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HM AND CANADA PM DISCUSS BILATERAL TIES

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on Monday received a phone call from Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada.

Aspects of the existing cooperation between the two friendly countries were reviewed during the phone call as well as the developments of the COVID-19 pandemic and international efforts to mitigate its impact.



GREETINGS
His Majesty has sent a cable of greetings to President Sergio

Mattarella of the Italian Republic, on the occasion of the National Day of his country.

In his cable, His

Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere greetings and best wishes of good health and happiness to the President Mattarella and the friendly Italian people further progress and prosperity.

His Majesty the Sultan has also sent a cable of greetings to President Evariste Ndayishimiye of Burundi on the occasion of him being elected as a

new President for his country.

In his cable, His Majesty expressed his sincere greetings and best wishes of success to President Ndayishimiye to lead the friendly people of Burundi towards further progress and prosperity.

His Majesty also wished the friendship relations between the two countries further progress and growth. — **ONA**

Beat the virus with social distancing

SAMUEL KUTTY

MUSCAT: Violations of social distancing measures have been seen as the major reason for the recent escalation in the number coronavirus cases and fatalities in the Sultanate.

“People are still flouting the social distancing rules”, said Dr Ahmed bin Mohammed al Saeedi, Minister of Health, pointing out the spike in the number of cases.

The Supreme Committee dealing with the pandemic often reiterates the need for “a conscious effort to keep away from each other and maintain social distancing at all possible areas”. According to Dr Saif bin Salem al Abri, Director-General of Control of Infectious Disease, over 70 per cent of recent infections in Oman occurred due to social gatherings.



**RAIN SHIFTS
BASE TO WEST,
AFFECTS
RAKHYYOUT,
DHALKOUT**

RESTORATION GATHERS MOMENTUM

KAUSHALENDRA SINGH

SALALAH: Salalah heaved a sigh of relief on Monday as the tropical depression that caused heavy rains all over eastern and central Dhofar moved to western parts of Dhofar and caused heavy rains in Raysut,

Mughsayl, Rakhyout and Dhalkout areas on Sunday night and Monday morning.

By the evening there was huge relief from rain even in western part and restoration work resumed on roads and residential areas.

According to reports reaching from Rakhyout

the road link between Rakhyout and Salalah got disrupted due to heavy rains, but soon after the rain subsided the Dhofar Municipality swung into action and restored the road link.

Restoration work is going on in full swing in all the affected areas.

TURN TO P2

Restoration gathers momentum

FROM PAGE 1

Heavy pumps were pressed into service in some low-lying areas in Salalah which witnessed heavy waterlogging. Many areas in North Awqad were still waterlogged due to inflow of water from mountains and adjoining wadis.

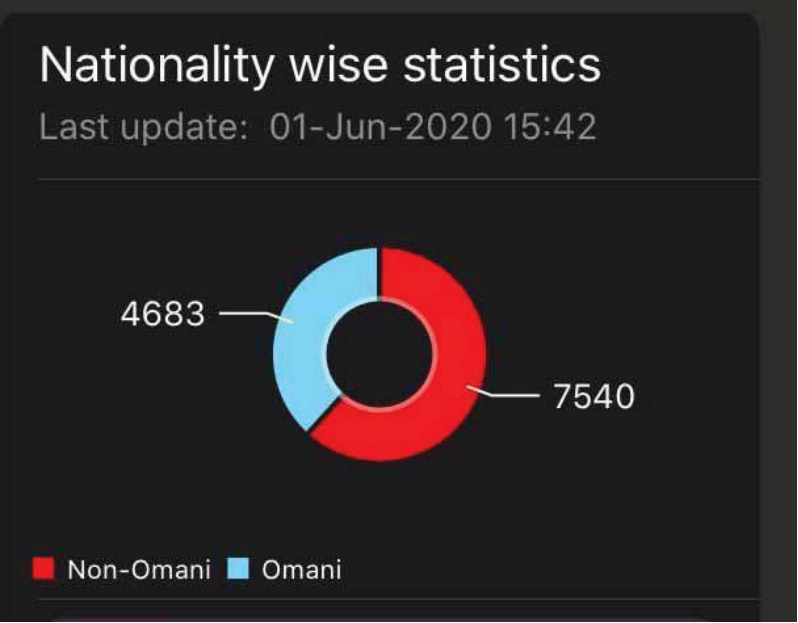
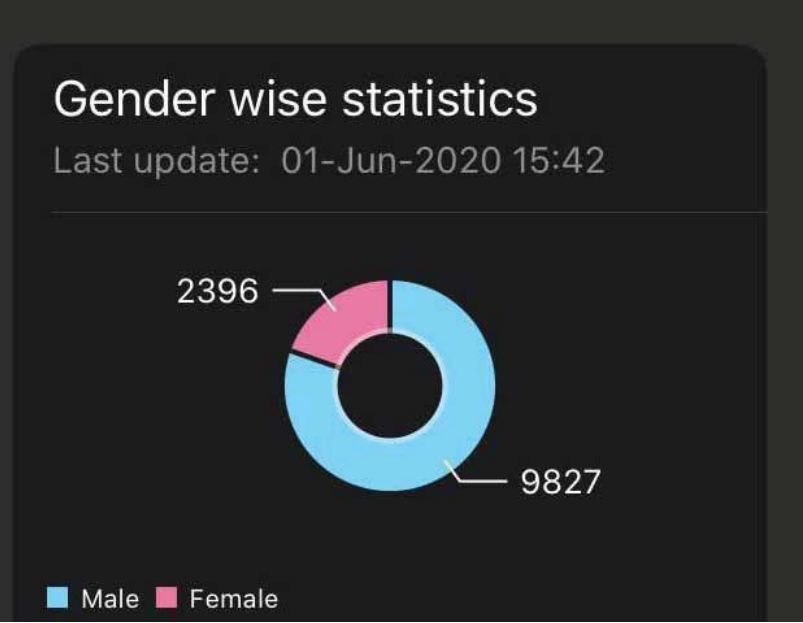
Early weather charts and reports of the National Multi-Hazards Early Warning Centre indicated that the tropical depression was located over Yemen near western parts of Dhofar Governorate with an estimated surface wind speed around the centre between 15-23 knots (27-40 km/hr).

According to Oman Met Office sporadic rains may occur in some areas but its impact in eastern Dhofar will be very less now onwards.

“Heavy thunder showers are expected to continue over western parts Dhofar Governorate and likely to concentrate over the western parts and surrounding desert areas of the governorate, approximately 100-200 mm, during next 24 hours associated with fresh to strong winds, flooding over low coastal areas and increase in wadis flow with a reduction in horizontal visibility.

Sea will continue to be rough with three to four metres of waves in Dhofar. Keeping in mind the damages and accumulation of water in some areas the Royal Oman Police and Dhofar Municipality have urged people not to venture out and stay away from wadis and tourist places.

786 NEW CASES, DEATH TOLL TOUCHES 50 MARK



VINOD NAIR

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Health (MoH) announced on Monday 786 new positive cases of COVID-19 in the Sultanate, including 298 Omanis and 488 residents, which brought the total number of positive cases in the Sultanate to 12,223 in addition to 50 deaths.

The 50-mark in the death toll crossed in little over two months as the first death that of a 72-year old citizen was reported on March 31, followed by another citizen on April 4. The ministry also pointed out that 2,682 cases have recovered.

Among governorates, Muscat tops the list with 9,256 cases including 39 deaths, Batinah 842 cases with one death, and South Batinah 814 cases with six

deaths.

Seven COVID-19 related deaths were reported on Sunday, taking the total to 49 including 21 Omanis and 28 expatriates, the Minister of Health said in an interview to Oman TV.

Dr Ahmed bin Mohammed al Saeedi said that some people flouted social distancing rules during Ramadhan and Eid, which increased the number of cases.

As many as 3,171 COVID-19 tests were carried out on Sunday, taking the total number of tests to 100,184.

The youngest person to die of COVID-19 in Oman was 33 years old, the minister said.

Five COVID-19 related deaths were recorded outside the hospital.

The reason for the increased number of recoveries in some

countries is the change in the definition of the recovery period while the Sultanate has maintained the post-recovery period of 14 days, the minister said. The number of recoveries from COVID-19 in Oman stands at 2,682.

The number of COVID-19 inpatients is now 199, the minister said, adding that it is unlikely that vaccine will be developed by the end of the year.

The minister urged everyone to adhere to preventive measures particularly social distancing and wearing a face mask in public and crowded places.

“There is no indication that allowing the first and second packages to open commercial and economic activities was the cause of the high number of injuries,” the minister said.

Roads to Rakhyout, Dhalkout damaged

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH

MUSCAT: Rakhyout and Dhalkout are cut off currently from other wilayats of Dhofar.

The first damage on the route to the two wilayats is at Adnob Bridge between Salalah and Mugsayl, Wadi Afool located after Mugsayl. It is after this wadi the number of hairpin roads climb up the mountains to Rakhyout and Dhalkout. The



road linking Rakhyout to Al Mazyouna across Wadi Aidm is also damaged.

This road has international prominence

as it links to Yemen.

The government authorities are working on the roads, said Ali al Baqi, from Rakhyout. “People in



Rakhyout and Dhalkout are used to storms and cyclones. So they had already taken measures to protect their cattle and farms,” Al

Baqi explained, adding, “The only difficulty is losing connection to the other wilayats of Dhofar in case of an emergency.”

