SPORTS



‘National weightlifters can claim first Olympic medal if our plan goes well’

ADIL AL BALUSHI

MUSCAT: With a confident voice, Said al Ghabashi, Chairman of Oman Weightlifting Committee (OWC), affirmed that Oman's stars in the weightlifting team can clinch the first Olympic medal for the Sultanate at Paris Olympics in 2024.

Keeping that in mind, the four-year plan with the Ministry of Sports Affairs should move successfully.

The Vice-Chairman of West Asian Weightlifting Association told Oman Daily Observer that the OWC submitted a detailed proposal with a realistic target to the ministry for preparing three stars of the national team to accomplish international and Olympic medals.

"The comprehensive plan approved by Shaikh Rashad bin Ahmed al Hinai, Under-Secretary of Ministry of Sports Affairs, and it began earlier this year. It included providing full funding for the team weightlifters to participate in the regional and global events beside

taking long period foreign exposure to shape them with high training standards. Unfortunately and due to the current situation of spreading the COVID-19 outbreak, the plan impacted quietly with postponement of many top international events. However, we still stick to the plan and hope things resume to normal condition to proceed further in our top project," he added.

Oman national weightlifting team impressed in many continental and international championships during the last few years. The top national weightlifter Ahmed al Habsi had claimed the gold medal in a top weightlifting championship in 2016. Murshed al Ajmi won the silver medal at a weightlifting championship in Bangkok in the same year. Oman hosted last year the West Asian and GCC championship in Muscat during March 26 to April 1.

Oman weightlifters team had claimed 87 medals including ten gold medals. This edition of the

championship recorded participation of the Oman women weightlifting team. The seven-day event had featured participation of more than 200 weightlifters representing over 18 countries.

The chief of OWC revealed that the committee provided many types of equipment to the top national team weightlifters during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Weightlifting sport is a very costly sport and reaching your goals and objectives required a lot of support from government and private sector. In every camp and championship, the committee spent a lot in preparing and shaping the weightlifters to the top level. One of the main technical philosophies at weightlifting team is to keep maintaining the fitness and technical level of the player through best nutrition system and continuity in the training. During these days, the head coach of the Sultanate team, Mazin al Badri supervised the online training sessions to manage the fitness level for players," Al Ghabashi concluded.

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Said al Ghabashi,
Chairman, OWC



SPORTS



NO SALIVA, NO SWEAT, SAYS INDIA'S SHAMI

MUMBAI: India fast bowler Mohammed Shami says he will be able to reverse-swing the ball even if saliva is banned during the coronavirus pandemic.

The International Cricket Council (ICC) is expected to next week order a temporary ban on using saliva, as part of measures to get the sport started again while reducing the risk of spreading the virus.

Bowlers traditionally get the ball to move in the air, deceiving the batsman, by shining one side using sweat or

saliva.

"There will be difficulties. We have been accustomed to using saliva since childhood," Shami said in an online discussion.

"If you are a fast bowler, instinctively you apply saliva to shine the ball. But yes, if you can maintain the shine of the dry ball, it will definitely reverse."

The 29-year-old, renowned for his reverse swing, offered no alternative but insisted that sweat is not a viable replacement.

"Sweat and saliva work

differently. I don't think it will help. I never tried bowling without saliva," he said. "Now because of COVID-19 pandemic, it's very important to stop using saliva."

Australian ball manufacturer Kookaburra is developing a wax applicator to shine the ball, but the world body is reluctant to allow artificial aids.

Cricket, like nearly all sport, was halted in March when India and many other nations ordered lockdowns.

With the ICC due to

make a call next week on whether the Twenty20 World Cup will go ahead in Australia in October-November, Shami said players would need at least two weeks to prepare.

"We are not machines, can't just switch on and off. As a sportsman, your body needs to get into rhythm," he said.

"No one has touched bat and ball in this period. So a 10-15 days camp or a couple of series before the World Cup will be helpful to get back the momentum."

— AFP