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editor@omanobserver.om

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EDITOR-IN-CHIEF: ABDULLAH BIN SALIM AL SHUEILI

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HIS MAJESTY GREETINGS TO KING OF MOROCCO

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to King

Mohammed VI of Morocco on the occasion of the success of his recent surgical operation. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere greetings and best wishes to King Mohammed VI, praying to Allah the Almighty to grant him permanent health, well-being and a long life to continue achieving further aspirations of progress and prosperity for the brotherly Moroccan people under his wise leadership. — **ONA**

Payment gateway service is fully operational



SAMUEL KUTTY

MUSCAT: The services of OmanNet – the ePayment gateway in the Sultanate were restored on Monday after being suspended for almost 10 days.

The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) affirmed that the Payment Gateway service for debit cards, its related services and other electronic payment services are fully operational.

The apex bank assured the safety of data related to the payment services and reaffirmed its efforts towards the development, stability and efficiency of the banking and financial services.

SEEB TOPS IN NUMBER OF COVID-19 CASES



Security personnel manning the checkpoints in Dhofar Governorate on Monday. — **ONA**

KABEER YOUSUF
AND VINOD NAIR

MUSCAT: The Wilayat of Seeb recorded the highest accumulated number of cases with 5,910 people infected with coronavirus from the wilayat, while Muttrah reported a total number of 5,745 cases till Monday. Other wilayats in

Muscat, Al Batinah and Al Wusta governorates, such as Bausher (4,798), Al Amerat (891), Duqm (864), Barka (773) followed in total number cases as of Monday. The recovery rate remained low in Seeb as the number of people who successfully underwent treatment stood at 1,530, while

Muttrah reported a total number of 3,330 recoveries. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Health on Monday announced registration of 1,043 new cases of COVID-19, including 614 Omanis and 429 residents, which brought the total number of positive cases in the Sultanate to 24,525, including 108 deaths.

Travel resumes across Europe as countries reopen

BERLIN: France, Germany and Switzerland were among the European countries allowed travel on Monday, with hopes of re-invigorating the economy running high three months after restrictions were imposed in a bid to curb the coronavirus pandemic. France reopened its borders with all EU countries except Spain, where restrictions will remain in place until June 21 in line with a similar decision on the Spanish side.— **dpa**

OMAN

Seeb gets fourth COVID-19 testing centre



STAFF REPORTER

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Health, represented by the Directorate-General of Health Services in Muscat Governorate, on Monday opened a fourth COVID-19 testing centre in Al Hail North in the Wilayat of Seeb for testing expats showing symptoms of the disease. The opening of the new centre comes as the Wilayat of Seeb (5,910) overtook the Wilayat of Muttrah (5,745) in coronavirus infections.

Dr Asim bin Mohammed al Musharaf, centre's medical superintendent said the centre will receive expats with coronavirus-like symptoms. Specialists will take swab samples and register the personal information as well as the home and employment address of those tested and trace their contacts. The samples will be sent to the central lab and the results notified by text message.

The recovery rate remained low in Seeb as the number of people who successfully underwent treatment was 1,530 while Muttrah reported 3,330 recoveries.

Among other wilayats of Muscat, Bausher has 4,798 cases followed by Amerat (891) and Barka (773).

Committee to decide on treatment of patients abroad



VINOD NAIR

MUSCAT: A medical committee formed by the Ministry of Health will decide on all aspects of treatment of patients abroad, according to a new decision by the ministry which came into effect on Monday.

The Ministry of Health (MoH) will be responsible for conducting medical examinations in private hospitals in Oman as well as financing travel, treatment and accommodation for patients from Dhofar and Musandam governorates if facilities are not available in government hospitals in those places.

The decision states that it is required the persons accompanying a patient are relatives up to the fourth degree or his wife. One of the companions should be a woman if the patient is a woman. If the patient is a child, one of the companions must be the parents. If mother is the companion, she should not be

pregnant at the time of travel.

The ministry will continue to cover the costs but the compensation will be within the limits set by the committee.

The decision states that if the patient wants to change the health institution from what was initially approved by the medical committee, the ministry will ensure that compensation will be paid.

It may be noted that the change will be allowed only if the treatment has been started in the initial health institution approved by the medical committee, and the transfer takes place after receiving the treatment. The patient will be required to submit the medical reports and the original treatment bills for the approval of the medical committee.

Under the new regulation, the MoH will bear the expenses of emergencies like accidents or illness following verification of the actual expenses by a health attache.

INTERSEARCH

Our client is a leading multi-billion-dollar mixed-use Real Estate Development Company based in Muscat, Oman. The company is committed to creating exciting sustainable developments that contribute to the strategic initiatives of Oman's 2040 vision. This is a prestigious organization dedicated to bringing state of the art concepts to enrich its developments, communities and it aims to contribute to enhancing the future landscape of Oman.

POSITION: CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Our client has decided to run an external search to attract a highly credible and capable Chief Executive Officer who will report directly to the Board of Directors.

This individual will work closely with multiple internal and external stakeholders to deliver the organization's strategic objectives.

Apart from day-to-day management of the company, the CEO will be accountable for the overall; Profit & Loss, Performance and ensuring the company achieves key milestones as agreed with the Board. We are looking for a strong visionary with proven leadership qualities and an entrepreneurial mindset.

Required Qualifications and Experience:

- ❑ Bachelor's Degree in; Engineering, Construction, Real Estate, Architecture, Business, Finance and/or economics. MBA or MS in Real Estate or Finance a plus.
- ❑ Minimum of 20 years (negotiable) work experience with at least 10 years of 'hands-on' real estate experience gained within the development sector such as; financing, master planning, design, construction, sales & leasing or asset management.
- ❑ A successful track record in delivering large mixed-use development projects and in setting up and developing new organizations or business units.
- ❑ Strong interpersonal skills such as; leadership, communication, presentation, motivation & emotional intelligence are essential for this role.

This is an exciting and challenging opportunity to lead ground breaking developments in Oman.

If you are interested in being considered for this opportunity, please forward your up to date CV in word format to h.mirza@intersearchme.com and mention IS-CEO-2020 in the subject header.

Please note closing date: Monday 29th June 2020

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COVID-19 spike restricts footfall in Salalah hypermarkets

KAUSHALENDRA SINGH

SALALAH: Even as people were adjusting to the 'new normal' after easing restrictions on certain commercial activities, Sunday's spike in COVID-19 cases reminded everyone that any lax approach in hygiene and not adhering to the pandemic protocols may lead them to bigger problems.

As soon as the Sunday's bulletin was out, the footfall in supermarkets and hypermarkets reduced and there were very few shoppers inside the malls even in the evening hours.

The hypermarkets became more vigilant in checking body temperature, masks and gloves with every visitor, and some were seen ensuring a limited number of customers inside the premises.

PEOPLE HEAVED A SIGH OF RELIEF OVER MONDAY'S FIVE CASES, WHEREAS THE NUMBER OF CASES ON SUNDAY WAS 81. DHOFAR NOW HAS 171 CASES, OUT OF WHICH 158 ARE FROM SALALAH AND REST FROM AL MAZYOUNA (3), SHALEEM AND AL HALANIYAT (9) AND MIRBAT (1)

"Everyone seems alarmed over Sunday's number as Salalah never had such a big number in all these days. The cases were very few and easily manageable with a very high recovery rate. But now is the time to be careful", said

Shahabuddin, who works as a mechanic in the industrial area.

People heaved a sigh of relief over Monday's five cases, whereas the number of cases on Sunday was 81. Dhofar now has 171 cases, out of which 158 are from Salalah and rest from Al Mazyouna (3), Shaleem and Al Hallaniyat (9) and Mirbat (1).

For a change, more than the commercial outlets, the shoppers are seen abiding by the safety norms as the rate of facemask wearers was very high on Monday. Most of the shopping outlets admitted this change after the announcement of Sunday's numbers.

The outlets dealing in groceries and essentials also admitted that among many other things the demand for masks, hand sanitisers and gloves was high on Monday.

'Sultanate favourable tourist destination for youth'



M U S C A T : Dmitry Usubov, Russian journalist and author of Oman Guide said the Sultanate is distinguished by astounding natural diversity and

historic richness attested by a multitude of monuments. Oman has a fine blend of modernity and a commitment to the traditions making it a favourable tourist destination for families and young people.

In an interview with Oman News Agency (ONA) Usubov says: "Given the development and stability in the Sultanate, it will be good to think of benefiting from the advanced technology which acquires an emerging power in Russia. There are also international fields of cooperation with Russia including cybersecurity.

Speaking about the prospects of the Omani-Russian joint cooperation, Usubov noted that the Oman-Russia Business Office has been working since its inception in 2007 to foster relations between the two countries with cooperation in the field of oil and gas placed in the forefront.

— ONA

شركة عمان للخدمات الجافة
OMAN DRYDOCK COMPANY

Corrigendum

Be advised that an error appeared in the Expression of Interest Invitation Ref. No. ODC/2020/016, regarding Service Operator (Waste Management and Recycling) at ODC Shipyard, published on Sunday, 14.6.2020 in Oman Daily Observer and that the EOI may be requested via e-mail as per the below details Email id should be read as Tender@omandrydock.com instead of Tenders@omandrydock.com.

عمان Observer

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Please Contact with our Team

Mohd Al Rashdi : Head Office	99841230	m.alrahdi86@yahoo.com
Ali Al Maashari : Head Office	99639264	wadialmeeh@yahoo.com
Bakhit Al Shihri : Salalah Office	92998577	bakhit.omandaily@gmail.com
Abdullah Al Abri : Nizwa Office	99429094	nizwaofc@omandaily.net.om
Musalam Al Saidi : Suhar Office	99429192	sohardaily@outlook.com

Campaign on nursing launched

SAMUEL KUTTY

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Health on Monday launched 'The Nursing Now' campaign aimed at raising the profile and status of nursing in Muscat on Monday.