“Many people practice farming here and majority of the people live on the mountains although we do have coastal villages too. However, the community today is very well connected through social media news and electronic media so they were prepared to receive the thunder-showers,” said Al Baqi.

DHOFAR RAINS

ROP ATTENDS OVER 140 INCIDENTS AFTER EMERGENCY CALLS



ZAINAB AL NASSRI

MUSCAT: Brig Mohsen bin Ahmed al Abri, Commander of the Dhofar Governorate Police, said that the Emergency Management Center, which was activated in Dhofar on Friday morning, (May 29) to follow up the tropical situation, received more than 145 reports that varied between drifting people, trapped people and vehicles, seeking help, roads

blocking and fires.

The police as well as Civil Defence and Ambulance have dealt with these reports, in cooperation with the other concerned authorities. Assistance was provided to more than 140 people, in addition to removing the vehicles that were drowned and trapped. Also, a number of urgent medical cases were transferred to Sultan Qaboos Hospital in Salalah.

Al Abri clarified, through

the ROP website, that the Emergency Management Center led by the Dhofar Governorate Police includes a group of sectors and the competent military and security authorities concerned with dealing with climatic conditions directly, which contributed to coordinating and unifying efforts through receiving reports and observations received and taking immediate action.



Armed forces aid in rescue and restoration efforts

THAMRAIT: A transport aircraft from Royal Air Force of Oman (RAFO) evacuated a child with critical health condition. The child was transported from Dhahboun in the Wilayat of Thamrait to Sultan Qaboos Hospital in Salalah to receive urgent medical treatment.

RAFO also carried out many rescue operations by its helicopters of citizens and residents who were stranded by the heavy rains and flooding wadis in several places, including Uqad in the Wilayat of Salalah in the Governorate of Dhofar.

SALALAH: Salalah flood protection dam holds an estimated 15 million cubic metres of rainwater, said Dr Khalid bin Salim al Meshaikehi, Assistant Director-General for Dams Affairs at the Ministry of Regional Municipalities and Water Resources. The dam's capacity is 77.2 million cubic metres.

In a statement to Oman News Agency (ONA), Dr Khalid added that Sahalnout dam is full of rainwater. The dam overflow from the main discharge and the dam was opened as a routine measure to absorb additional vol-



umes of rainwater. He affirmed that the current situation does not pose any

threat and the excess rainwater flow on the path of the wadi normally. — ONA

ENGINEERING, TECHNICAL SUPPORT

The Engineering Services at the Ministry of Defence continue to provide engineering and technical support in the governorate.





AFTER-WORK MOVEMENT RESTRICTIONS IN DUQM

VINOD NAIR

MUSCAT: As part of the precautionary measures to combat the spread of COVID-19, the authorities have requested all projects operating in Duqm Economic Zone to request workers to stay at the accommodation after returning from work.

All projects shall provide the necessary services to their workers, including money transfer services.

This shall be in effect until June 30. The SEZAD will take legal actions against any project that violates these instructions.

The Ministry of Health (MoH) has so far reported 42 cases from Al Wusta, including 27 in Duqm.

Duqm Economic Zone Authority (SEZAD) said that it is working closely with MoH towards combating COVID-19 in Duqm.



Meanwhile, the SEZAD urged all companies to strictly adhere to following instructions:

Providing regular multilingual awareness messages to employees on the necessity to adhere to precautionary healthy habits and physical and social distancing, issued by the Supreme Committee and Ministry of Health and not to leave accommodation except for extreme necessity and wearing masks.

The approval includes the responsibility of the project to provide places for precautionary institutional isolation, before commencing work. The application shall be sent by e-mail hse@duqm.gov.om

Reducing the number of passengers in buses by half, and the density of gatherings in dining halls by organising dining times or delivering food to the rooms.



Mandatory midday break for workers begins

STAFF REPORTER

MUSCAT: Workers should be not employed at construction sites and open areas in high temperatures between 12.30 and 3.30 pm in the peak summer months of June, July and August, said the Ministry of Manpower.

As per the Article 16 on the regulations for occupational safety and health, “the workers shall be not employed in the construction sites or high-temperature locations during afternoon hours from 12.30 pm to 3.30 pm throughout June, July and August every year”.

According to the company law, in the event of the existence of any danger which threatens the safety and health of the workers, the ministry shall take necessary measures to stop the work wholly or partially or to stop the operation of one or more machinery until the elimination of the causes of such danger.

PACP receives 10,190 complaints

MUSCAT: The Public Authority for Consumer Protection (PACP) received 10,190 complaints and reports from consumers between February 25 and end of May.

PACP received the consumers' complaints through its call centre, website and social media accounts owing to the closure of the service halls at PACP's main office and branches in the governorates which came in implementation of a decision made by the Supreme Committee for tackling the COVID-19 pandemic to limit the spread of the virus. The bulk of the complaints were related to hike in prices but there were also reports about manipulation in sale offers, selling expired goods and refusal to provide services, among other things. — **ONA**



Post COVID-19, malls to follow certain SOPs

VINOD NAIR

MUSCAT: While the government is yet to decide on the opening of malls in the country, the major operators are expected to collectively implement Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). Some details available with the Observer state that elderly aged 60 years and above and children below 12 years will not be allowed to enter the malls. Sources told the Observer, “It is important to have our stakeholders, which include suppliers, customers, and retailers, prepared before a decision in this regard is announced.” All tenants will clean and sanitize the stores before the commencement of

trade so that the malls ensure that operations are fully apt to operate under the current circumstances. Protective face masks and gloves have to be worn at all times and the gloves need to be sanitized frequently while worn. Retailers are to submit an updated list of all employees working in their respective stores. All mall seating shall be removed from common areas, while prayer hall will remain closed until further notice. Hand Dryers in all the restrooms to be switched off and sealed from customer usage. Mall parking occupancy should not exceed 50 per cent and the same to be manned by security personnel and operations staff. Anyone entering the mall including staff, visitors, and contractors will have to undergo mandated body temperature screening and checks. Mall management and retailers are refrained from holding any sales or promotional activities that will attract a crowd in the common areas and inside stores. Ensure social distancing is maintained in all common areas, elevators, escalators, food court, ATMs. Elevator capacity should not to exceed more than 30 per cent at one point in time. Shops shall ensure ‘red tags’ are placed when 40 per cent capacity is reached to indicate maximum occupancy, this shall be calculated at one person for every 4 sqm.

Mechanism for smooth education process

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Education said it has set up suitable mechanisms and solutions for a smooth education process during the next academic year, the statement from the ministry said. Schools and educational institutions were suspended in Oman from March 15. The government also decided to end the academic year for all students in public and private schools on May 7. The ministry was asked to adopt the appropriate alternatives to calculate the results of students and the mechanism for restudying in grades one to twelve and the equivalent.



تنمية
TANMIA

الشركة العمانية لتنمية الإستثمارات الوطنية
Oman National Investments Development Company

Invitation and Agenda to the Extraordinary General Meeting of
Oman National Investments Development Company SAOC

The Board of Directors of the **Oman National Investments Development Company SAOC ("Company")** is pleased to invite the shareholders of the Company to the Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) to be convened in accordance with Article 176 of the Commercial Companies Law promulgated by Royal Decree No. 18/2019, to be held at **12:00 PM on 21 June 2020** through the electronic portal designated for holding General Meetings, which can be accessed via the website of Muscat Clearing and Depository(MCD), to consider and decide upon the following agenda:

- To consider and approve the amendments to the Articles of Association of the Company to comply with the Commercial Companies Law promulgated by Royal Decree No. 18/2019, attached hereto as Annexure.
- In accordance with the Articles of Association of the Company, and the Regulations for Holding General Meetings Through Electronic Channels that have been issued by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MOCI), to highlight to the shareholders the following:
 - A juristic person shareholder (only) is entitled to appoint a representative to attend the EGM and vote on its behalf through the described electronic channels, and such representation may be duly amended or withdrawn up to 24 hours prior to the time that the EGM is scheduled to be held.
 - The shareholders that will be attending the EGM shall vote for the articles set out in the Agenda of the EGM within a maximum period of 3 days prior to the date of the EGM. The electronic platform shall record the votes privately, without disclosing the votes until the respective article is discussed during the EGM, and due for the shareholders' votes.

In the event that the quorum for the Extraordinary General Meeting is not completed, the second meeting will be held at **12:00 PM on 22 June 2020** through the electronic platform described above. The second meeting shall be valid whatever the number of shares present.

