

EXPATS WITH RESIDENT VISA CAN RETURN TO OMAN

VINOD NAIR

MUSCAT: Expats with resident visas who are stranded outside the country due to coronavirus-linked air traffic restrictions can return to Oman after getting approval from the Ministry of

Foreign Affairs (MoFA). According to official sources, “A letter seeking approval should be emailed to consular@mofa.gov.om with all relevant details, including the residency status, the urgency of the matter and the financial and social or personal

problems faced due to the current situation.” Once the request is accepted, the approval will be granted in coordination with other relevant authorities to help them return to Oman in some of the incoming repatriation flights.

FAO HAILS OMAN’S STEPS TO CURB OBESITY

MUSCAT: The United Nations agency Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) has hailed the efforts undertaken by the Sultanate to curb the spread of obesity caused by unhealthy habits.

The FAO’s 2020 Report said that the Sultanate, along with some other Arab countries, is utilising a variety of means to stem the spread of obesity, including imposing high taxes on sweet drinks, energy drinks and aerated beverages.

The report indicates that more than 20 million children suffer dwarfness in the East Mediterranean Region including Arab states. It also shows that half of the population of the same region suffers from obesity or overweightness. — **ONA**



PUBLIC, PRIVATE ORGANISATIONS MUST
COORDINATE WITH NEC ON RECRUITMENT

NOTIFY VACANCIES WITHOUT DELAY

SAMUEL KUTTY

MUSCAT: The National Employment Centre (NEC) reiterated that both public and private sectors should notify job vacancies in their respective institutions to the centre without any delay. The move stems from the initiatives by NEC to reinforce its efforts to provide employment opportunities to Omanis, and fill vacancies as needed in organisations.

“All units in the administrative, civil, military and security apparatus, and private sector establishments, are obliged to provide the centre with details of job vacancies and occupations,” the state agency said in statement on Thursday.

The centre, affiliated with the Council of Ministers with financial and administrative independence, has been established by a Royal decree to act as a one-stop centre for job-seekers, to unify employment efforts and effectively coordinate the supply and demand of job opportunities in the Sultanate.

“The NEC has noticed postings to some job positions without prior coordination with the centre. It is imperative, for implementation of the Royal Decree 22/29/2019, on all units of the state administrative apparatus



and private sector establishments to provide the centre with all vacancies and jobs to be filled,” the statement said.

The NEC also noted that it is still receiving requests to fill the position of CEO of the NEC, and according to the announcement issued in this regard the selection process will go through the usual procedures followed.

Between January 1, 2020 and June 3, 2020, as many as 16,338 Omani nationals have found jobs through the centre.

Of the total number, 1,925 were hired in government, civil and military jobs — while private sector contracts have touched 11,956.

Moreover, 531 Omani job-seekers found work in government companies, while 436 have received apprenticeships, and 1,490 pursued entrepreneurship.

GCC HEALTH OFFICIALS REVIEW SITUATION

MUSCAT: The GCC Under-Secretaries of Ministries of Health on Thursday convened their ninth video-conference to discuss the latest developments of coronavirus (COVID-19). Dr Saif bin Salim al Abri, Director-General of Diseases Surveillance & Control, represented the Sultanate in the meeting on behalf of Dr Mohammed bin Saif al Hosni, Under-Secretary of Ministry of Health for Health Affairs. The meeting reviewed the minutes of the previous meeting and discussed the proposal of the GCC Ministers meeting agenda. In addition, the meeting reviewed outputs of the