"The campaign comes within the framework of strengthening the capabilities of the workforce in nursing and midwifery to achieve universal health coverage for all members of society," said a statement from the ministry.

Run in collaboration with the World Health Organization and the International Council of Nurses, the campaign was launched by Dr Ahmed bin Mohammad al Saeedi, Minister of Health.

Nursing Now, a three-year global campaign started in 2018, seeks to empower nurses to tackle 21st century health challenges and maximise their contribution to achieving Universal Health Coverage.

The campaign will focus on five core areas: ensure that nurses and midwives have a more prominent voice in health policymaking; encourage greater



Dr Ahmed bin Mohammad al Saeedi, Minister of Health, at the launch of Nursing Now campaign in Muscat on Monday. — ONA

investment in the nursing workforce; recruit more nurses into leadership positions; conduct research that helps determine where nurses can have the greatest impact; and share best nursing practices.

The World Health Organization has designated 2020 as the International Year of the Nurse, coinciding with the 200th birth anniversary of Florence

NURSING NOW, A THREE-YEAR GLOBAL CAMPAIGN STARTED IN 2018, SEEKS TO EMPOWER NURSES TO TACKLE 21ST CENTURY HEALTH CHALLENGES AND MAXIMISE THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO ACHIEVING UNIVERSAL HEALTH COVERAGE

Nightingale, one of the founders of modern nursing.

According to the statement, the Sultanate will be represented by the General Directorate of Nursing Affairs in the ministry in cooperation with the Omani Nursing Association and representatives of nursing groups in the health sectors and public and private educational institutions.

Oman takes part in Unesco meeting

MUSCAT: The Sultanate, represented by the Ministry of Arts Affairs, participated in the Unesco Evaluation Experts Committee meeting via videoconferencing.

The Ministry was represented at the meeting by Sayyid Said bin Sultan al Busaidy, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Arts Affairs, Head of the Unesco Evaluation Experts Committee. The Committee discussed several topics in light of COVID-19 crisis, and the creation of an electronic platform to hold meetings that will start on June 29.

The Committee also discussed the evaluation progress of each expert, presenting their opinions, working mechanisms, setting the time plan, mechanisms for dialogue and consultation with member states, and dealing with common issues that arise in the work of the committee.

National Youth Commission, OLC sign MoU

MUSCAT: The National Youth Commission (NYC) and Oman Logistics Center (OLC) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Monday to enhance cooperation.

The MoU was signed by Dr Sami bin Salim al Kharousi, NYC Chairman, and Al Khattab bin Salim al Maani, OLC Executive Director.

The MoU will contribute to promote youth skills in research, development, innovation and entrepreneurship in logistics. It also aims at enhancing youth participation in the logistics sector and cooperation between the two sides to develop proposals and sustainable plans for future youth programmes to fulfil aspirations of the Omani youth in the logistics centre.

Maintenance of water pipelines in Dakhiliyah

MUSCAT: The emergency committee of the Public Authority for Electricity and Water (Diam) held a meeting via video-conferencing during which it discussed steps to enhance the performance of the main water pipeline supplying the Governorate of Al Dakhiliyah. The improvements, to begin this evening and continue for two days, includes the replacement of some pumps and valves in the main stations at Al Seeb, Fanja and Samayil and the execution of mechanical and electrical tasks on the network feeding the wilayats of Bidbid, Samayil, Izki, Manah, Nizwa, Bahla, Al Hamra and Adam. Ahmed bin Talib al Shaqsi, Director of the National Centre for Water Surveillance and Control, said that the improvements come as a precaution to accommodate the expected increase in demand for water during the summer season. — ONA

SQU team wins TRC’s Salalah water award

MUSCAT: The Research Council (TRC) announced the winners of the Salalah Water Research Awards on Monday in Muscat.

The RO 4,000 award was won by Dr Abdullah al Mamun, Dr Tahirih Jafari and Ali Mousawi

from Sultan Qaboos University for their project ‘smart microbial desalination for wastewater treatment and electricity recovery with real-time monitoring’.

The second prize which carries RO 2,000 was shared by Emad Abdullah

Alobiadoon from Salalah Methanol Company for ‘waste-water treatment by electrocoagulation process’ and Dr Wafa al Rawahi, Hanadi al Ameri, Marwa al Riyami and Maryam al Hashmi from Higher College of Technology for ‘activated carbon from sludge for waste treatment and desalination’.

The awards are sponsored by Salalah Sanitary Drainage Services Company. Over 64 applicant researchers and innovators competed for the first edition of the award.

The Salalah Award for Water and Wastewater aimed to find innovative ideas and solutions on the challenges facing the water sector and convert them into products and services that can be marketed in the local and global market. — **ONA**

GCC under-secretaries discuss COVID-19

MUSCAT: The under-secretaries of the Ministries of Health in the GCC states on Monday held their seventh video-conference meeting to discuss the coronavirus situation in the region.

The meeting convened on the decision of the emergency meeting of the GCC ministers of health which was held in the beginning of March to discuss the pandemic.

The Sultanate was represented at the meeting by Dr Mohammed bin Saif al Hosni, Under-Secretary for Health Affairs at the Ministry of Health along with Dr Saif bin Salim al Abri, Director-General of Disease Surveillance and Control (DGDSC), Dr Said bin Harib al Lamki, Director-General of Primary Health Care and member of Executive Body of the Health Council of the GCC countries and a number of officials of the health ministry.

— **ONA**



Bid deadline extended to June 28

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MoAF) has extended the deadline for submission of bids for setting up fish collection centres in the governorates of Dhofar, Al Wusta and South Al Sharqiyah to June 28.

Earlier, MoAF floated tenders inviting investors to bid for establishing fish collection centres in Hayatam and Ras Madrakah areas in the Wilayat of Duqm, Khuwaimiya area in the Wilayat of Jaalan Bani Bu Ali and Hasik area in the Niyabat of Sadah.

The projects for establishing fish collection centres are among the initiatives overseen by the Implementation Support and Follow-up Unit (ISFU) to serve as main centres for fish collection along Oman’s coastline.

The fish collection centres will contribute to achieving transparency in the buying and selling of fish quantities through the first-price auction system as well as maintaining the quality of fish. Each centre comprises refrigerated stores, an auction hall, an ice factory, warehouses, administrative offices and other facilities.

— **ONA**





ROYAL OMAN POLICE
DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF MEDICAL SERVICES

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

Tender Number	Tender Name	Tender Fee (R.O)	Last Date For Collection	Last Date For Submission
ROP/DGMS/PR/55/2020 Dated 26 th June 2018	Medicines	300/-	25-06-2020	11-08-2020
ROP/DGMS/PR/56/2020 Dated 26 th June 2018	Surgical Consumables	200/-	25-06-2020	11-08-2020
ROP/DGMS/PR/57/2018 Dated 26 th June 2018	Laboratory Consumables	100/-	25-06-2020	11-08-2020

- Only Registered Manufacturer/Approved suppliers can participate in the Tender.
- The Tender documents may be obtained from the office of Director General of Medical services, Royal Oman Police, Qurum, upon receipt of non-refundable payment of respective amount.
- Bid bond certificate of 1% of the total bid amount valid for a total period of 90 calendar days must be attached
- The response received from bidders must be submitted in 2 hard copies and 1 electronic soft copy on a CD or memory stick (flash drive), all in a sealed envelope showing the Tender name and Number. No company names or hints of any sort should be shown on the envelope.
- Submissions received after the designated closing time (12:00pm) on the due date may not be considered regardless of the circumstances.
- The DGMS reserves the right to reject any or any part of, or all tenders and also reserves the right to award to a bidder other than the bidder submitting the lowest total acquisition cost.



شركة الصلان للصناعات الغذائية ش.م.ع.م
Al Sallan Food Industries Co. SAOC
P.O.Box: 970 , Sohar - P.C: 311, Sultanate of Oman - Tel: 26750623 - Fax: 26750940

Invitation for attending Annual General Meeting & Extraordinary General Meeting

The Board of Directors of Al Sallan Food Industries Co. SAOC have pleasure in inviting the shareholders to attend the Annual General Meeting & Extraordinary General Meeting which will be held online (MCD site) 1:00 PM and 1:30 PM on Monday, the 29th of June 2020, In case the quorum is not completed, date of next AGM & EGM will be on Tuesday the 30th of June 2020 at 1:00 PM and 1:30PM Respectively.

Annual General Meeting:

- To consider and approve the report of the Board of Directors for the financial year ended March 31, 2020.
- To consider and approve the Auditors’ report, Balance Sheet and Profit & Loss Account for the financial year ended March 31, 2020.
- To inform the related party transactions carried out during the financial year ended March.31, 2020 as per Annexure 1.
- To consider and approve related party transactions for the year ended March 31, 2021 as per Annexure 1.
- To appoint Auditors of the Company for the year 2020-21 and to fix their remuneration.
- Election of Board Member for a new term of office – 3 years . Those who are interested to be nominated to the Board of Directors shall fill up the prescribed form of nomination available with Ministry of Commerce & Industry and submit to the Company before two working days of the date of General Meeting no later than end of business day of 25/06/2020

Extraordinary General Meeting:

- To discuss the financial position of the Company as required under Article 129 of Commercial Companies Law.
- To discuss and approve the new Article of Association under the new Commercial Companies Law of 2019.