For further information please contact **Ms. Deena Al Balushi** as follows:
Phone No.: **22300447**
E-mail: **deena@tanmia.om**

Chairman

Legal Advisor

Auditor



تنمية
TANMIA

الشركة العمانية لتنمية الإستثمارات الوطنية
Oman National Investments Development Company

Invitation and Agenda for the Annual General Meeting of
Oman National Investments Development Company SAOC

The Board of Directors of the **Oman National Investments Development Company SAOC ("Company")** is pleased to invite the shareholders of the Company to the Annual General Meeting (AGM) to be convened in accordance with Article 172 of the Commercial Companies Law promulgated by Royal Decree No. 18/2019, to be held at **12:00 PM on 21 June 2020** through the electronic portal designated for holding General Meetings, which can be accessed via the website of Muscat Clearing and Depository(MCD), to consider and decide upon the following agenda:

- To consider and approve the report of the Board of Directors on the activities of the Company and the financial status of the Company, for the financial year which ended on 31 December 2019.
- To consider and approve the report of the Board of Directors on the organisation and management of the Company, for the financial year which ended on 31 December 2019.
- To consider and approve the auditor's report, balance sheet and profits and loss statement for the financial year which ended on 31 December 2019.
- To notify the shareholders of related party transactions entered into in the ordinary course of business during the financial year which ended on 31 December 2019.
- To appoint the external auditor for the financial year ending on 31 December 2020 and to determine their remuneration.
- To elect the new Board of Directors.
- To consider and approve the sitting fees of the members of the Board of Directors and the committees under the Board of Directors for the last financial year which ended on 31 December 2019, and to confirm the same for the financial year ending in 31 December 2020.
- To study and approve the remuneration fees of the members of the Board of Directors in the amount of RO. 15,950/- for the financial year which ended on 31 December 2019.
- In accordance with the Articles of Association of the Company, and the Regulations for Holding General Meetings Through Electronic Channels that have been issued by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MOCI), to highlight to the shareholders the following:
 - A juristic person shareholder (only) is entitled to appoint a representative to attend the AGM and vote on its behalf through the described electronic channels, and such representation may be duly amended or withdrawn up to 24 hours prior to the time that the AGM is scheduled to be held.
 - The shareholders that will be attending the AGM shall vote for the articles set out in the Agenda of the AGM within a maximum period of 3 days prior to the date of the AGM. The electronic platform shall record the votes privately, without disclosing the votes until the respective article is discussed during the AGM, and due for the shareholders' votes.

In the event that the quorum for the Annual General Meeting is not completed, the second meeting will be held **12:00 PM on 22 June 2020** through the electronic platform described above. The second meeting shall be valid whatever the number of shares present.

Any persons who are interested to be elected as a member of the Board of Directors in accordance with item 6 of the above agenda must fill in the attached candidacy form and submit it to **Ms. Deena Al Balushi** no later than **Wednesday 10 June 2020**.

For further information please contact **Ms. Deena Al Balushi** as follows:
Phone No.: **22300447**
E-mail: **deena@tanmia.om**

Chairman

Legal Advisor

Auditor

Back to work: MoH stipulates workplace safety measures

KABEER YOUSUF

MUSCAT: It's back to work for majority public and private sector employees after nearly two-month lock-down and for most of those who have been totally cut off from the work environment it was a new beginning altogether on Sunday. For others who have been working from home, it was an extension of their work arena and an opportunity to touch base with their colleagues who were 'locked in' for more than two months.

Just as the country reported 786 cases on Monday preceded by 1,014 cases on Sunday, the biggest number for a day ever since the first case in the country was reported in February, taking the total cases to 12,223, civic authorities and Ministry of Health have stipulated certain precautions to be adhered to at workplace. Out if the 786 confirmed cases, a total of 298 are locals while the rest, 488 are expatriates and the number of lives lost till Monday afternoon is 50 which include 44 locals and 3 expatriates. "These measures are to keep all workplaces safe



and healthy and to protect the country from community as well as cluster spreads", an official at the Ministry of Health has said.

1. All staff members should wear face masks during working hours
2. Number of people inside an elevator shouldn't be more than 3 for social distancing reasons.
3. All should commit themselves to physical distancing by leaving at least 1 to 2 metres between two people
4. Clean the place of work,

computer, keyboard and work tools with sterile or sterile wipes

5. One shouldn't rely on cleaning company responsible for cleaning, instead, cleaning should be taken as individual responsibility
6. Change the position of offices if they are close or move to another office in coordination with the head of the department
7. Avoid unnecessary gathering and meetings, and use electronic applications for holding virtual meetings

8. Those who prefer to have tea or coffee should make it on their own
9. Avoid touching the doors, surfaces and stairs by hand. Instead, use your shoulder or hands with gloves
10. Avoid sharing the prayer rug and each employee should use his/her own prayer mat
11. Always wash hands with soap and water, and use sterilisers when in contact with surfaces
12. Avoid touching the face, nose, mouth and eyes.

PACT FOR FURNISHING QUARANTINE CENTRE IN NORTH AL BATINAH

SUHAR: Driven by its social pledges Vale Oman has signed a cooperation agreement with the Ministry of Health to furnish the Drug Rehabilitation Centre in Suhar (which was lately established by Jusoor

Foundation as Drug Rehabilitation Centre funded by the three-founding companies of Jusoor; OQ, Vale and Sohar Aluminium) to be operated by the ministry as quarantine and isolation space for people with COVID-19



during the outbreak. The centre will be equipped based on a thorough risk and capacity assessment considering all medical equipment/facilities and basic amenities conducted with the Ministry of Health for

around \$400,000 and in reference to the latest available information on transmission and severity characteristics of COVID-19. As well as impact of containment measures at local, national and international levels.



The mood in Britain is clearly improving as the number of daily deaths drops. — AFP

Debates rage in UK as some children go back to school

LONDON: Britain partially reopened schools on Monday and allowed the most vulnerable to venture outdoors despite warnings that the world's second worst-hit country is moving too quickly out of its coronavirus lockdown.

A death toll that now officially stands at 38,489 has piled political pressure on Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who was elected in December with a big majority.

Johnson spent much of the past week stamping out a scandal sparked by his chief adviser's decision to drive to a picturesque castle with his family while everyone was under orders to limit outdoor exercise to an hour a day.

Dozens of members of Johnson's own party joined a failed effort by the opposition to get Dominic Cummings fired for undermining the government's public

message on health.

The furore over Cummings appears to have abated but concern about Johnson's handling of the crisis remains.

His public support has suffered the sharpest fall for a Conservative party leader in 10 years -- nine points in a YouGov poll and 21 points in a survey for the Daily Mail.

Yet the mood in Britain is clearly improving as the number of daily deaths drops. Parks and beaches have been filled for two successive weekends in what has been one of the driest springs in over 100 years.

Johnson has set out a timeline that allows two million younger children to return to school on Monday and older ones on June 15.

However, a survey conducted by the National Foundation for Educational Research found that primary

school leaders expect 47 per cent of families to keep their children home.

The government is also allowing those most at risk of suffering serious consequences from the virus to spend time outdoors for the first time in two months.

"I do not underestimate just how difficult it has been for you," Johnson told the 2.2 million Britons who fall into the extreme risk category.

The UK government has also been encouraged by the positive experience of other European countries that have started to return to something resembling the old way of life. But critics argue that the so-called R rate of transmission -- estimated nationally at between 0.7 and 0.9 -- was still dangerously close to the 1.0 figure above which the virus's spread grows.

— AFP

BRIEFS

Armenian PM tests positive for virus as cases surge

YEREVAN: Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and his family have tested positive for the coronavirus, he said on Monday, as the rate of new infections soared in the Caucasus nation. "My coronavirus test was positive yesterday," Pashinyan said in a self-recorded video message on Facebook, adding that his family were also infected. He said he had no "visible symptoms" of the virus and would be working from home. The prime minister and his wife Anna Hakobyan, who is a journalist, have four children.

Virus-hit cruise liner leaves Japan after a month

TOKYO: The Costa Atlantica cruise ship, which docked in southern Japan with over 100 crew members testing positive for COVID-19, has left the country and is en route to the Philippines, local government officials said on Monday. The ship departed Nagasaki on Sunday over a month after it became the second virus-stricken cruise ship to dock in Japan. Lax control on the movement of crew whilst docked highlighted Japan's patchy response to the pandemic. The 86,000 tonne Costa Atlantica docked for maintenance in late April carrying no passengers and 623 crew, most of whom were eventually quarantined inside the ship after 149 tested positive.

Poland resumes domestic flights

WARSAW: Poland resumed domestic flights on Monday, with the inaugural flight after the coronavirus hiatus safely landing on Monday morning in the north-western city of Szczecin. As of Monday, Poland's flagship airline LOT resumed flights from Warsaw to seven cities in the country as well as between Gdansk and Krakow, a total of 30 flights per day. Air travel resumes under a new sanitary regime to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. Only passengers are allowed to enter terminals and all of them have their temperature measured. Keeping a distance of 1.5 metres from others and wearing face masks is obligatory, including on the plane. On LOT flights only every second seat can be taken.

WORLD

Clashes outside White House as US cities under curfew

WASHINGTON: Police fired tear gas outside the White House as anti-racism protesters again took to the streets to voice fury at police brutality, and major US cities were put under curfew to suppress rioting.

With the Trump administration branding instigators of six nights of rioting as domestic terrorists, there were more confrontations between protesters and police and fresh outbreaks of looting.

Violent clashes erupted repeatedly in a small park next to the White House, with authorities using tear gas, pepper spray and flash bang grenades to disperse crowds who lit several large fires and damaged property.

Local US leaders appealed to citizens to give constructive outlet to their rage over the death of an unarmed black man in Minneapolis, while night-time curfews were imposed in cities including Washington, Los Angeles and Houston.

One closely watched protest was outside the state capitol in Minneapolis' twin city of St Paul, where several thousand people gathered before marching down a highway.

"We have black sons, black brothers, black friends, we don't want them to die. We are tired



of this happening, this generation is not having it, we are tired of oppression," said Muna Abdi, a 31-year-old black woman who joined the protest.