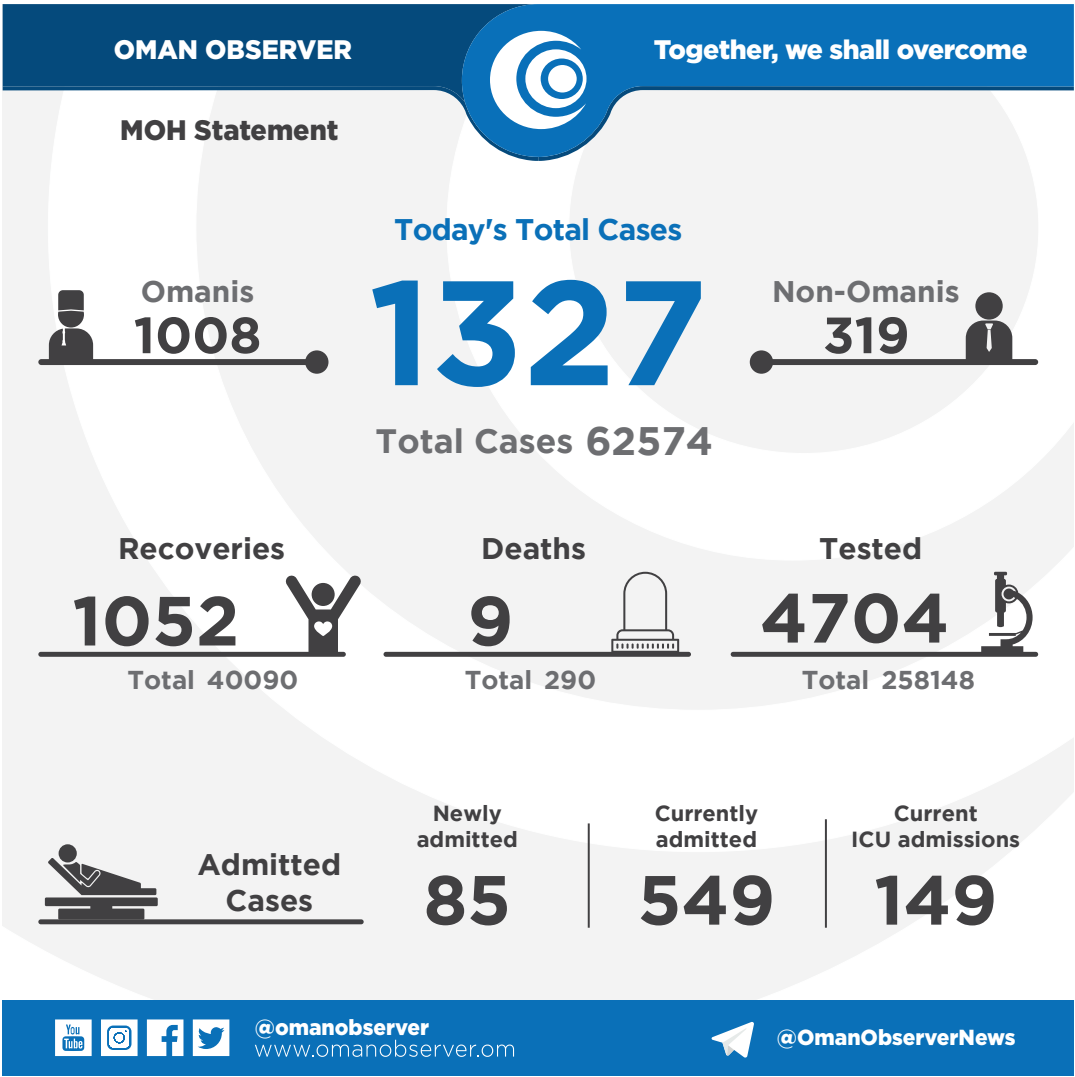
committees and the work teams, represented by the Health Regulations Committee, the joint meeting of the committees for health regulations and communicable diseases, the team of therapeutic protocols, and the vaccine procurement team. The Under-Secretaries have urged all GCC citizens and residents to implement the infection control standards, avoid attending gatherings and adhere to the preventive safety measures. They also stressed the importance of taking the information from the reliable sources and paying no attention to rumours and unofficial social media channels. — **ONA**