A shareholder is entitled to appoint a proxy in writing to attend and vote on his behalf. All the reports, documents and statements relating to the general meeting are available for the shareholders inspection during working hours at the company’s principal place of business in Sohar. For any clarification regarding the matters mentioned in the above agenda, please contact Mr. Ismail Roushdi on Ph. 26750623.

Download this app even if you don't have COVID-19

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH

MUSCAT:DownloadMinistry of Health's Tarassud Plus mobile app even if one does not have COVID-19, advises an official.

The app can alert the user if there is a presence of a person with coronavirus symptoms anywhere in the proximity.

The benefits are many, said Dr Sulien al Khalili from the Ministry of Health while she explained the functions of the apps.

The main objective of this Artificial Intelligence system is to reduce the spread of the coronavirus with its geographical tracking feature.

"By activating the system you will be able to assess your health status by analysing the symptoms if you have any and see if it is related to COVID-19. On the other hand, if one is infected and is meant to be in isolation then it can check on the individual's adherence to the instructions and provide information whether the person is available at home or moving about," explained Dr Sulien.



TARASSUD PLUS CAN ALERT THE USER IF THERE IS A PRESENCE OF A PERSON WITH CORONAVIRUS SYMPTOMS ANYWHERE IN THE PROXIMITY

If the application is downloaded it can alert individuals if there is a presence of a person with COVID-19 anywhere in the proximity.

"It is used for isolated people and their families but I recommend everyone to download the application because it can help in having your own database of information in addition to guidelines on health status in connection with symptoms," she explained.

In regard to the current

situation with the number of COVID-19 confirmed cases Dr Sulien said it is the norm of the epidemiology of the pandemic.

"We are opening up so many activities and trying to go back to normal life. So the increase in the number of cases is expected. Of course people have had the time to learn about the nature of the pandemic so what we ought to do now is to go back to our knowledge and logic. Yes, we are going

back to normal life but that does not mean the virus has gone. It is very much around us. We have to take precautions and avoid risks," advised the expert.

She urged not to forget hand hygiene, which is the cornerstone of prevention and secondly, the use of masks especially if you are around people.

According to her, the system has been helpful in keeping in contact with people and guiding them. There has been a good response from people who have begun to use the app.

"I think the main reason is because the individuals have the support when they really need it, and for us it has made our lives easy because nowadays the geographical data such as where they are located and how many are infected as well as how many have been in contact are all now easier to comprehend. It is also convenient to communicate with the people," said Dr Sulien al Khalili.

The medical scout is available in five languages – Arabic, English, Hindi, Bangladeshi and Urdu.

STUDY IMPROVED QUALITY OF BUSOOR DATES

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries said that a study to improve the quality of the Busoor Dates in the Sultanate was carried by specialists from the Palm Research Center at the Directorate General for Agricultural and Animal Research in the ministry and the Industrial Innovation Center in cooperation with specialists at the Directorate General of Standards and Metrology in the Ministry of

Commerce and Industry, and in coordination with other related parties.

The ministry stated that the implementation of this study came due to the competition from other Busoor-producing countries and to improve the marketing of this product.

The study followed a methodology to examine the properties of the Busoor and develop the standard in several stages. — ONA



Criticism mounts as hospital beds run out in Indian capital



People wearing masks are seen at the food court at a mall in New Delhi. — Reuters

NEW DELHI: India's capital is fast running out of hospital beds amid a surge in coronavirus cases and is struggling to contain the pandemic, after critics said it did too little to prepare and reopened shopping malls and temples too soon.

Some families of people infected with COVID-19 have complained about having to hunt for beds for their relatives after hospitals turned them away.

Others said patients had been left unattended in corridors of government-run hospitals, while local media reports of dead bodies in a hospital lobby prompted the Supreme Court to order the state administration to get its act together.

"I don't think we expected that cases would rise this much," said a lawmaker of the Aam Aadmi party that

runs the capital, who asked not to be named. "We were so over-confident."

CASES IN THE CAPITAL ARE SET TO SURGE. THE GOVERNMENT ESTIMATES IT WILL HAVE 550,000 COVID-19 CASES BY THE END OF JULY, AROUND 13 TIMES CURRENT NUMBERS, AND WILL REQUIRE 150,000 BEDS BY THEN.

The office of New Delhi's Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and the city's health authorities did not respond to requests for comment.

Less than a month ago, Kejriwal said the city's hospitals were well equipped to fight

the virus as the lockdown had given authorities enough time to prepare. "Delhi will win, corona will lose," he said.

While Delhi had around 10,000 novel coronavirus cases at that time, the number had jumped to 41,000 on Monday.

India's total numbers stood at 332,424, with Delhi, Mumbai and Chennai fueling the rise in infections.

Cases in the capital are set to surge. The government estimates it will have 550,000 COVID-19 cases by the end of July, around 13 times current numbers, and will require 150,000 beds by then.

On Monday a government mobile app showed that of Delhi's 9,940 COVID-19 beds, almost 5,500 were occupied. Of the 108 private and public hospitals listed in the app, 25 had no beds available.

— Reuters

IN BRIEF

Irish parties reach draft coalition deal with rotating PM

DUBLIN: Three Irish parties on Monday agreed a draft deal to form a coalition government with a rotating prime minister, sparking outrage from Sinn Féin, which was excluded. Four months after a landmark election, the largest party in parliament, Fianna Fail, said it had "signed off on the draft programme for government" with Fine Gael and the Green Party. Prime Minister Leo Varadkar of Fine Gael — acting in a caretaker role since his party was routed at the polls — earlier said there would be a rotating prime minister at dates that had been agreed upon. Fianna Fail leader Micheal Martin, who leads a 38-seat bloc in a 160-seat parliament, would become the first premier until December 2022 and Varadkar would then take over, RTE said.

UN asks Iran for access to disputed sites

VIENNA: The head of the UN's nuclear watchdog on Monday called on Iran to allow "prompt access" to two sites where past nuclear activity may have occurred. "I hope we can do better," Rafael Grossi, director general of the Vienna-based International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), told reporters when asked about the agency's current relationship with Iran. Grossi was speaking at the start of a meeting of the agency's Board of Governors which is expected to discuss a report earlier this month in which the IAEA expressed "serious concern" that Iran has been blocking inspections at two sites.

Johnson, EU chiefs seek Brexit talks relaunch

BRUSSELS: British Prime Minister Boris Johnson and EU chiefs tried to breathe new life into stalled post-Brexit trade talks on Monday, with both sides entrenched in long-held positions. Johnson held a conference by video link with European Commission president Ursula von der Leyen and European Council chief Charles Michel intended to review progress in the talks on future EU-UK relations.

— Agencies

WORLD



BEIJING REINSTATES CURBS AS CORONAVIRUS RESURFACES

BEIJING: Several districts of the Chinese capital set up security checkpoints, closed schools and ordered people to be tested for the novel coronavirus on Monday after an unexpected spike of cases linked to the biggest wholesale food market in Asia.

After nearly two months with no new infections, Beijing officials have reported 79 cases over the past four days, the city's biggest cluster of infections since February.

The return of the coronavirus has shrouded Beijing, home to the headquarters of many big corporations, in uncertainty at a time when China is trying to shake off the economic torpor caused by the disease. "The risk of the epidemic spreading is very high, so we should take resolute and decisive measures", Xu Hejiang, spokesman for the Beijing city government, told a news conference.

The outbreak has been traced to the sprawling Xinfadi market, where thousands of tonnes of vegetables, fruits and meats change hands each day.

A complex of warehouses and

trading halls spanning an area the size of nearly 160 soccer pitches, Xinfadi is more than 20 times larger than the seafood market in the city of Wuhan where the outbreak was first identified.

The new cases have led to officials in many parts of Beijing reimposing tough measures to stifle the spread of the virus, with at least three districts entering "war-time mode".

Measures included round-the-clock security checkpoints, closing schools and sports venues and reinstating temperature checks at malls, supermarkets and offices.

Some districts sent officials to residential compounds in what they described as a "knock, knock" operation to identify people who had visited Xinfadi or been in contact with people who had.

Beijing began mass testing on Sunday, with tens of thousands of checks.

Samples of 8,950 people identified as recently being at Xinfadi had been collected as of early Monday, Gao Xiaojun, from the Beijing public health commission, told the briefing. — **Reuters**

IN BRIEF

Spain reopens borders in tourism pilot project

DUESSELDORF: Spain reopened to a select group of German tourists on Monday in a pilot project which will bring 10,000 holidaymakers to the Balearic Islands to find out how mass tourism can work in a time of coronavirus. Dozens of mask-wearing sunseekers queued at Duesseldorf airport on Monday morning to board tour operator TUI's flight to Palma de Mallorca, eager to test arrangements for socially distanced holidaymaking two weeks before Spain fully reopens. Hotels are limited to running at 50 per cent occupancy and will have infra-red cameras at their entrances to measure guests' body temperatures. The government is limiting to 10,900 the number of test participants. But few were deterred.

Thailand ends curfew, marks 21 days with no cases

BANGKOK: Thailand on Monday lifted a nationwide curfew after more than two months and allowed restaurants to open as the coronavirus crisis eased, with 21 days since a recorded case of local transmission. The Southeast Asian nation of about 70 million people was the first country outside China to report a case of coronavirus, on January 13, and has been a relative success story in containing it, with just 3,135 confirmed cases and 58 fatalities. Some 2,987 patients have recovered. Officials have credited Thais' early adoption of wearing masks — ubiquitous in public since January — as well as its border closure, shuttering of many business and the curfew for the retreat of the new virus that has infected 7.9 million worldwide and killed more than 430,000.