Hundreds of police and National Guard troops were deployed ahead of the protest.

At one point, some of the protesters who had reached a bridge were forced to scramble for cover when a truck drove at speed after having apparently breached a barricade.

The driver was taken to hospital after the protesters

hailed him from the vehicle, although there were no immediate reports of other casualties.

The New York Times said he was later arrested.

Minneapolis police later reported they had discovered caches of homemade firebombs around the two cities.

There were other large-scale protests on Sunday night, including in New York and Miami.

Washington's mayor ordered a curfew from 11:00 pm until

6:00 am, as a report in the New York Times said that President Donald Trump had been rushed by Secret Service agents into an underground bunker at the White House on Friday night during an earlier protest.

In Louisville, Kentucky, CBS affiliate WLKY-TV reported the local police chief as saying law enforcement shot and killed a man early on Monday morning as they broke up a crowd, although it was unclear if the group was taking part in protests. — Reuters

BRIEFS

India asks ISPs to block WeTransfer

NEW DELHI: India has ordered its Internet service providers (ISPs) to block file-sharing website WeTransfer at a time when hundreds of millions of people are working from home because of a nationwide lockdown to stop the novel coronavirus. The order, dated May 18, from India's Department of Telecommunications (DoT), which was reviewed by Reuters, does not specify a reason for blocking the website, but invokes a clause from conditions laid out for granting licences to ISPs. "At this moment in time, WeTransfer seems to be blocked and unavailable in India," WeTransfer said in a blog post.

Thousands of Filipinos return to work as lockdown eases

MANILA: Thousands returned to work in the Philippines on Monday as the country emerged from one of the longest virus lockdowns in the world. Buses, commuter trains, taxis and modernised jeepneys or mini-buses resumed operations in the capital Manila after 76 days of suspension, but were only allowed to take in a reduced number of passengers to ensure physical distancing. "Many people are now allowed to go out and many industries are reopening so you'll see a lot of vehicles, but the situation remains abnormal," said Guillermo Eleazar, national deputy police chief for operations.

Thais head for movies as virus lockdown eases

BANGKOK: Thais took in a movie and enjoyed foot massages in a welcome return on Monday to some pampering and popular pastimes as coronavirus restrictions further eased and new infection numbers remained low. Shopping malls stayed open later, a curfew was shortened and more businesses reopened, among them fitness clubs, spas, traditional massage centres and cinemas. Thailand has so far recorded 3,082 confirmed cases and 57 deaths, with no local transmissions in the past seven days and many cases in recent weeks found in quarantine among Thais returning from abroad. — Agencies



Scientists hunt pandemic hotspots in race to test vaccines

KATE KELLAND AND JULIE STEENHUYSEN

The first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic may be waning. For vaccine developers, that could be a problem.

Scientists in Europe and the United States say the relative success of draconian lockdown and social distancing policies in some areas and countries means virus transmission rates may be at such low levels that there is not enough disease circulating to truly test potential vaccines. They may need to look further afield, to pandemic hotspots in Africa and Latin America, to get convincing results.

"Ironically, if we're really successful using public health measures to stamp out the hot spots of viral infection, it will be harder to test the vaccine," said Francis Collins, director of the National Institutes of Health in the United States. A vaccine is seen as essential to ending a pandemic that has killed nearly 370,000 people and infected more than 6 million so far, with

world leaders looking at inoculation as the only real way to restart their stalled economies.

But running large-scale clinical trials of potential vaccines against a completely new disease at speed is complex, scientists say. Showing efficacy in those trials during a fluctuating pandemic adds extra difficulty – and doing so when outbreaks are waning makes it harder still.

"For this to work, people need to have a risk of infection in the community. If the virus has been temporarily cleared out, then the exercise is futile," said Ayfer Ali, an expert in drug repurposing at Britain's Warwick Business School.

"The solution is to move to areas where the infection is being spread widely in the community – that would be countries like Brazil and Mexico at the moment." Vaccine trials work by randomly dividing people into a treatment group and a control group, with the treatment group getting the experimental trial vaccine and the control group getting a placebo. – Reuters

ACCEPTING CHALLENGES, NOVEL NORMS



Lakshmi Kothaneth
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During my countless visits to Wadi Darbat in Dhofar Governorate, I often wonder when I would see the cascade in full strength.

A good khareef would reignite the falls in a gentle way once the springs were filled to the brim. However in just two to three days the tropical system from the Arabian Sea triggered rains and filled roads and in some instances entered homes. Wadi Darbat roared and sprayed water around, and thanks to aerial video footage most of us are now able to watch Wadi Darbat in its full glory.

Nature has been throwing surprises throughout this year. The whole experience reminded us how we are all entangled in the process of nature. We had been so disconnected from the rest of the process of nature because we are so engrossed in our plans and goals.

Success meant everything until we came across COVID-19. Whenever we talked about caring for earth before it is too late it was considered more of a statement and attitude and today the

world is unanimously seeking for a protection against novel coronavirus.

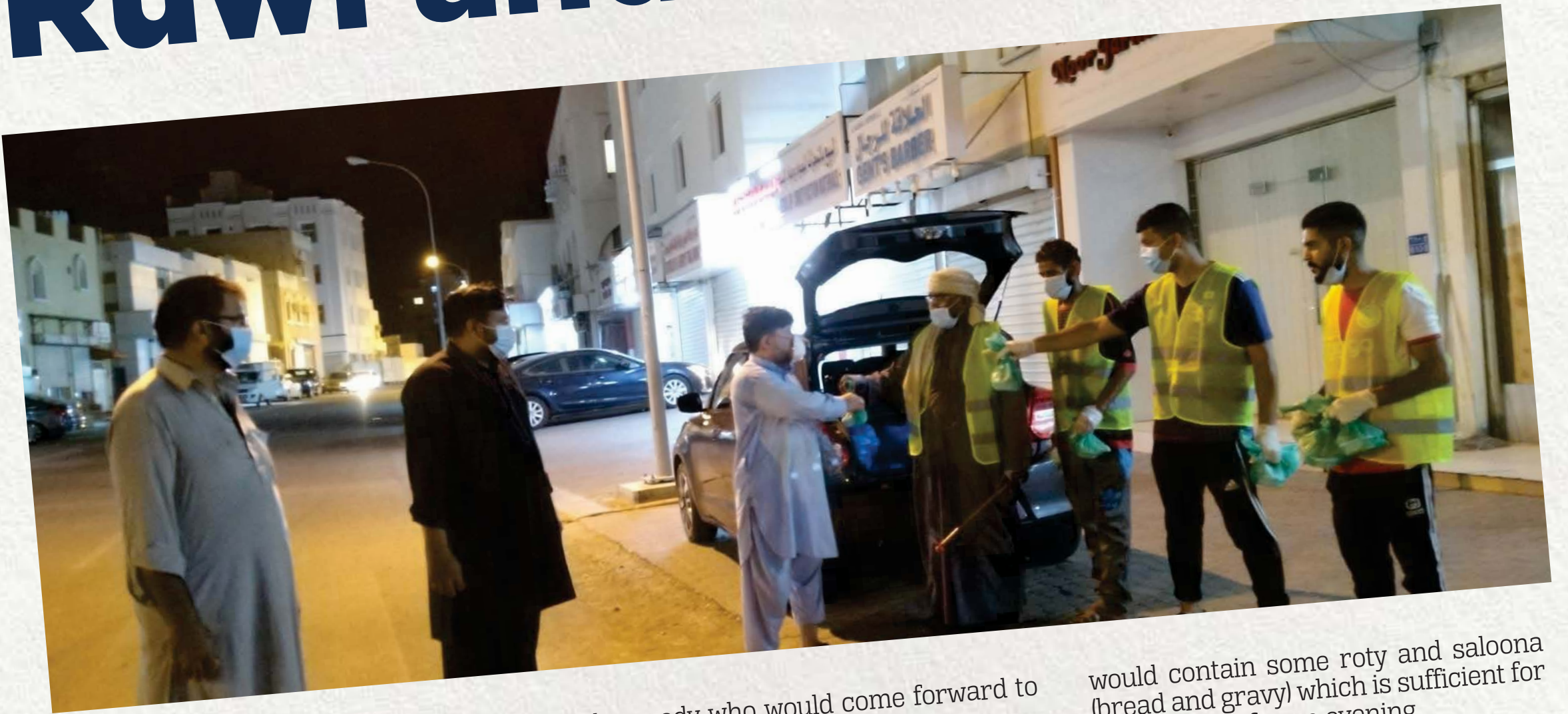
When we hear about the number of coronavirus cases or deaths we get sleepless nights. But the numbers don't tell their stories of life and aspirations left incomplete. They said it is the elderly who are vulnerable, but COVID-19 took away people in their 30s and 40s too – a woman who was expecting a child, a person who was on a visit visa, others who had not gone out because of their age but still contracted it because someone had visited them.

When people do not abide by regulations, and when shoppers do not follow social distancing it reminds us of yet another issue – reckless drivers who think accidents only happen to others but never them. So for now we need to indulge in positivity, boost our immunity, follow the instructions and hope for the best. We are back at work but let us keep the two-metre distance and be mindful of our hands and do not forget the soap and water. It is the new norm it is best we accept it.