DIAM OFFERS INCENTIVES TO AFFECTED SUBSCRIBERS

MUSCAT: The Public Authority for Water (Diam) decided to offer a package of incentives to ease financial burdens on its household water supply service subscribers from among Omani citizens who suffered the brunt of coronavirus pandemic, materially and economically. In particular, Diam package targets private sector workers laid off from their jobs or those who had their salaries slashed, in addition to owners of small businesses most hit by the pandemic. This was announced by Eng Khalid bin Hamoud al Habsi, Senior Manager, Billing. He explained that the incentives include the payment of only 20 per cent of dues and rescheduling of outstanding payments till the end of 2020. Eng Al Habsi advised those who wish to avail the incentives to submit their applications to Diam via email, along with their respective salary certificates or letters (stating salary) from their head offices by July 29, 2020. As for Small and Medium Enterprises, they have to submit authentication documents, including a copy of the Commercial Register in force, a certificate of affiliation to Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Water Account Number by July 18, 2020. — **ONA**

1,327 new COVID-19 cases, 9 deaths

MUSCAT: As many as 1,327 new cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) were registered in the Sultanate on Thursday, in addition to nine related deaths. Among the new cases, 1,008 were Omanis and 319 residents. This brings the total number of positive COVID-19 cases to 62,574 in the Sultanate, in addition to 290 deaths, the Ministry of Health said. The ministry also said that 1,052 new cases have recovered, bringing the total number of recoveries to 40,090. The ministry said that 4,704 tests were conducted and 85 cases were hospitalised over the past 24 hours,



adding that the total number of patients admitted to hospital stood at 549, of them 149 are in intensive care units (ICU). — **ONA**

Epidemiological survey to assess COVID-19 infection in community

KAUSHALENDRA SINGH

SALALAH: Even as the Ministry of Health is making progress in the national survey to investigate the epidemiological propagation of COVID-19 infection across the Sultanate, Dhofar Governorate has made all arrangements for the study.

The serological survey is an initiative of the ministry to identify antibodies that are created by the immune system when someone is infected with the virus as well as antigens in a person's blood.

A source at the General Directorate of Health Services in Dhofar said the survey would be done for over 10 weeks.

Survey teams are getting ready and identification of the areas being marked for the purpose.

Commenting on the need for the survey, a specialist at the MoH said, "The serological survey is a way to measure the immunity of the population against the virus and one of the most important elements for epidemiological evaluation and monitoring of the disease. Some studies have shown that resistance to COVID-19 is determined in part by the degree of immunity against the disease."



The investigation, according to him, is important because laboratory tests have confirmed cases in the Sultanate that are continuing to escalate. "It has become necessary to conduct a survey that will help determine the extent of infection in the community and thus allow conclusions to be made about the rate of cumulative spread in various groups of society."

The serological survey is aimed at measuring the prevalence of COVID-19 infection in the Omani society, as part of the national strategy to deal with the pandemic and use the result

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to determine the day-to-day functioning in the country. The results of the survey can be used as an indicator when it is possible to keep open or close services and facilities in the country, as well as estimate the extent of the virus by age groups. "This is aimed at monitoring laboratory inactive cases, and estimating the level of infection at the state level and the rate of asymptomatic and the cumulative number of infections, in addition to estimating the impact of the standard of living on the spread of the disease in the state," the specialist said.

First youth survey on future of skills begins

STAFF REPORTER

MUSCAT: Oman's Future Skills Initiative, in collaboration with the National Youth Commission (NYC), has launched the Sultanate's first youth survey on the future of skills. The survey, being held from July 15 to 28, is focused on the Omani youth's perceptions of skills needed in a digitalised economy and their interest in pursuing it. The three key things the survey measures are behaviour, interest and applicability of skills.

As many as 46.7 per cent of Oman's population are young Omanis under the age of 29,

making up a significant proportion of the population, and they will not just be inheriting the future but are the shapers and implementers of the vision 2040, the vision of the survey said.

The findings of the survey will be critical when combined with the findings of the employer's survey, in building the Future Skills Framework.

The framework aims to better understand the perception of employers in Oman on the availability of future skills (5 years), and potential initiatives that could help address the skills gap.