UK to review 2-metre social distancing rule

LONDON: Prime Minister Boris Johnson said Britain's two-metre social distancing rule was under review ahead of a potential further easing of lockdown measures on July 4, adding his room for manoeuvre was increasing as the incidence of COVID-19 falls. "As we get the numbers down, so it becomes one in 1,000, one in 1,600, maybe even fewer, your chances of being two metres, or one metre, or even a foot away from somebody who has the virus is obviously going down statistically, so you start to build some more margin for manoeuvre", he said. "We'll be looking at that and keeping it under constant review as we go forward to the next step in our plan, which is as you know July 4". — **Agencies**



House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and other Democrats observe a moment of silence to honour George Floyd at the US Capitol. — Reuters

Congress tackling police reform, but GOP and Democrats differ on aims

LAURA KING

Against the backdrop of another black man's death at the hands of a white police officer, this time in Atlanta, Republican allies of President Trump clashed with Democratic lawmakers over police-reform legislation expected to be a focal point this week in both the House and the Senate. Nearly three weeks after George Floyd's death in Minneapolis, which galvanised the most widespread and sustained racial-justice protests the United States has seen in a generation, House Democrats are calling for a ban on police chokeholds, an end to no-knock warrants and the creation of a national police misconduct registry, among other steps. A midweek hearing is set in the House on the Democratic plan. On the Senate side, the chamber's only black Republican, Senator Tim Scott of South Carolina, plans to unveil a

measure this week. Trump, who turned 74 on Sunday, has often appeared out of step with public sentiment, with opinion polls suggesting broad support for the protests' aims of redressing systemic racism in policing. As marches and rallies spread from coast to coast and beyond the US, critics accused the president of stoking tensions with inflammatory tweets and statements, including his threat earlier this month to send in active-duty military troops to American cities. Even so, Housing and Urban Development Secretary Ben Carson, the only Black member ever to serve in trump's Cabinet, said on Sunday he expected the president would "look at everything" in terms of legislation meant to curb police abuses. "We need to look at appropriate reforms, and this is probably a goodtime to shine the spotlight on it and get it done," Carson said. But he added: "Obviously we do not want to create a situation where the police are under the microscope." — dpa

Greetings to the masked world...



LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
lakshmiobserver@gmail.com

There is a plethora of numbers and figures floating around us currently and especially the teen digit attached to the alphabet 'C' keeps being repeated in various statistics dimensions. The familiarity of the pandemic situation is bringing in the division of no, not have and have nots but the pendulum is swinging between the fearless and the fearful of COVID-19. For many it is just another virus and they believe their immunity is strong enough to tackle the virus. On the other hand health experts continue to urge everyone to be cautious. The Minister of Health had said behave as if everyone has the symptoms. Meanwhile the fearful ones continue to worry about every symptom that pops up (even though it is summer) is related to COVID. In the midst of all this healthcare providers have also been affected by COVID-19 and have joined the statistics. When there are so many numbers floating around and officials warn that the Sultanate has not reached the peak, the unanimous sentiment is that we must move forward and thus the new theme has come forward from health authorities titled 'Oman to Recovery'. While all this is going on, it was surprising to come across that old familiar SMS message, "Congratulations! Your number has been chosen to be the winner.." Did not want to read the rest of the message as I could imagine what it would say. There have been fake ids on social media platforms and business proposals that have been doing rounds since we all began to swim in the digital world but it is interesting to note that it has been business as usual for those who have found this stream as their profession. You see nothing really changed for them because while rest of the world are trying to survive by existing online and learn about new model of doing business once COVID-19 took over the lifestyles and economy of the world the aforementioned experts did not have to go through much work-wise as they had always existed in this domain of cyberspace. And it is about time we knew how to stay clear of these potential traps of the virtual world. If we had been thinking of changes due to global warming, COVID-19 did all the changes with the snap of a finger. And if what the experts says about vaccine is true and it could take longer to get a remedy and bounce back to normalcy, then it is best we live with an understanding and reduce fear and panic, but be cautious.

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NEW ANTI-TAX AVOIDANCE UNIT CREATED WITHIN OMAN TAX AUTHORITY

CONRAD PRABHU

MUSCAT: A new Anti-Tax Avoidance Department has been incorporated within Oman's newly restructured Tax Authority – a measure seen by experts as reflective of the government's resolve to bolster tax revenue collection amid a decline in earnings from Oil & Gas exports.

The new unit is one of several striking features of the Sultanate's autonomous Tax Authority, which was established by Royal Decree last October. Until recently an organ of the Ministry of Finance, the

new Tax Authority is now helmed by a 'Head' with the rank of a minister who reports directly to the Council of Ministers.

A notable feature of the structure of the revamped Tax

Authority is a dedicated 'Anti-Tax Avoidance' unit, according to a well-known Muscat-based tax expert.

"The new Anti-Tax Avoidance Department has been created with a clear focus on improving tax compliance," said Ashok Hariharan, Partner and Head of Tax -- KPMG Lower Gulf.

Speaking during a recent webinar on tax related developments in the Sultanate, he said the restructured Tax Authority's foremost priority is to enhance tax efficiency and boost tax compliance.

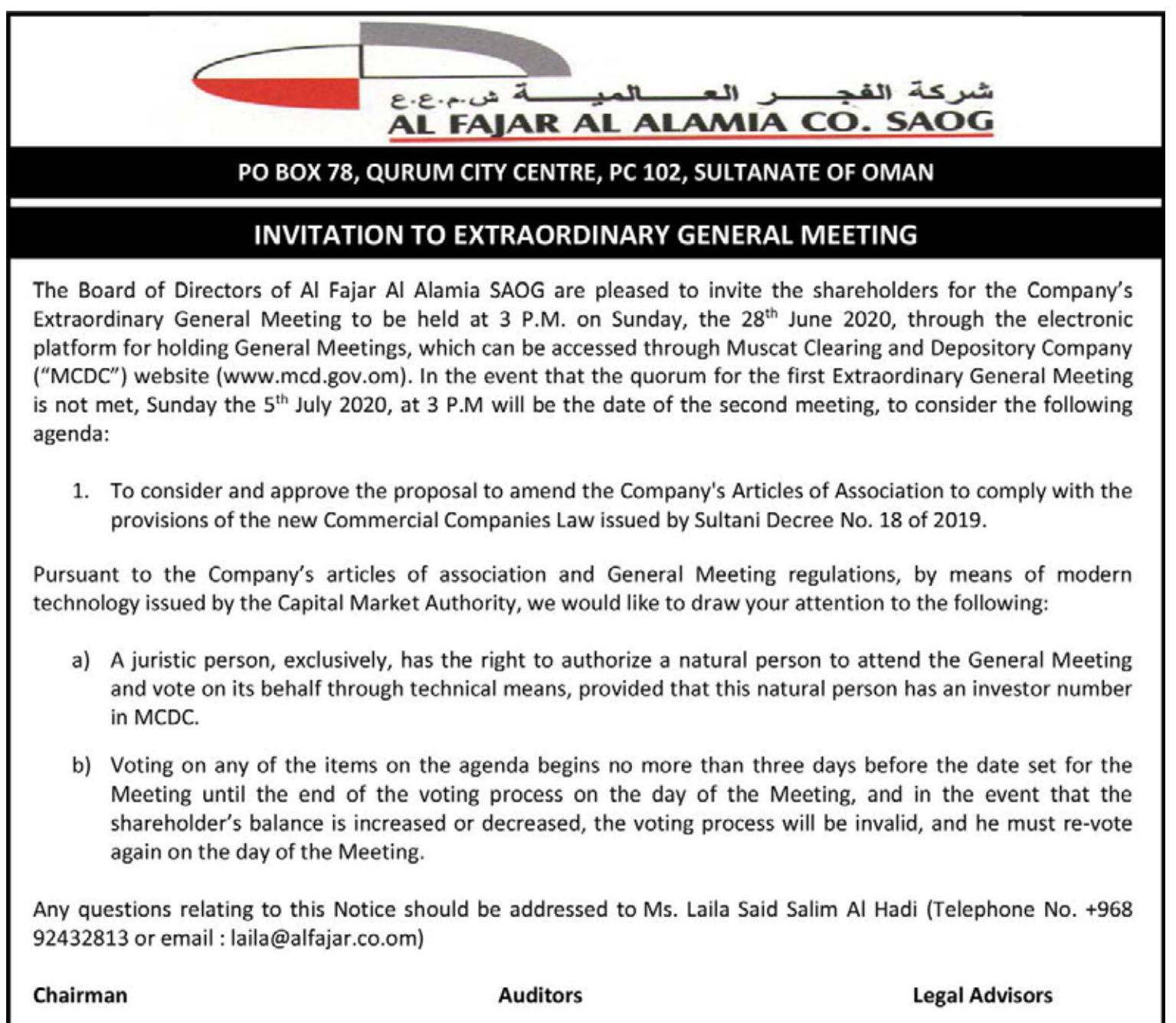
In addition to the creation of a Deputy Head, the new Authority also features, for the first time, a new Directorate General of Planning and Tax Policies, as well as a Cyber Section. Both new departments report directly to the Head of the Tax Authority, said Hariharan.

Furthermore, the Directorate General of Assessment and Investigation that was part of the erstwhile Secretariat General of Taxation has now been divided into two directorates, reporting to the Deputy Head of the Tax Authority. At the same time, the Large Tax Payer Unit that was a feature of the old entity has been done away with, he noted.

TURN TO PAGE 12

ROBUST APPROACH:

"THE NEW DEPARTMENT HAS BEEN CREATED WITH A CLEAR FOCUS ON IMPROVING TAX COMPLIANCE," SAYS MUSCAT-BASED TAX EXPERT.