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

Strangers helping those in need in Ruwi and Hamriya



KABEER YOUSUF

They come under the cover of the night on board cars that eventually stop at residential areas where laborers live. Food pack in hand, they give away dozens of meals to passersby.

It sounds like a plot of a good movie but it does happen here in Oman in the familiar corners of downtown Ruwi and Hamriya. And after sunset, one can easily find these men from Muttrah and Jibroo doing their slices of good deeds in places considered to be the focal points of COVID-19.

Mostly men, the group of 35 is comprised of students, employees, retired men, and job seekers who are all part of 'Azzahiya' — an association of the people from this area in Muttrah who come forward to help and support the needy in the society. For a few hours, they will be seen riding through the ally pallies of these places where not much private help reach except people like Ali Thani.

Here, a retired man called Char Shambe al Balushi, along with students and employees named Mohammed al Zadjali, Ammar al Balushi, and Ali al Balushi and their friends are out on the streets with the food packets awaiting

the needy who would come forward to them.

"We have been doing this (distributing foods) ever since Muttrah was put under lockdown and vehicle and people movements were restricted on April 10," said Char Shambe.

"The beneficiaries of these food packets are numerous and we are pretty sure they really deserve them", he added.

"A lot of people in Muttrah are not able to go out and buy their provisions and prepare their meals every day just as they did during the pre-Corona period. All we could do was to bring some foods from people who don't want to be named and feed the needy in the area," Shambe said.

He is helped by his Issam al Balushi, one of his well-wishers who knows Ali Thani for years, along with a group of Omani and expatriate youngsters who volunteer their service handing over the food packs at each doorstep.

A typical food packet in distribution

would contain some roty and saloona (bread and gravy) which is sufficient for an individual for an evening.

"In the Holy Qur'an, Allah has said that those who don't look upon his fellow beings on earth wouldn't be looked upon by Him in the Day of Judgement. Besides, all the wealth, property, money, name, and fame wouldn't come with you to the grave but only your good deeds will. Those who believe in these verses can't be anything different from me."

Thousands of packets of foods are being distributed thus and it would be costing the donor a huge sum.

"We don't know who is investing money to do this. Every evening we see a man and a small pick up loaded with foods and we unload the vehicle and fill our cars. We never asked him his whereabouts nor his intention for we know what charity your right-hand does should not be known to your left hand and we let him keep his identity anonymous", Al Balushi adds.



INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



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Fashion revolution as designers rebel against ‘wasteful’ calendar



“NOTHING WILL EVER be the same again” has been the constant refrain of the coronavirus era.

But for the fashion world that may well be true.

Tectonic plates have been shifting inside the industry during the lockdown, with a wave of designers standing up to say that the mad whirr of the fashion circus has to slow.

While many have questioned its frenetic rhythm and wasteful over-production for years, few big-name insiders dared openly to question the hamster wheel of spring/summer, autumn/winter, cruise and pre-fall shows, as well as the now mandatory capsule collections.

The first cracks in the facade began to appear last month, when Saint Laurent designer

Anthony Vaccarello said he was pulling out of Paris fashion week this year.

Henceforth “the brand will lead its own rhythm... and take control of its pace and reshape its schedule,” he declared.

‘CLOTHES NEED LONGER LIFE’

This week Gucci’s Alessandro Michele joined the revolt by saying he was slashing his shows from five to two a year, and questioning the very idea of seasonal collections which have underpinned fashion since World War II.

“Clothes should have a longer life,” he said in a virtual press conference from Milan, insisting that his future collections would be “seasonless”.

Michele is no pouting rebel,

but fashion’s commercially savvy darling who has turned Gucci into a cash cow for the French luxury conglomerate Kering with his ironic kitschy style that has echoes of Wes Anderson and John Waters films.

And it is not the just the young guns who have had enough.

The doyen of designers, Giorgio Armani -- still working at age 85 -- said it was time to “cut out the superfluous” and rein in fashion’s gruelling schedule.

“The times that we are living in are turbulent, but they give us a unique chance to see what is not working... to find a more human dimension to it,” he said.

More significant still has been an open letter initiated by the Belgian master Dries Van

Noten and rising French designer Marine Serre calling for a rethinking of how luxury fashion works.

Several hundred industry players have since signed it including brands, creators and department stores like Chloe, Thom Browne, Y/Project, Lemaire, Alexandre Mattiussi, Nordstrom, Bergdorf Goodman, Selfridges and Harvey Nichols.

They call for “fundamental change that will simplify businesses, making them more environmentally and socially sustainable” and are now in talks with the organisers of the four big fashion weeks in Paris, Milan, New York and London.

OVER-PRODUCTION

Van Noten has also called for an end to the frenzy of discounting and Black Friday-type sales and pleaded for clothes to stay longer in the shops.

He wants winter clothes to hit the shops in winter and summer ones in summer, rather than months before as they do now.

He said current retail culture was creating a “vicious circle” of waste and over-production. “After the sales, shops need something new and we are pushed to make more and more collections,” he told the French daily Le Monde.

“I may be naive, but I think that maybe what happened with gastronomy a few years ago could happen in fashion. We saw the emergence of a wave of restaurants with shorter, seasonal menus that were less ostentatious,” Van Noten said —**AFP**

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CMA WEIGHS FUND TO COMPENSATE VICTIMS OF NATURAL DISASTERS

MUSCAT: Shaikh Abdullah Salim al Salmi (**pictured**), Executive President of the Capital Market Authority (CMA), has commended the role played by insurance companies in demonstrating solidarity with the community and the local economy as the country deals with the effects of the coronavirus pandemic.

A number of insurance companies, he said, have contributed to the healthcare (Waqf) fund which is currently providing services in the current circumstances.

He praised the initiative of insurance companies to cover the costs of medical tests and treatment of the insured individuals who are infected with the coronavirus, thus helping supplement the efforts of the Supreme Committee, while also responding positively to the appeal of the Authority, in mitigating the cost burden on the government.

Given the succession of natural disasters impacting the Sultanate in recent years, most notably the ongoing pandemic as well as the tropical storm that hit Dhofar Governorate over the weekend, Al Salmi said the CMA is weighing the establishment of a 'Disaster Fund' to compensate for damage, as well as coverage of risks, that are generally not covered by currently available insurance products. These risks include epidemics like COVID-19 as well as compensation for these who



Disaster fund to cover risks such as pandemics and adverse weather events.

SHAIKH ABDULLAH SALIM AL SALMI,
CMA Executive President

suffer losses in adverse weather events.

In his press statement, Al Salmi also lauded insurance companies on their efforts in rolling out remote services, as well as online channels, to enable the provision of insurance services to the general public during the lockdown.

The audited financial statements of insurance companies, Al Salmi said, show they enjoy good financial solvency which

enables them to deal with crises and to discharge their obligations toward policyholders.

Gross direct premiums of listed insurers increased by 5 per cent to RO 486.5 million at the end of 2019 compared to RO 463.5 million in 2018.

The sector recorded average four per cent growth in gross premiums over the last five years. The number of insurance companies licensed to operate was 20 in addition to Oman Reinsurance Company. There were 35 insurance brokers operating in Oman at the end of 2019, in addition to 145 insurance agents.

COVID-19 tests and treatment costs to be borne by insurer

MUSCAT: The Capital Market Authority (CMA) has announced that the cost of testing and treating medical insurance policyholders (nationals and expatriates) afflicted with coronavirus (COVID-19) will be borne by their insurers.

A circular issued by the CMA effectively expands health coverage of insurance policies to include Medical Tests and Treatment Costs for Coronavirus. Insurers are directed to cover the costs and treatment of insured members infected with coronavirus

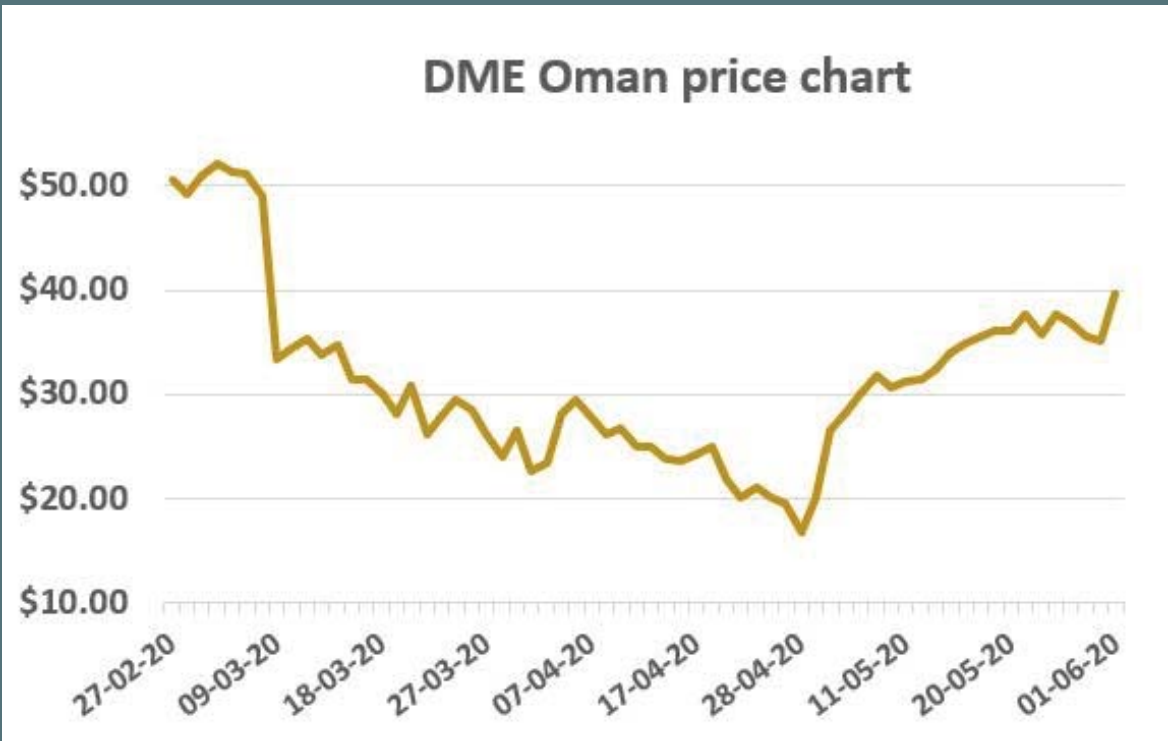
(COVID-19) up to their available annual benefit limits in their respective policies when they receive treatment for COVID-19 in any public or private hospital. The insurers will apply the unified standard price schedule and national guidelines set by the Ministry of Health (MoH). All insured members currently receiving treatment for coronavirus (COVID-19) and those members who develop symptoms will be covered in public and private hospitals, and will be effective from the date of issuance of the circular.