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Military Technological College receives 8th batch

MUSCAT: The Military Technological College on Thursday received at its headquarters students with a general education diploma for the academic year 2019/2020 (Admission Centre), to conduct medical examinations and personal interviews for students of the eighth batch, in preparation for their enrolment in the college for the next academic year 2020/2021 in coordination with the Higher Education Admission Centre (HEAC). — **ONA**

Virus impact: OCCI initiative to support private companies



KABEER YOUSUF

MUSCAT: The Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) has taken the initiative to extend all possible support to private companies to meet the challenges that have emerged out of the COVID-19 situation.

As a first step, the authority that regulates the registration, activities and operations of various companies and liaises with the Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI), is carrying out a survey, asking the companies about their issues and areas that need urgent attention.

"This survey is the first step of investigation of the financial difficulties of companies, and we at the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry want to address the financial challenges and difficulties facing the Omani private sector companies in the COVID-19 scenario through this survey," an OCCI official

said.

Any private company registered and operating in the country can inform the Chamber about the main challenges in their financial plans, in obtaining loans or even emergency loans.

Also, a thorough study on the availability of credit facilities, issues about the postponement of the instalments, loan restructuring and loan rescheduling are being studied.

"The private companies seeking the support from the OCCI will also be asked to furnish information related to the bank or banks they are dealing with, their main challenges in expenditures and costs, salaries, rents, government fees, taxes, and any other relevant areas," he said.

Private entities will also be asked to give in detail the reason (s) for the late payment of the dues there any dues for the company on government institutions.

Nod for shifting beehives to Dhofar

SALALAH: The Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, in coordination with the Supreme Committee, will allow beekeepers to shift their beehives from the northern governorates to Dhofar.

"The decision will be as per conditions specified in Ministerial Decree 105/2017. Interested beekeepers can submit their applications to the Agricultural Development Centre in the respective governorates," a statement said. — **ONA**



مقشـن الشاهلة للخدمات الزراعية ش.م.ع.م
MAQSHAN GLOBAL AGRO SERVICES SAOC
COM. Reg. No : 1079787 / رقم السجل التجاري :

إعلان

الدعوة لاجتماع الجمعية العامة الغير عادية

يشرف مجلس إدارة شركة مقشـن الشاهلة للخدمات الزراعية (ش.م.ع.م) بدعوة المساهمين الكرام لحضور اجتماع الجمعية العامة الغير عادية للشركة والمقرر عقده في تمام الساعة 12:30 صباحاً من يوم الأربعاء الموافق 29 يوليو 2020م ، وذلك عبر المنصة الإلكترونية لانتقاد الجمعية العامة الغير عادية يمكنكم الدخول إليها عبر موقع شركة مسقط للمقاصة والإيداع WWW.mcd.gov.om وفي حال عدم اكتمال النصاب ستعقد الجمعية العامة الغير عادية ثانية في تمام الساعة 12:30 صباحاً، من يوم الأحد الموافق 09 أغسطس 2020م وذلك لمناقشة بنود جدول الأعمال التالية :

1. اجازة تعديل النظام الأساسي للشركة وذلك وفقاً للقانون الشركات 2019/18.

ووفقاً للنظام الأساسي للشركة والقرار الوزاري الخاص بضوابط انعقاد الجمعيات العامة للشركات المساهمة المقتلة باستخدام وسائل التقنية الحديثة نود أن نلفت عنايتكم إلى الآتي :

- الالتزام بقيود وشروط الخدمة التي تقدمها المنصة الإلكترونية لشركة مسقط للمقاصة والإيداع .
- يحق للشخص الاعتباري دون غيره تفويض شخص طبيعي آخر لحضور الاجتماع والتصويت على القرارات المتخذة نيابة عنه من خلال وسائل التقنية الحديثة على أن يكون لهذا الشخص الطبيعي رقم مستمر لشركة مسقط للمقاصة والإيداع .
- يبدأ التصويت (عبر النظام المخصص لذلك) على أي من البنود المطروحة في جدول الأعمال قبل تاريخ انعقاد الجمعية بمدة لا تزيد على (3) ثلاثة أيام وحتى انتهاء عملية التصويت على البند المطروح يوم الاجتماع وفي حالة تغيير رصيد أي مساهم بالنقصان سيتم إلغاء أي عملية تصويت قام بها قبل انعقاد الجمعية ، وعليه إعادة التصويت مرة أخرى إذا رغب في ذلك .