CCED OMAN SET TO PRODUCE ITS 100 MILLIONTH BARREL



CONRAD PRABHU

MUSCAT: Away from the limelight dominated by the likes of Block 6 of Petroleum Development Oman, Block 61 of BP, or Block 53 of Oxy Mukhaizna, is a pair of adjoining licences that exemplify the important contribution of relatively small players to the continuing success of Oman's upstream sector.

Blocks 3&4, covering a total area of around 29,100 sq km in eastern central Oman, together represent one of the largest concessions in the Sultanate. They have held their own in the boom and bust of the past decade, sustaining and even building on crude production in a demonstration of their commitment to supporting the nation's upstream energy objectives.

A decade on, the partnership of CC Energy Development (Oman) as operator with a 50 per cent equity stake, Tethys Oil (30 per cent) and Mitsui E&P Middle East (20 per cent), is poised to step up its game in unlocking the hydrocarbon potential of the two

WALTER SIMPSON,
Managing Director – CC
Energy Development

blocks.

Walter Simpson, Managing Director – CC Energy Development, was upbeat about the Blocks' performance and the outlook for growth. "We achieved record production levels in 2019, exporting above 45,000 bpd. Our compound annual growth in production over the last two years has been about 8 per cent, which I'm pleased with."

Simpson further added: "What has really made this performance extra special is that we have seen our safety record at the same time to be absolutely in line with the best in the industry. So we have had an improvement in our business performance and our production, and a significant enhancement in our safety."

Contributing to the

We achieved record production levels in 2019, exporting above 45,000 bpd; our compound annual growth in production over the last two years has been about 8 per cent.

uptick in the Blocks' performance is an array of factors, most notably the start-up of CCED's new facility at Ulfa in Block 3 early in 2019. "This facility, which processes output from the Ulfa and Sahma fields, has played a key role in the optimisation of the existing and new fields and while also helping us grow our production to the record levels we have seen at present," the Managing Director said. "We have also been working very hard on developing the capabilities of our technical teams, and introducing new processes and procedures to optimise our fields and bring on stream new discoveries as quickly and effectively as possible."

For 2020, the operator has its sights on a checklist of performance tar-

gets, not least the ramp-up of crude production to 50,000 bpd. To this end, CCED and its partners are investing upwards of \$300 million annually in the drilling of a mix of exploration, appraisal and production wells aimed at sustaining and growing output.

"We have three rigs drilling continuously – that's about \$80 million invested in wells this year – as well as a workover hoist and a number of intervention units in the fields. We are looking to drill in the order of 30 – 40 wells this year, so we are making a strong commitment along with our partners to sustain production from our fields and grow it," Simpson noted.

But the highpoint of 2020 – and indeed perhaps of the past decade – is the much-anticipated production of the 100 millionth barrel of crude which CCED is on track to delivering later this year. The milestone, Simpson observes, is of immense pride for CCED particularly as it coincides with the 50th anniversary of Oman's modern renaissance.

BUSINESS

New anti-tax avoidance unit created within Oman Tax Authority

FROM PAGE 10

Also scrapped is the Department for Indirect Taxes. However, responsibility for indirect taxes, including the much-anticipated Value Added Tax (VAT), will be assumed by two directorates that will oversee both direct and indirect tax matters.

Underlining the new vigour with which the new Tax Authority has been performing its core function, fuelled partly by a mission to offset the decline in revenues from hydrocarbon exports, the agency has adopted robust practices in its dealings with tax payers, according to the expert.

"We are witnessing an aggressive and fast track disposal of assessments and objections," he said. "There is a significantly enhanced scrutiny of related party transactions; Documentary evidence that is necessary to substantiate arms-length pricing is becoming significantly onerous. Also, there is a clear preference for seeking information on profits actually earned by related parties across the supply chain. We are aware that the Tax Authority is sourcing information about income that is possible escaping taxation from sources such as suppliers, customers, contractors and government organisations."

Given this strident approach adopted by the Authority in the collection of taxes, tax payers are advised to be suitably "prepared in the coming months for a strict audit of their tax returns and withholding tax obligations", he added.

OPAL SIGNS MOU WITH MITSUI E&P

MUSCAT: Oman Society for Petroleum Services (OPAL) has joined hands for the first time with Mitsui E&P Middle East BV for sponsorship OPAL's Employability Training programme.

To this end, a memorandum of understanding (MoU) setting out the terms of a collaborative partnership was signed by the two parties on Monday at OPAL premises in Muscat. Representing OPAL at the signing was Abdulrahman al Yahyaei, CEO, while Najeeb al Harthi, Director, GM and COO of Mitsui E&P Middle East BV, signed for his company.

Mitsui is the first company to join the network of sponsors investing in OPAL's Employability Training programme. The core task of this initiative is preparing fresh graduates for tomorrow's challenges in fast changing business



environment, as they are the requisite engines for growth and prosperity for the Sultanate of Oman.

This scheme will enable training for up-skilling a group of fresh graduates in a time period of three months program. Funding of such a programme is part of Mitsui's corporate responsibility to the community while OPAL will be in charge of designing and supervision of the full programme while guaranteeing that candidates are

gaining the right educational background and that the training providers are complying with OPAL quality assurance.

Commenting on the MoU, Al Yahyaei said, "We are delighted to expand our cooperation with Mitsui and build on the success of the well-established OPAL Training programmes. The signing of this agreement reflects our commitment to constantly improve the sector and industry in Sultanate at large."

TIBIAAN COLLABORATES WITH ZAWAYA GROUP TO DEVELOP 'QABAS'

MUSCAT: Tibiaan Properties, an award-winning real estate firm, announced recently its collaboration with Zawaya Group to develop and operate 'Qabas', a new retail destination in Muscat. Located on Al Mouj Street in North Al Mawaleh, the RO 8 million retail destination will comprise of spacious commercial spaces to be a host for local and international brands whom are looking for a state-of-the-art development which will help them expand their market share.

Commenting on the announcement, Fahad al Ismaili, CEO of Tibiaan Properties said: "We've always believed in quality in everything we do, this is where our new project - Qabas - is placed and therefore we will invite quality local and international brands to be part of it. This project will up-lift the surrounding retail market



with its wonderfully designed drive thru tunnels and will be a lifestyle destination."

Besides its strategic location and unique design, the project provides more than 250 parking spaces and an indoor air and water-controlled temperature swimming pool at the penthouse dedicated to a special business activity. Retailers will also have the option to have their businesses stretched over 2 levels as (Duplex).

Speaking about the project, Shaikh Usama al Khalili, Founder of Zawaya Group said: "We are delighted to be appointed as developer of "Qabas," a project we have designed and now hitting the ground with expectations to celebrate the official opening in early 2022 and we thank Tibiaan Properties for their trust in our team of professionals."

Being tech-savvy is key during pandemic

The world has lost a lot of jobs during the past five months as a result of the ongoing pandemic crisis since the beginning of 2020. Today, millions of people continue to do their work from homes, relying on the policy of social distancing, although some countries recently started allowing certain categories of employees to return to office.

During the recent months, some institutions have conducted a number of researches related to the impact of the coronavirus on the current and future job market in Arab countries, including the Gulf Cooperation Council. The study of "Bayt.com" and "YouGov", relates to people's



HAIDER AL LAWATI

haiderdawood@hotmail.com

expectations about the impact of technology in daily business in light of the continuing crisis. The research shows that more than 65 per cent of workers in the region expect that the hunt for jobs will be done via the Internet, and this will increase in the coming years in light of the continuation of the coronavirus. Everyone knows that the pandemic has greatly impacted workers, which has led them to change their routine work and adapt to the new situation.

Today, modern technolo-

gy has enabled routine office work to be performed from home. About 81 per cent of those who participated in the study stated that technology has contributed to reducing exposure to the virus. Nevertheless, the number of infections in the region has not declined, but on the contrary, is on the increase. Deaths are on the uptick as well. However, work done by remote means reduces and limits the number of people infected with this deadly virus.

The importance of these

technologies and electronic applications, as exemplified by Zoom — which has made its founder a very rich man in a very short time — will persist. More than 53 per cent of those surveyed said they meet virtually with the aim of avoiding physical contact.

Today, this pandemic is pushing young people to equip themselves with skills necessary to do their work remotely. Around 80 per cent said they expect the virus to impact their future employment prospects if they do not possess the requisite technological skills. Indeed, the disease drives everyone — former, current and future employees — to stay updated with these new technologies while at the same time adhering to hygiene precautions.

BP cuts up to \$17.5 billion from assets' value with bleaker oil outlook

BP lowered its benchmark Brent oil price forecasts to an average of \$55 a barrel until 2050, down by around 30 per cent from previous assumptions of \$70.



BP's new Chief Executive Bernard Looney gives a speech in central London, Britain. — Reuters

LONDON: BP will write off up to \$17.5 billion from the value of its assets after cutting its long-term oil and gas price forecasts, betting the COVID-19 crisis will cast a lasting chill on energy demand and accelerate a shift away from fossil fuels.

Like its rivals, the British oil major is set to take a big hit to revenue from an unprecedented collapse in oil demand due to the pandemic. The impairments are set to raise its debt burden sharply and increase

pressure to reduce its dividend.

The move comes as Chief Executive Bernard Looney prepares to outline his strategy in September to "reinvent" BP including a reduced focus on oil and gas and a larger renewables business.

BP lowered its benchmark Brent oil price forecasts to an average of \$55 a barrel until 2050, down by around 30 per cent from previous assumptions of \$70.

BP said that the aftermath of the new coronavirus pandemic would accelerate the transition to a lower-carbon economy, in line with the goals of the 2015 Paris climate agreement.