DME AUGUST OMAN CRUDE TRADES ABOVE \$40/BARREL

MUSCAT: Oman's crude oil benchmark on the Dubai Mercantile Exchange traded above \$40 per barrel on Monday for the first time in almost three months, making it the first internationally traded crude oil futures contract to break the \$40/b mark since the oil price recovery started early May.

Front-month August DME Oman traded at a high of \$40.09/b, up \$0.30/b from Friday's settlement price of \$39.79/b. Oman last traded above \$40/b on March 6 of this year.

The DME Marker Price for Monday was set earlier in the day at \$39.62/b. The



Marker Price is used by Middle East producers Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Oman and Dubai in calculating the monthly Official Selling Price (OSP).

Middle East prices have recovered faster than those in Europe, with DME Oman trading at around \$2/b over the Brent North Sea benchmark on

Monday.

DME's flagship Oman Crude Oil Futures Contract (DME Oman) contract is the largest physically delivered crude oil futures contract in the world and the world's third crude oil benchmark.

It is also the sole benchmark for Oman and Dubai exported crude oil. DME is a joint venture between Dubai Holding, Oman Investment Fund and CME Group. Global financial institutions and energy trading firms including GoldmanSachs, JPMorgan, Morgan Stanley, Shell, Vitol and Concord Energy also hold equity stakes in the DME.

Investments by insurance firms rise to RO 686.5m in Q1

MUSCAT: Total investments of insurance companies rose 2.8 per cent to RO 686.5 million in the first quarter of 2020 versus figures for Q1 2019, the Capital Market Authority (CMA) announced on Monday.

Of RO 529.6 million invested by national insurance companies, 90 per cent of it was ploughed into Oman based assets. Foreign insurance companies, on the other hand, placed around 82 per cent of their total investments of RO 257.2 million into cash instruments, bank deposits, and government and corporate bonds in the Sultanate. The remaining 18 per cent of their investments went overseas.

The data indicates



that cash instruments, bank deposits, listed bonds and shares and real estate accounted for the lion's share of the investments. Cash instruments and bank deposits received 278.5 million (64.8 per cent) of the total investments of national insurance companies and RO 162.8 million (63.3 per cent) of the total investments of foreign insurance companies.

Dhofar Insurance is the biggest investor with RO 74.467 million, followed by Axa Insurance (RO 69.486 million), Oman United Insurance (RO 63.287 million) and National Life and General Insurance (RO 56.027 million). These four insurers account for 38 per cent of the total investments in the sector in the first quarter of 2020.

HSBC Bank Oman holds virtual EGM, AGM

MUSCAT: HSBC Bank Oman SAOG held an Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) followed by its Annual General Meeting (AGM) recently using the electronic platform developed by Muscat Clearing and Depository Company, which allowed the shareholders of the Bank to remotely participate and vote in both the AGM and the EGM.

"HSBC Bank Oman's focus on delivering exceptional customer service was the driving force behind our success in 2019 and has put us in a strong position to navigate the year ahead.

Our long-standing strategy of investing in technology has ensured that we have been able to stay connected to our customers, shareholders and other stakeholders despite social distancing measures currently in place to combat the spread of COVID-19," said Sir Sherard Cowper-Coles, Chairman, HSBC Bank Oman.

At the EGM, shareholders of the Bank approved the amendments to the Articles of Association of the Bank in accordance with the Royal Decree 18/2019. At the AGM, shareholders of the Bank ratified the proposal to distribute a cash dividend which was paid on April 8, 2020 at the rate of 8.7 Omani Baisa per share for the year ended December 31, 2019.

BUSINESS

UK JOB MARKET SET FOR 'SIGNIFICANT DOWNTURN'



ANDY JALIL

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Employment in Britain is heading for the worse over the next three months, a new report from the Chartered Institute of Professional Development (CIPD) has found. According to the research, more than half of private sector firms are preparing to freeze pay for the next 12 months, while hiring intentions have fallen to their lowest levels on record.

Just two in every five firms now say that they are planning on recruiting in the period up to July 2020, the lowest level since the survey began in 2005. In partnership with the Adecco Group, the CIPD surveyed 2,000 firms to assess the effect the coronavirus crisis has had on UK jobs.

The research underlined just how critical the Treasury's job retention scheme (furlough) had been for employers, with those who used the initiative saying they would have had to make on average 35 per cent of their staff redundant without it.

Chancellor Rishi Sunak announced recently that the scheme, which is currently helping 8.4m people with the bulk of their wages, would be extended to October and told employers they would have to help meet its huge cost from August.

Gerwyn Davies, senior labour market adviser for the CIPD, said: "While hiring and pay prospects have taken a significant turn for the worse, employers have so far held off from making large-scale job cuts.

"The government's job retention scheme is undoubtedly a key factor,

but many employers have also succeeded in achieving a step change in homeworking which, along with other steps to reduce costs, has avoided the need for large-scale redundancies."

The jobs crisis has tipped the net employment balance, the report's measure of the difference between the proportion of employers who expect to increase staff levels and those who expect to decrease staff levels, into the negative.

The measure is set to fall 25 points, from 21 to -4, as employers prioritise measures to preserve existing jobs over hiring new staff. Alex Fleming, country head at the Adecco Group, said: "Organisations are doing all they can to keep employees in work, from reducing working hours, freezing hiring and cutting training budgets.

"Employers must also continue to focus on creating a positive workplace culture for existing employees, to help keep them engaged and agile during this time of uncertainty." The job retention scheme sees the government pay 80 per cent of wages – up to £2,500 a month – for staff who would otherwise be made redundant.

"The worry is what happens when furlough winds up," said James Reed, chairman of online jobs site Reed. "The danger is a tsunami of job losses." He added: "Companies I talk to are a half or a quarter of the size they were when they furloughed people, or they are on the verge of going bankrupt." Economists worry there will be a wave of fresh redundancies once the furlough scheme is wound down.

THE RESEARCH UNDERLINED JUST HOW CRITICAL THE TREASURY'S JOB RETENTION SCHEME (FURLOUGH) HAD BEEN FOR EMPLOYERS, WITH THOSE WHO USED THE INITIATIVE SAYING THEY WOULD HAVE HAD TO MAKE ON AVERAGE 35 PER CENT OF THEIR STAFF REDUNDANT WITHOUT IT.

Bank Muscat wins Private Banking award

MUSCAT: Bank Muscat Private has won EMEA Finance's Best Private Bank in Oman award for the third consecutive time. The prestigious award recognised the unique and exceptional offerings from the Sultanate's premier banking service for high net worth individuals. Bank Muscat Private is the Sultanate's premier end-to-end wealth management solutions provider to high net worth clients. The investment offerings cover global markets and all asset classes, through a robust execution platform administered by experienced and dedicated Relationship Managers.



Abdulnasir al Raisi (pictured), DGM – Premier Banking, said: "We are delighted to receive the third consecutive endorsement from EMEA Finance, which reflects the consistency of performance and the innovative strategies pursued by the bank to stretch operational excellence.

For over 18 years the high-end lifestyle benefits and banking facilities available to our Private Banking clients are unmatched in the Sultanate. This global accolade acknowledges the highest standards of professionalism, which have been achieved by Bank Muscat Private as well as the exceptional breadth of our wealth-management solutions."

Bank Muscat offers Private Banking clients a complete suite of investment options in global asset classes through its wealth-management platform and tie-up with international counter parties. The range of solutions offered to clients includes stocks, bonds, ETFs and mutual funds; across global markets. Bank Muscat Private Banking also offer selective exposure to private equity funds, real estate funds and commodity ETFs; offshore banking and portfolio management through reputed global counterparties.

Bank Muscat Private Banking also sends regular research reports to its customers as part of new initiatives to improve customer experience. These reports cover investment ideas, global macroeconomic outlook and updates on key economic and geographic events impacting performance of various asset classes.