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إعلان

الدعوة لاجتماع الجمعية العامة الغير عادية

يشرف مجلس إدارة شركة مقشـن لخدمات النفط والغاز (ش.م.ع.م) بدعوة المساهمين الكرام لحضور اجتماع الجمعية العامة الغير عادية للشركة والمقرر عقده في تمام الساعة الحادي 11:30 صباحاً من يوم الأربعاء الموافق 29 يوليو 2020م ، وذلك عبر المنصة الإلكترونية لانتقاد الجمعية العامة الغير عادية والتي يمكنكم الدخول إليها عبر موقع شركة مسقط للمقاصة والإيداع WWW.mcd.gov.om وفي حال عدم اكتمال النصاب ستعقد الجمعية العامة الغير عادية ثانية في تمام الساعة 11:30 صباحاً، من يوم الأحد الموافق 09 أغسطس 2020م وذلك لمناقشة بنود جدول الأعمال التالية :

1. اجازة تعديل النظام الأساسي للشركة وذلك وفقاً للقانون الشركات 2019/18.
2. زيادة رأس مال الشركة

ووفقاً للنظام الأساسي للشركة والقرار الوزاري الخاص بضوابط انعقاد الجمعيات العامة للشركات المساهمة المقتلة باستخدام وسائل التقنية الحديثة نود أن نلفت عنايتكم إلى الآتي :

- الالتزام بقيود وشروط الخدمة التي تقدمها المنصة الإلكترونية لشركة مسقط للمقاصة والإيداع .
- يحق للشخص الاعتباري دون غيره تفويض شخص طبيعي آخر لحضور الاجتماع والتصويت على القرارات المتخذة نيابة عنه من خلال وسائل التقنية الحديثة على أن يكون لهذا الشخص الطبيعي رقم مستمر لشركة مسقط للمقاصة والإيداع .
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الدعوة لاجتماع الجمعية العامة الغير عادية

يشرف مجلس إدارة شركة مقشـن للخدمات والاستثمار القابضة (ش.م.ع.م) بدعوة المساهمين الكرام لحضور اجتماع الجمعية العامة الغير عادية للشركة والمقرر عقده في تمام الساعة 12:00 صباحاً من يوم الأربعاء الموافق 29 يوليو 2020م ، وذلك عبر المنصة الإلكترونية لانتقاد الجمعية العامة الغير عادية والتي يمكنكم الدخول إليها عبر موقع شركة مسقط للمقاصة والإيداع WWW.mcd.gov.om وفي حال عدم اكتمال النصاب ستعقد الجمعية العامة الغير عادية ثانية في تمام الساعة 12:00 صباحاً، من يوم الأحد الموافق 09 أغسطس 2020م وذلك لمناقشة بنود جدول الأعمال التالية :

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REPATRIATION TRAFFIC TO INDIA SLOWING DOWN

SAMUEL KUTTY

MUSCAT: The number of people wanting to travel back to India by the repatriation flights as result of the COVID-19 crisis is witnessing a slowdown. According to a senior official at the Indian Embassy, although most flights flew in full capacity so far, the demand is expected to come down in the coming weeks.

“As of now there is still demand and most of the flights have departed in full capacity. We expect the demand to come down in future, as majority of the Indian nationals having urgent travel requirement have already departed,” said Anuj Swarup, Second Secretary, Political and Information at the Embassy.

He said that Indian nationals are returning to India on either Vande Bharat Mission flights organised by the government of India or charter flights



organised by corporates and social organisations.

“The scheduling of flights is done taking into account the demand for a particular destination,” Anuj said.

Till Wednesday, 81 Vande Bharat Mission flights operated by the government of India departed from Oman, on which approximately 14,200 Indian nationals have travelled.

In addition to this, around 27,000 Indian nationals travelled in 149 charter flights operated by corporates and welfare associations like Kerala Muslim Cultural Centre (KMCC).