"We have reset our price outlook to reflect that impact and the likelihood of greater efforts to 'build back better' towards a Paris-consistent world," Looney added.

BP shares were down 4.1 per cent at 0912 GMT.

Last week, BP said it would

cut about 15 per cent of its workforce in response to the coronavirus crisis and as part of Looney's strategy.

BP said the new price assumptions will lead to non-cash impairment charges and write-offs in second-quarter earnings, due on Aug 4, in a range of \$13 billion to \$17.5 billion after tax. It said it would also now review its plans for some oil and gas projects that are at early exploration stages.

BP is set to increasingly shift its fossil fuel production from oil to natural gas, which is expected to play a key role in supplying growing demand for electricity.

However, in its new outlook, BP revised down its assumption for gas from Henry Hub in the United States by 31 per cent to \$2.90 per million British thermal units.

It also increased the assumed price it will have to pay governments for carbon dioxide emitted from its oil and gas activities to \$100 per tonne of CO2 in 2030, from \$40. — Reuters

BUSINESS

MEXICO'S OIL HEDGE TO BE PRICIER IN 2021

NEW YORK: Mexico will have to pay more for less coverage under its giant oil revenue insurance policy for 2021, but will likely go ahead anyway to avoid further damaging its financial standing with international investors, sources said.

The finance ministry's billion-dollar oil hedge is the world's largest. It has been a pillar of the budget for more than two decades for Mexico, which pumps about 1.7 million barrels per day of crude.

The policy ensures Mexico can sell oil at a predetermined price, guaranteeing a portion of revenues crucial for the state budget — no matter what happens in the global oil market.

Many countries dependent on oil revenues face massive budget shortfalls due to collapsing prices and demand during the coronavirus pandemic, yet Mexico's insurance policy is expected to deliver a \$6 billion payout this year — its largest ever.

Bankers and officials on both sides of the secretive deal expect a smaller hedge this year since market volatility and lower crude prices have sharply hiked the cost of options Mexico typically uses to hedge oil sales. Those oil

The finance ministry's billion-dollar oil hedge is the world's largest. It has been a pillar of the budget for more than two decades for Mexico, which pumps about 1.7 million barrels per day of crude.

derivatives for 2021 are 40 per cent more expensive than normal, several market sources said.

At the same time, resources available to finance the hedge are dwindling. Despite the bumper hedge payout, lower revenues have forced Mexico's government to plug the gap by spending more of the stabilisation fund that also pays for the hedge.

"There are lots of challenges, and everything points to it being more difficult," said a Mexican source who worked on last year's hedge.

Finance ministry sources said internal discussions center on either hedging a smaller part of the country's exports in 2021; buying cheaper options; or using a less costly strategy.

Negotiations with banks on the hedge have yet to start, ministry and Wall Street sources said.

The hedge is designed to protect about one-fifth of Mexico's budget revenues, current and former Mexican finance and energy ministry officials said.

The government has grown more secretive about its strategy so other traders cannot easily profit from speculating on its giant options purchases with bets that can in turn make the hedge more expensive.

Finance Minister Arturo Herrera is a strong proponent of the hedge and likely to keep it, said several Mexican sources familiar with his thinking.

JPMorgan Chase & Co, Citigroup Inc, Goldman Sachs Group Inc, BNP Paribas SA and Shell are among those the finance ministry tapped to execute the hedge last year, sources familiar with the deal said.

Investors and credit rating agencies consider the hedge a measure of fiscal prudence that offsets oil market volatility. Scrapping it might prompt some bond investors to demand higher yields.

If Mexico's borrowing costs rise, it could also mean even higher financing costs for ailing state oil company Petroleos Mexicanos, already a junk-rated company.

Mexico is still rated investment grade, but all three major credit rating agencies — Fitch Ratings, Moody's Investors Service and S&P Global Ratings — downgraded the country this year, and could lower its rating in coming months.

— Reuters



A general view of Mexican state oil firm Pemex's Reynosa refinery in Tamaulipas state, Mexico. — Reuters

SPORTS



“

First game back is going to be a little bit different, what we understand is the magnitude of the game, the coverage of the game. Villa-Sheffield United was a Championship game last year and would possibly have been seventh or eighth on (BBC's) Match Of The Day and now it is 6:00 pm on the TV and worldwide coverage.

CHRIS WILDER,
SHEFFIELD
UNITED MANAGER

SHEFFIELD UNITED BOSS
BRACED FOR PREMIER LEAGUE
RESTART IN GLOBAL SPOTLIGHT

LONDON: Sheffield United coach Chris Wilder knows the eyes of the world will be on his side as they relaunch the Premier League against Aston Villa on Wednesday.

The high-flying Blades travel to Villa Park for the first game in the English top-flight after a three-month suspension due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Later on Wednesday, Manchester City host Arsenal, with 92 games packed into just five-and-a-half weeks

“First game back is going to be a little bit different,

what we understand is the magnitude of the game, the coverage of the game,” Wilder said at his pre-match video press conference on Monday.

He added: “Villa-Sheffield United was a Championship game last year and would possibly have been seventh or eighth on (BBC's) Match Of The Day and now it is 6:00 pm on the TV and worldwide coverage.

“From our point of view we want to put on a good show and make sure we play well. Players will

naturally want to play well and we want to do that as a football club.”

Sheffield United, who have 10 games to play, are seventh in the table, chasing Champions League football.

They could move up to fifth place with three points at Villa Park, but Wilder will not allow himself to get distracted by talk of Europe.

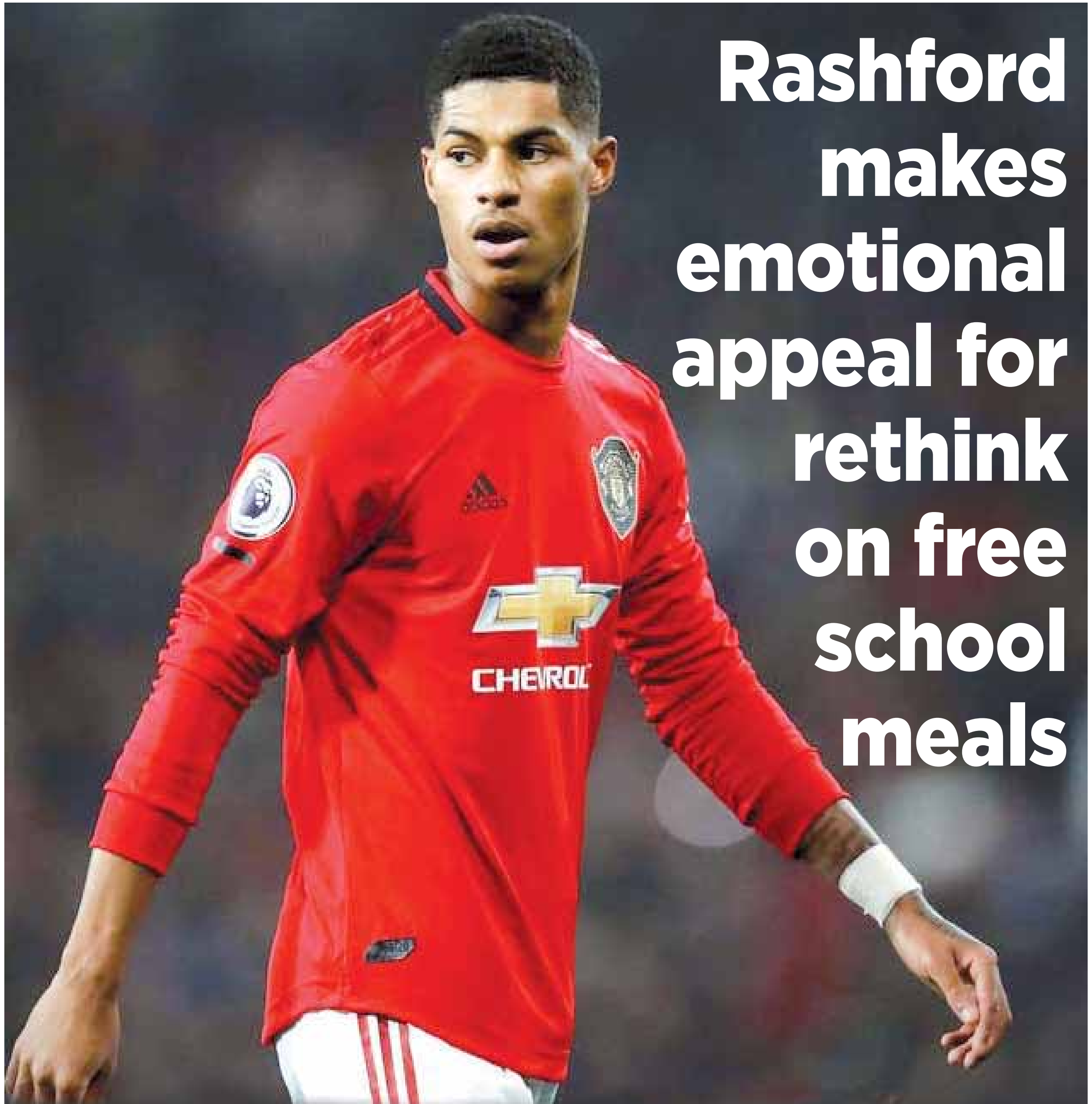
“If it gets to the situation where we are one or two games out and we are still in a fantastic position then we will possibly talk about that,” said Wilder.

“But at the moment we have quarter of a season to go, near enough. I am sure that you have seen the fixture list as such as I have seen it, there are some incredible challenges in front of us.”