The Private banking services also include conventional accounts, term deposits, currency exchange, domestic and international transfers, online banking and regular asset monitoring.

Oman endorses two major intl tax reforms — What’s next?



SANDEEP KUMAR

MUSCAT: Oman's recent ratification of the Multilateral Convention for implementing tax treaty-related measures to prevent Base Erosion and Profit Shifting (BEPS), popularly known as the “Multilateral Instrument” or “MLI”, demonstrates its commitment to the OECD’s Inclusive Framework (IF) on BEPS, as part of which Oman had agreed to implement four minimum standards. Preventing tax treaty abuse is one of these standards.

Oman was the 92nd jurisdiction to sign this landmark agreement, on 26 November 2019, to strengthen its existing tax-treaty network. The Convention was ratified by RD 43/2020, issued on 31 March 2020. This brings Oman one step closer for the MLI to ‘enter into force’ for bilateral tax treaties which are already Covered Tax Agreements (CTAs). CTAs are those identified bilateral tax treaties wherein both Oman and the other tax-treaty partner (for

instance China) have listed each other to be covered by the MLI. Until now, 15 bilateral tax treaties, out of Oman's total tax treaty network of 34 countries, have become CTAs. The MLI will ‘enter into force’ for Oman on the first day of calendar month after the expiry of three months beginning on the date Oman has deposited its instrument of ratification with the OECD’s Secretary General.

Once the MLI has entered into effect for Oman, claiming benefit under a tax treaty covered by the MLI is likely to become more difficult for foreign tax payers, as they will have to prove that obtaining benefit under such a treaty was not one of the “principal purposes” of any arrangement or transaction [Article 7(1) of the MLI]. Likewise, Article 16 of the MLI (which is also a minimum standard) requires signatories to include a mutual agreement procedure (MAP), in their CTAs. This can be seen as being quite posi-

tive, as it should expedite the dispute-resolution process involving potentially huge tax demands that can be settled through a MAP.

Another imperative event that happened on 25th March 2020 was Oman ratifying the Multilateral Convention on Mutual Administrative Assistance in Tax Matters (the Convention) through Royal Decree 34/2020.

Oman was the 92nd jurisdiction to sign this landmark agreement, on November 26, 2019, to strengthen its existing tax-treaty network.

This is quite significant, as it clearly endorses the OECD’s stand on matters concerning tax evasion and avoidance. The Convention’s objective is to facilitate international co-operation on informa-

tion exchange, including automatic exchanges for better operation of national tax law(s), and at the same time enhance respect for the fundamental rights of taxpayers.

Like the MLI, Oman will have to deposit its instrument of ratification for this Convention with the OECD, after which it may ‘enter into force’. Closely connected to this Convention is the Multilateral Competent Authority Agreement on Automatic Exchange of Information Agreement (CRS MCCA), through which automatic exchange of financial information with other jurisdictions is possible. Oman intends its first information exchange to occur by September 2020, as per the 2019 AEOI Implementation Report.

It is quite surprising for a jurisdiction like Oman to be on the European Union’s blacklist in spite of having full-fledged corporate income-tax law in place for more than 30 years. The ratification of the Convention (and the MCCA) should help Oman in expediting its removal from the blacklist, which currently is a dampener to foreign investments.

[The author is Tax Director, KPMG LLC (Oman)]

Oil steady as Opec+ considers extension to crude curbs

LONDON: Oil prices were steady on Monday helped by reports that Opec and Russia were closer to a deal on extending oil cuts but held back by renewed tension between the United States and China. Benchmark Brent crude was up 10 cents, or 0.3 per cent, at \$37.94 a barrel at



A 3D printed oil pump jack is placed on dollar banknotes in this illustration picture. — Reuters

0854 GMT. US crude had dipped 10 cents, or 0.3 per cent, at \$35.39 a barrel. The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and Russia, part of a group known as Opec+, are moving closer to a compromise on the duration for extending oil output cuts and were

discussing rolling over the curbs one to two months, two Opec+ sources said. Algeria, which holds the rotating Opec presidency, has proposed that Opec+ hold a meeting on June 4 rather than the previously planned June 9-10. Russia has said it has no objection to meeting sooner. — Reuters

BUSINESS

Europe's factories starting to recover, Asia's pain worsens

LONDON: European manufacturers may be over the worst of a coronavirus-driven downturn, but Asia's pain deepened in May due to a slump in global trade, with export powerhouses Japan and South Korea seeing the sharpest falls in activity in over a decade, surveys showed.

The new coronavirus pandemic — which has killed more than 370,000 people around the world — has wreaked havoc with supply chains and quashed demand as government-imposed lockdowns forced businesses to close and citizens to stay home.

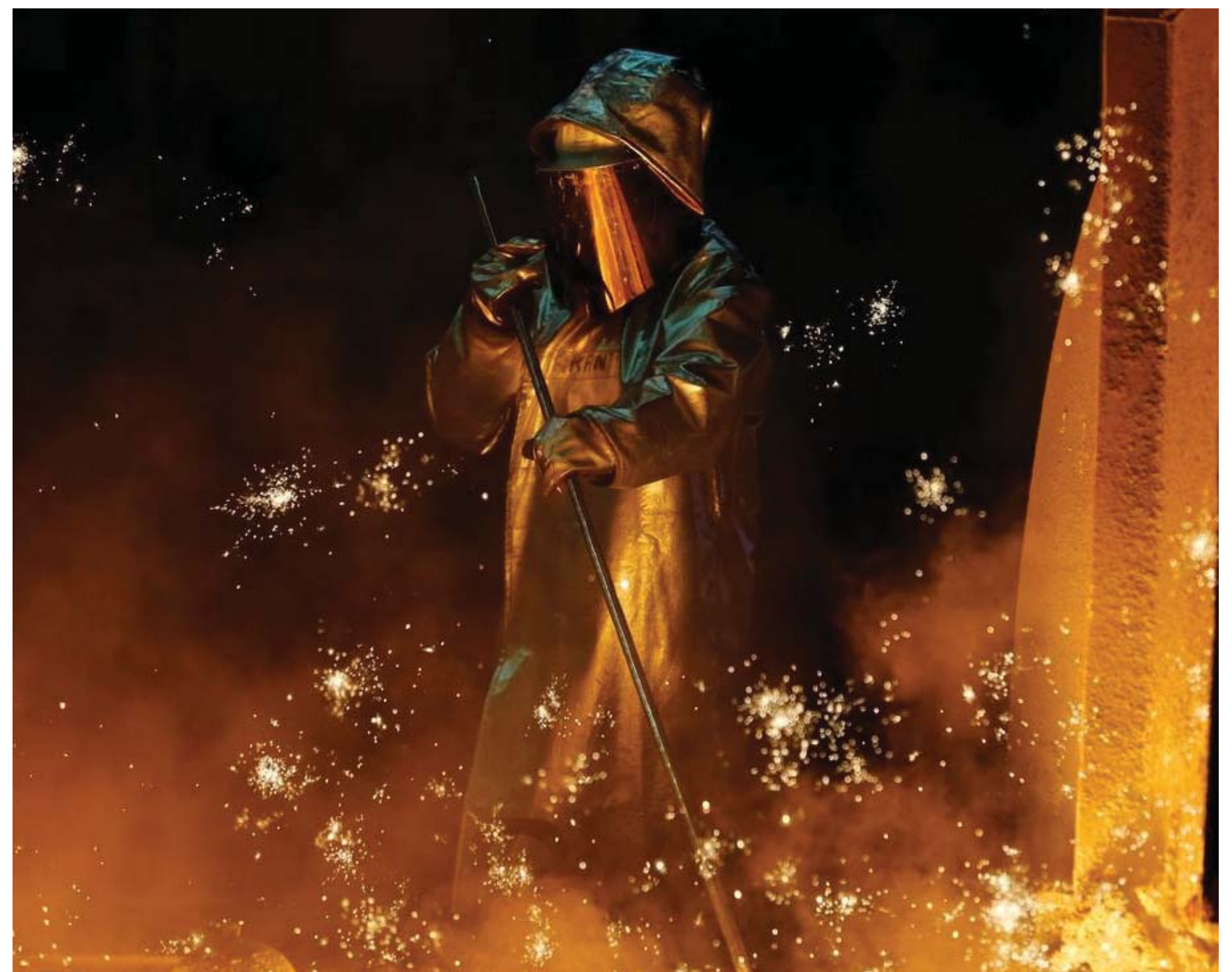
While factory activity still contracted sharply across Europe last month, purchasing managers said April lows had passed as governments on the continent began to ease the tough lockdown measures implemented to contain the spread of the virus.

After crashing to its lowest reading in the survey's nearly 22-year history in April, IHS Markit's Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' index (PMI) for the euro zone recovered somewhat last month, rising to 39.4 from 33.4.

But that was still a long way from the 50 mark separating growth from contraction, something echoed in surveys from other countries in the region.

"There was a clear sense that — particularly in the euro zone — April was likely to be the bottom of the trough. Hopefully we are past the worst", said Peter Dixon at Commerzbank.

Britain also saw another



A steel worker stands amid sparks of raw iron coming from a blast furnace at a ThyssenKrupp steel factory in Duisburg, Germany. — Reuters

While factory activity still contracted sharply across Europe last month, purchasing managers said April lows had passed as governments on the continent began to ease the tough lockdown measures implemented to contain the spread of the virus.

sharp downturn and pockets of growth were mostly linked to healthcare and personal protection equipment although some firms reported signs of new inflows of business as clients began to reopen.