Wilder confirmed the club would extend highly-rated goalkeeper Dean Henderson's loan deal in the next few days.

The England Under-21 international keeper is close to agreeing an extension from Manchester United until the current season ends. —AFP

SPORTS



Rashford makes emotional appeal for rethink on free school meals

LONDON: Manchester United forward Marcus Rashford has pleaded with the British government to continue to supply free meals for children in poorer families during the summer holidays in a letter "written from the heart".

Children eligible for free school meals have received food during the coronavirus lockdown, often in the form of vouchers to spend at supermarkets.

About 1.3 million disadvantaged pupils are entitled to free school

meals but the scheme in England will not run during the school holiday period, which starts in July.

England international Rashford, who has helped raise around £20 million (\$25 million) for FareShare, a charity that fights hunger and food waste, received free meals as a child.

"The government has taken a 'whatever it takes' approach to the economy -- I'm asking you today to extend that same thinking to protecting all vulnerable children across

England," he wrote in an open letter to lawmakers.

"I encourage you to hear their pleas and find your humanity. Please reconsider your decision to cancel the food voucher scheme over the summer holiday period and guarantee the extension."

Rashford, 22, added: "As a black man from a low-income family in Wythenshawe, Manchester, I could have been just another statistic.

"Instead, due to the selfless actions of my

mum, my family, my neighbours, and my coaches, the only stats I'm associated with are goals, appearances and caps."

Rashford, last week named the fifth most valuable player in Europe, told the BBC the letter was "written from the heart".

"What families are going through now, I've once had to go through that — and it's very difficult to find a way out. It's very important for me to help people who are struggling," he said. — **AFP**



Oman U-19 team to take part in Asian U-19 handball meet in Iran

ADIL AL BALUSHI

MUSCAT: The Oman under-19 handball team will take part in the 17th edition of Asian Under-19 Handball Championship which will be held in Shiraz City, Iran from , October 7 to 15 instead of the previous dates of July 10 to 21.

The Asian Championship will act as a qualifier for the IHF Men's World U-19 Championship in 2021. Oman Handball Association (OHA) sent the confirmation participation letter to the Asian Handball Federation (AHF) earlier this week as the last deadline to receive the participation letter ended on Monday.

On the other hand, the International Handball Federation (IHF) announced recently the implementation of the precautionary measures on resuming the handball activities and affirming that safety must be treated as a top priority. Hence, all the national and regional associations are adhering to the health and safety practices.

The Sultanate handball Under-19 team is keen to register an impressive

THE SULTANATE HANDBALL UNDER-19 TEAM IS KEEN TO REGISTER AN IMPRESSIVE DISPLAY AT THE ASIAN CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT WITH THE NEW COACHING STAFF. THE OHA APPOINTED COACH ADIL AL HASANI WILL LEAD THE TECHNICAL STAFF OF THE TEAM WITH BADER AL TAMIMI AS ASSISTANT COACH AND JAMAL AL DUGEHSI AS TEAM MANAGER.



display at the Asian Championship event with the new coaching staff. The OHA appointed coach Adil al Hasani will lead the technical staff of the team with Bader al Tamimi as assistant coach and Jamal al Dughaishi as team

manager.

Oman team were placed at the eighth position in the previous edition of the Asian Under-19 Handball Championship which was hosted in Salalah in 2018. They suffered a loss against Qatar 25-23 in the seventh

and eighth place playoff. The previous edition in Salalah had registered participation of 16 teams including Japan, China, South Korea, Lebanon, Qatar, Iraq, Syria, Palestine, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Uzbekistan, Chinese Taipei, Iran, India, Yemen and Oman.

South Korea had lifted the title after beating Japan in the final clash 26-25. Bahrain were positioned in the third place as they had edged Saudi Arabia 29-28 in the third/ fourth match playoff.

It is expected that the domestic handball season will be back in action again in September since stopping in mid March. The resuming of the sporting activities will depend on a decision by the supreme committee and Ministry of Sports Affairs. Based on the decision, OHA will unveil the dates of the preparatory camps and friendly matches of the national team including the national handball Under-19 team besides the announcement of the remaining domestic competition such as the league and the Ministry's shield championship.

SPORTS

CASILLAS ENDS SPANISH FOOTBALL FEDERATION PRESIDENCY BID

MADRID: Spain's World Cup-winning captain Iker Casillas announced on Monday he was ending his bid to run for the presidency of the Spanish Football Federation (RFEF) due to the crisis caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

"I would like to inform you that I have decided not to run for the upcoming RFEF elections", the Porto goalkeeper wrote on social media.

The 39-year-old said he was pulling out of the race for the top job in Spanish football as a result of the "exceptional social, economic and health situation that our country is suffering".

He said the COVID-19 outbreak which has claimed over 27,000 victims in the country had relegated the election into "second place".

Casillas, who led Spain to their first World Cup title in 2010, had announced his intention to stand against current RFEF president Luis Rubiales back in February.

His defection now leaves the way clear for Rubiales to gain a second mandate in the election scheduled for August 17.

Casillas played 167 times for Spain, also winning two Euros in 2008 and 2012, and made more than 700 appearances for Real Madrid, with whom he won five La Liga titles and the Champions League three times, before joining Porto in 2015. Named in the Fifa FIFPro World XI five years in a row between 2008 and 2012 he suffered a heart attack in May 2019 during training and has not played another competitive match since. — AFP

“

I would like to inform you that I have decided not to run for the upcoming RFEF elections

IKER CASILLAS,
FORMER SPAIN
CAPTAIN



FEATURES

Spectacular landscapes reveal clues to Oman's ancient geological heritage

Oman's geological heritage is one of the richest anywhere on earth and great efforts are now being made to preserve its many unique natural formations and sites that trace the spectacular story of how this region came to be formed.... **page 20**

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P22

Spectacular landscapes reveal clues to Oman's ancient geological heritage

MARY OOMMEN

Oman's unique location between the converging African and Asian land masses has resulted in the creation of some of the most stunning geological features to be found anywhere in the world. Its rugged mountains are perfect examples of fold-thrust belts, stratified sedimentary rock and layered basaltic dikes. Natural wonders like the huge piles of pillow lava in Wadi Al-Jizzi, the artistic natural sandstone and limestone sculptures at Duqm, a mysterious looking 250 million year old limestone rock that has been deformed and folded into a concentric shape resembling an eye and 300 million years old limestone that has been folded into layers due to the intense pressure and heat exerted on them - all reveal intriguing details of the evolutionary history of the Arabian peninsula.

Old glacial rocks tell a story of global glaciations while deep wells in south Oman have been found to contain possibly the oldest volcanic glass in the world. The Sultanate also holds a special significance for geologists because of the presence of the biggest and most intact ophiolite complex on Earth - a true rarity. These rare rocks comprise bits of the Earth's mantle that was shoved atop the Arabian Peninsula during a massive mountain-building episode that reshaped the region. Some of the rocks once formed the bed of an ancient ocean called Tethys that completely disappeared in a titanic struggle for space between continental and oceanic plates. Proof of this can be found in the fossilized remains of ancient life



forms, such as trilobites, shells and calcified remains of the oldest fish in the world.

There are many other echoes of these momentous geological events that lie strewn across the Sultanate for those who want to explore the regions geological heritage. Given these unique natural treasures, it is not surprising that geotourism has been gaining particular importance in Oman. Initiatives like the development of geoparks and the introduction of apps like the Oman Geoheritage Guide are perfect examples of how the Sultanate is working towards preserving these sites and ensuring sustainable tourism practices.

The Oman Geoheritage guide for example, creates awareness and provides information about the rich geology in Oman. It has several theme routes and more than 100 geological

attractions that provides those interested with a unique Geotourism experience. These theme routes can be experienced on half-day tours or can be combined as day trips. The tours offer opportunities for different kinds of activities, ranging from a comfortable tour in an air conditioned 4W drive, hiking and trekking tours, mountain bike tours, as well as boat trips including swimming and snorkelling activities.

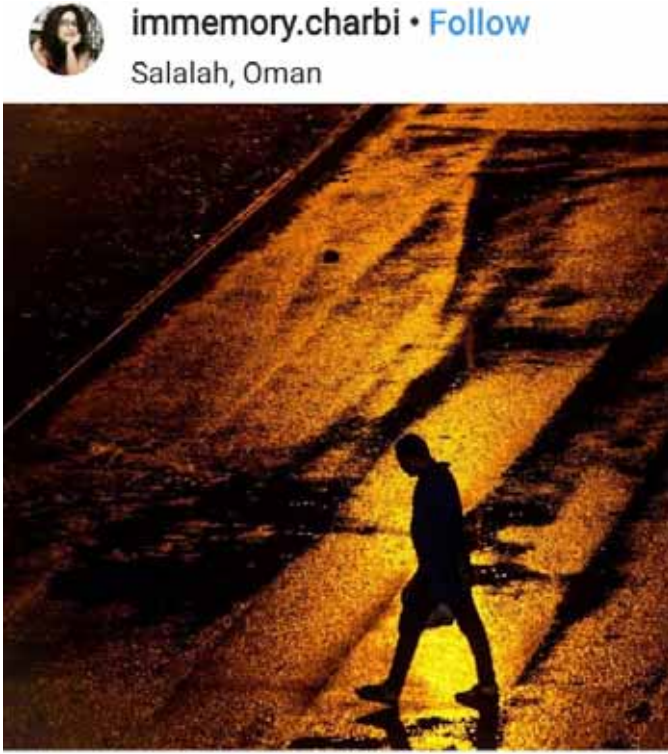
Oman's geological heritage is one of the richest anywhere on earth and great efforts are now being made to preserve its many unique natural formations and sites that



trace the spectacular story of how this region came to be formed. Each of these contribute significantly to our understanding of our planet's key dynamic processes and they need to be preserved for future generations.

FEATURES

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



Majority of Oman residents lack confidence to prepare meals at home

RESEARCH BY THE leading Arabic cooking channel – Fatafeat – has found that more than half of Oman residents lack confidence in the kitchen, with 35 percent stating they don't have enough knowledge of recipes to be able to cook regularly, and 28 percent claiming they lack the skills to be able to cook good meals. Half of respondents also report being too time-poor to be able to cook on regular occasions. 28 percent claim to have little

to no skills whatsoever in order to prepare meals and an additional 50 percent state they only know enough to get by, leading to an overall lack of confidence in the kitchen. In response to the findings, a brand-new app has been launched to aid in inspiring meal preparation and cooking, as well as promoting confidence to experiment and create in the kitchen. Dubbed Genius Kitchen is the first fully Arabic cooking course app in

the world. Genius Kitchen features more than 120 exclusive cooking classes from the Arab world's most popular cooks and chefs, which aren't available on any other platform. It is also home to more than 9,000 recipes, 60 quick-view 'How To' videos and 140 episodes in its library of TV shows, with more content being added every week. Celebrity chef, 'Queen of the Arabian Kitchen' and Genius

Kitchen's Brand Ambassador, Chef Manal Alalem commented on the findings: "Cooking is such a beautiful way to create memories as a family. So much of Arab culture is centred around food, so I was saddened to learn so many people don't feel confident enough to cook with, or for, their families. It's such a privilege to be part of the launch of Genius Kitchen so that we can help change that, especially as we all stay home and stay safe with our families." The research also revealed that key areas respondents would like to improve in the kitchen include: being able to successfully make baked goods (45 percent); knowing how to prepare more complex meals (42 percent); learning quick recipes for easier meals (41 percent); preparing meals for large groups (32 percent) and preparing meat and vegetables (22 percent). Respondents also expressed the desire to improve cutting techniques and knowing how to use kitchen appliances, such as blenders and food processors. The app, now available in Oman, UAE and Egypt, and soon to be launched in KSA, Bahrain and Kuwait, includes Fatafeat favourites and household names in never-before-seen cooking courses to inspire new and seasoned cooks. Multiple lessons within each course have been designed to aid budding chefs in perfecting their skills, including the craft of cookies with Chef Souha Abdallah, mezzah with Chef Daad Abu Jaber, and vegan meals with Chef Safaa Alabed. There are also inspiring and indulgent TV shows within the app – such as Salma fl Bait with Chef Salma Suliman, and Hakawi with Chefs Mohammad Orfali and Tariq Ibrahim – as well as recipes and skills episodes to aid in improving kitchen skills, making Genius Kitchen the ultimate kitchen assistant.

FEATURES

As pandemic kicks
mass tourism,
islands seek to
mend ties with
nature

SINCE CORONAVIRUS emptied Hawaii of tourists, seals have been lounging on beaches, fish are swimming closer to shore and the turquoise water of the U.S. islands' famous Hanauma Bay is 55% clearer, one marine biologist said.

The pandemic has been devastating economically for Hawaii, whose \$18-billion tourism industry employs more than 200,000 people, or about a third of the workforce. It is among the U.S. states with the highest unemployment rate since March.

But the absence of thousands of visitors a day has been a boon for fisheries, coral reefs and other aspects of the fragile island ecosystem that has become degraded by too much tourism and climate change.

As islands around the world grapple with similar challenges, some authorities see the pandemic as an opportunity for change. Before they open the floodgates to mass tourism again, some are questioning how much they want to go back to that model.

"The path we were on prior to COVID wasn't sustainable," said Celeste Connors, executive director of Hawaii Green Growth, one of several U.N. hubs set up around the world to advance sustainable development locally.

"The numbers of tourists that were coming were actually taking a toll on the community and environmental resources," she told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

Hawaii has not yet set a date for reopening to tourists, nor has it announced any plans to limit visitors. But officials said they do want to make a shift, and coronavirus may accelerate it.

"If we can move away from the mass, sort of industrial way tourism has been done and get into a more community and connected type of tourism, I think that's where Hawaii can really shine," said Kalani Kaanaana, director of cultural affairs and natural resources at the Hawaii Tourism Authority.

The pandemic could help small-scale tourism offerings thrive because they

will be less risky for disease transmission than large resorts and attractions, he added.

GREEN RECOVERY

Many island destinations, including Hawaii, were already discussing how to make tourism more sustainable before the novel coronavirus swept around the world this year.

Popular spots from the Philippines to the Faroe Islands have briefly closed to visitors in recent years, to allow their ecosystems to recover. But none could have imagined the months-long closure coronavirus has imposed.

Scientists at the Hawaii Institute of Marine Biology are doing surveys of water quality and wildlife, and are observing changes they have never seen before, said Kuulei Rodgers, principal investigator for the Coral Reef Ecology Lab.

The work could allow them to monitor for the first time just how big an impact tourism has on the local ecosystem.

"There's hope that if we can establish a baseline from what we learn now, we have an argument for trying to preserve that," said Kevin Chang, the head of KUA, an organization advocating for community-based natural resource management in Hawaii.

In the South Pacific, the Cook Islands were already planning a re-branding that would emphasize environmental stewardship.

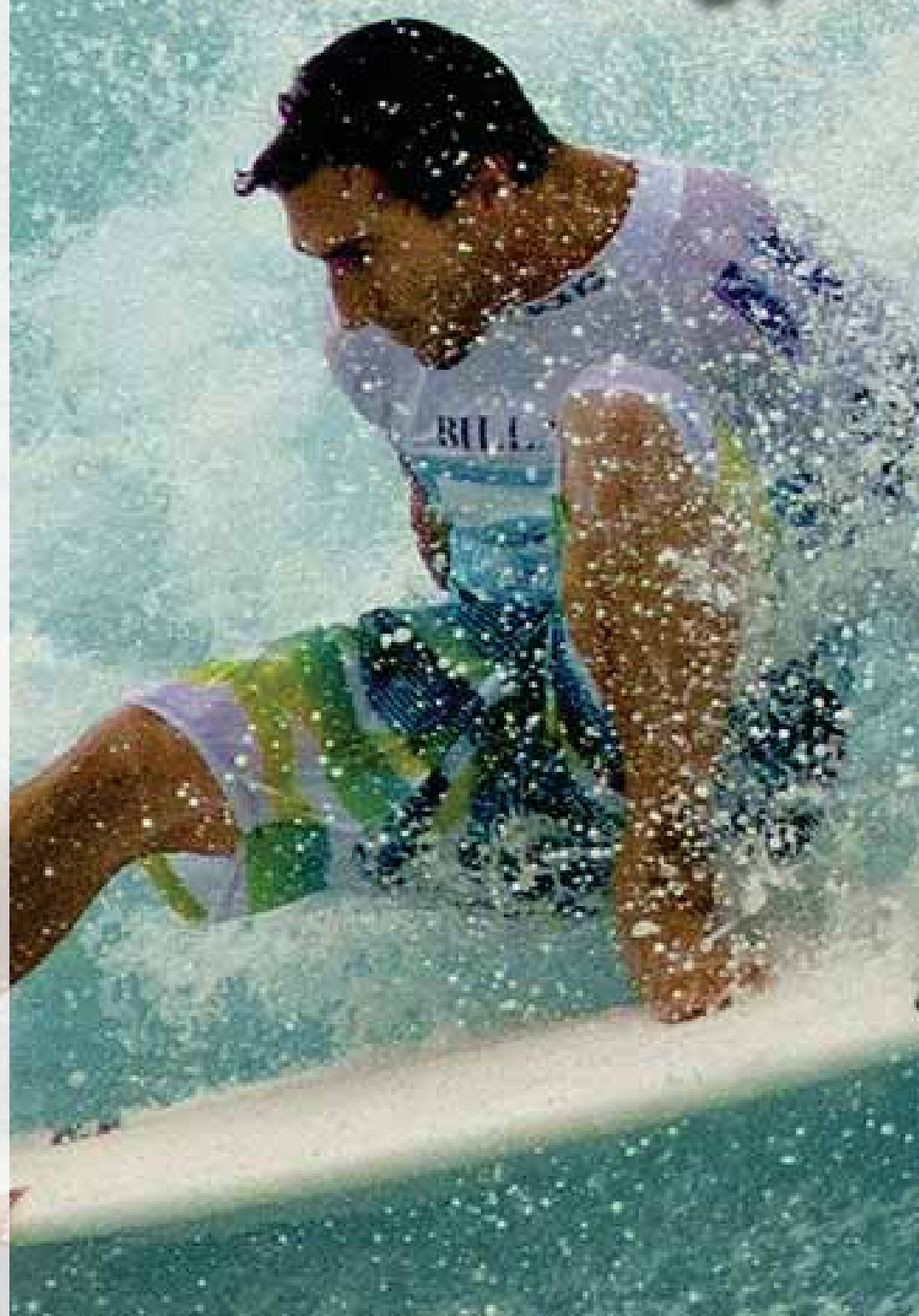
Coronavirus offers a good chance to make that transition, said Metua Vaiimene, the government's director of destination development.

"We have resolved to use this opportunity to reset and refresh our tourism industry," Vaiimene told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

But not all islands feel the same.

"I think what COVID-19 is doing is shaking things up enough that change is possible in places that want to do that," said Kate Brown, executive director of the Global Island Partnership, an alliance spearheaded by island leaders.

"Some will just go back to business as usual," Brown said. —**Thomson Reuters Foundation**



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