Data from the US is expected to show factory activity declined there again last month.

Alongside the devastating impact of the pandemic, a US-China spat over Hong Kong's status and

Beijing's handling of the pandemic could sour business sentiment and add to already huge strains on the global economy.

So the trough in global economic activity will be deeper and the rebound is likely to take longer than previously predicted as the pandemic spreads in waves, a recent poll found.

The International Monetary Fund said last month the global economy would take much longer

than expected to recover fully from the virus shock, suggesting a downgrade to its current projection for a 3 per cent contraction this year.

Still, world stocks were just shy of three-month highs on Monday as optimism on economies opening up boosted risk appetite, despite worries over riots in the United States and lingering unease over Washington's standoff with Beijing.

Other manufacturing surveys suggested any rebound for Asian businesses might be some time off, even though China's factory activity unexpectedly returned to growth in May. — Reuters

Al Mouj Golf affirms green status

MUSCAT: Al Mouj Golf, regarded by many as one of the Middle East's finest golf courses, has for the second time retained its designation as a 'Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary' through the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Programme for Golf Courses, an Audubon International programme.

Al Mouj Golf was first designated as a Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary in 2014 becoming the first golf course in the Middle East and North African (MENA) region to be certified. Al Mouj Golf has now achieved this distinction three times, thanks to the eco-friendly management approach of the wider team and the practices they have adopted toward the maintenance of the club as a

habitat for a diverse range of wildlife. These efforts have been escalated by the Al Mouj Golf team, who have conducted regular assessments of the facility to ensure it has once again been recognised for the third time by Audubon International for environmental stewardship in 2020.

Al Mouj Golf is now just one of 200 golf clubs to be Golf Environment Organisation (GEO) certified worldwide and less than 20 courses to be certified by both GEO and Audubon, meaning that Al Mouj Golf is just one from approximately 20 courses worldwide to be certified by both organisations.

Nasser al Sheibani, CEO of Al Mouj Muscat, said: "I am incredibly proud of the team at Al Mouj Golf for successfully

retaining the natural heritage of our golf course, as well as being recognised by Audubon for a third time. This is a significant environmental and sustainability achievement in balancing such a wonderful lifestyle asset with nature. Maintaining the biodiversity of the grounds at Al Mouj Golf is central to providing golfers with a world-class facility. Thanks to the efforts of the Al Mouj Golf team, we were able to become the region's first achievers of this outstanding certification back in 2014. By continuing this success and retaining this certification, Al Mouj Golf continues to put Oman on the map as a leading party in environmental protection and management."

"Al Mouj Golf is honoured to be certified by both Audubon International and Golf

Environmental Organisation for our environmental, sustainability and commitment to the greater community" said Steven Johnson, Course Superintendent at Al Mouj Golf. "Both programmes are internationally recognised for their cutting-edge approach to sustainable golf course management practices and these certifications ensure Al Mouj Golf's maintenance programmes are at the forefront of world golf."

"Al Mouj Golf has shown a strong commitment to its environmental programme. They are to be commended for preserving the natural heritage of the area by protecting the local watershed and providing a sanctuary for wildlife on the golf course property," said Christine Kane, CEO at Audubon International.



SPORTS



MAJOR TALK WAS TOO BIG TOO SOON: TSITSIPAS

MUMBAI: Stefanos Tsitsipas set himself the target of claiming a Grand Slam title in 2020 after winning last year's season-ending ATP Finals but the young Greek feels that in hindsight the statement was "too big" and burdened him with extra pressure.

Novak Djokovic, Rafa Nadal and Roger Federer have shared all the Grand Slams between them since Swiss Stan Wawrinka triumphed at the 2016 US Open and Tsitsipas has been marked as one of the few players capable of breaking that stranglehold.

The 21-year-old is ranked number six in the world and had announced he was "really

close" to being crowned a Grand Slam champion after his triumph in the ATP Finals, which is contested by the top eight singles players and doubles teams.

"Looking back to that I think this was too big of a statement to be taken seriously. I shouldn't be looking so far so soon," Tsitsipas was quoted as saying by the Tennis Majors website.

"For sure, I want it to come, but I should be talking about stuff like this less often and concentrate on the present.

"I guess I just put too much pressure on myself, aiming so high and I just have to take it step by step, not think too much about the future and be irra-

tional," he added.

Tsitsipas has made some giant strides in his young career and reached the Australian Open semifinals and the fourth round of the French Open in 2019.

The Greek, who has been tipped by Djokovic as a future world number one, said he would have to learn to wait for his chance.

"I say it every single time like it's the only thing I want to achieve in my life," he said. "For sure it is.

"My theory behind it is that if you think about it too much it might as well never happen, so just relax and enjoy the process." — **Reuters**

SPORTS



COACH DARIO AIMS TO GROOM COMPETITIVE OLYMPIC TEAM

ADIL AL BALUSHI

MUSCAT: The head coach of the Oman Olympic (U-23) football team, Dario Pasetch, affirmed that his aim is to prepare a competitive team which can compete with other strong teams in the region. The Croatian coach added in his remarks to Oman Daily Observer that there are many potential and talented players in the team and they need further tactical development plans to reach the top level.

The former coach for Al Ain Club (UAE) began his term as Olympic team coach in February. He supervised the team for two internal camps in the field. "The first two domestic camps in February and March were very significant as I observed many local players. The technical and tactical level was very excellent for group of players who are playing in the top league clubs. We had shortlisted them to provide better technical and tactical improvement



methodology plans. However, this does not mean we are not following the other players. We will keep our eyes on all the players specially those young ones. I am very pleased with the outcome of the preparatory camps and looking for some more in the coming period," he added.

The Croatian Coach pointed out that the team did not stop during the COVID-19 pandemic situation and the players had many remote training sessions.

"We are not sure when the coronavirus outbreak

will get over but we keep continuing on the training planned schedule. In addition to that, we are daily sending video clips of some previous international games to the players explaining the tactical movements and best positions to play.

Meanwhile, we took the current situation as an opportunity to do more analysis for all the players and analysing the other national teams. It is correct that we are not on the field but our focus is to make the squad in full shape prior to the situation becomes normal. We

have mapped different plans including A, B and C and the technical staff is ready for implementing it," he said.

Commenting on team's participation at the West Asian Championship in the UAE next year, Dario said: "We need good preparation for our next participation at West Asian Championship. However, my aim is to make the team competitive and ready to challenge the top teams in the region. I am working to prepare players who can show high level of organised football. Furthermore, I hope we can produce many top players who can shine in the coming few years and add value to the top senior team. The Olympic team players are aware that this is the last step for them to advance into the top national team. Definitely, this will encourage them to do better in this stage and I hope to see more Omani talented players in the top national teams," the coach concluded.

SPORTS



SANCHO NETS HAT-TRICK AS DORTMUND CRUISE

BERLIN: England winger Jadon Sancho scored a hat-trick and revealed a 'Justice for George Floyd' protest message in Borussia Dortmund's 6-1 rout of bottom side Paderborn on Sunday that trimmed Bayern Munich's lead at the top of the Bundesliga to seven points.

The outstanding Sancho, who now has 17 goals and 17 assists in the Bundesliga this season, joined a host of protests in the German top-flight over the weekend at the death of an unarmed black man in the United States.

Sancho later wrote on Instagram: "Delighted to get my first career hat-trick, a bittersweet moment personally as there are more important things going on in the world today that we must address and help make a change."

Morocco international Achraf Hakimi lifted his jersey to deliver the same message as Sancho after scoring Dortmund's fourth goal at Paderborn.

At Paderborn, second-placed Dortmund kept



their remote title hopes intact as Sancho stole the limelight with teenage striker Erling Braut Haaland sidelined by a leg injury.

"We're going to give everything to win every game," said Dortmund goalkeeper Roman Buerki.

Bayern are firmly on course for an eighth successive title with just six matches left to play, and Dortmund's sports director Michael Zorc said the focus was now on securing Champions League qualification as quickly as possi-

ble. "It's clear that Bayern will be German champions at the end," said Zorc.

After Dortmund's attack struggled to break the deadlock, Hazard scored the opening goal on 54 minutes when presented with a tap-in by midfielder Emre Can.

Julian Brandt set up Sancho for his first goal three minutes later, with the England international receiving a yellow card after removing his shirt to reveal his political message.

Paderborn defender Uwe

BUNDESLIGA RESULTS ON SUNDAY:

Borussia
Moenchengladbach 4
(Neuhaus 17, Thuram
41, 59, Plea 81) Union
Berlin 1 (Andersson 50)

.....
Paderborn 1
(Huenemeier 72-pen)
Borussia Dortmund 6
(Hazard 54, Sancho 57,
74, 90+1, Hakimi 85,
Schmelzer 89)

Huenemeier converted a penalty on 72 minutes to give the hosts brief hope, but Dortmund responded with four unanswered goals.

Just two minutes later, Sancho grabbed his second after good work from Hazard.

Hakimi made it 4-1 on 85 minutes when he was set up by Marcel Schmelzer, who came on as a late substitute. Schmelzer then scored Dortmund's fifth when he converted a low Axel Witsel cross on 89 minutes. — **AFP**