Referring to the trend of decline, Dr Satheesh Nambiar, Chairman of Indian Social Club, said that people who were desperate to reach their home towns have already left.

“The initial apprehension following the outbreak of the pandemic and the consequent clampdown of lockdown has started fading. Many of those registered to fly back are now changing their decision,” he said.

Coupled with this, the positive sentiment reigning on the business front after the reopening of commercial activities are deterring many people from going back, said Dr Nambiar.

STAY

HOME

STAY

SAFE

SHINAS

شركة تطوير شnavاص

إعلان لحضور الجمعية العامة العادية السنوية

يسر مجلس إدارة شركة تطوير شnavاص (ش.م.ع.م) دعوة المساهمين الكرام لحضور اجتماع الجمعية العامة العادية السنوية المقرر عقده بقاعة السلام في تمام الساعة ١٠ من صباح يوم الاثنين الموافق ٢٠ يوليو-٢٠٢٠ للنظر في جدول الاعمال التالية:

١. دراسة تقرير مجلس الإدارة المنتهية في ٣١-١٢-٢٠١٩م.

٢. دراسة تقرير مدقق الحسابات والموافقة على الميزانية العمومية للسنة المالية المنتهية ٣١-١٢-٢٠١٩م.

٣. تعيين مراقب حسابات الشركة للسنة المالية التي تنتهي في ٣١-١٢-٢٠٢٠م.

وينص النظام الاساسي للشركة على أن يحق لكل مساهم تفويض أي شخص آخر لحضور هذا الاجتماع، والتصويت على مقررات الجمعية نيابة عنه بموجب التفويض الخطي.

للعلم في حال عدم اكتمال النصاب ستعقد الجمعية العمومية العادية مرة أخرى في تاريخ ٢٣ يوليو ٢٠٢٠، لأي استفسار بما يتعلق بالبنود على جدول الاعمال يرجى الاتصال على ٩٢٧٧٧٩٨٥.

شاكرين لكم حسن تعاونكم

وتفضلوا بشفائق الاحترام والتقدير

رئيس مجلس الادارة

مقشن الشاملة للخدمات الزراعية ش.م.ع.م

MAQSHAN GLOBAL AGRO SERVICES SAOC

رقم السجل التجاري : 1079787 COM. Reg. No :

إعلان

الدعوة لاجتماع الجمعية العامة العادية السنوية

يتشرف مجلس إدارة شركة مقشن الشاملة للخدمات الزراعية (ش.م.ع.م) بدعوة المساهمين الكرام لحضور اجتماع الجمعية العامة العادية السنوية للشركة والمقرر عقده في تمام الساعة 11:00 صباحاً من يوم الأربعاء الموافق 29 يوليو2020م، وذلك عبر المنصة الإلكترونية لاتخاذ الجمعية العامة العادية السنوية والتي يمكنكم الدخول إليها عبر موقع شركة مسقط للمقاصة والإيداع (WWW.mcd.gov.om) وفي حال عدم اكتمال النصاب ستعقد الجمعية العامة العادية السنوية ثانية في تمام الساعة 11:00 صباحاً من يوم الأحد الموافق 09 أغسطس 2020م ويكون الاجتماع صحيحاً ايا كان عدد الاسهم الحاضرة ، وذلك لمناقشة بنود جدول الأعمال التالية :

- 1- دراسة تقرير مجلس الإدارة عن السنة المالية المنتهية في 2019/12/31 والموافقة عليه.
- 2- دراسة تقرير مراقب الحسابات والموافقة على الميزانية العمومية وحساب الأرباح والخسائر عن السنة المالية المنتهية في 2019/12/31.
- 3- الإحاطة بالعمليات التي أجرتها الشركة مع الأطراف ذات العلاقة خلال السنة المالية المنتهية في 2019/12/31.
- 4- تعيين مراقب الحسابات للسنة المالية التي ستنتهي في 2020/12/31 وتحديد أتعابهم .

ووفقاً للنظام الأساسي للشركة والقرار الوزاري الخاص بضوابط انعقاد الجمعيات العامة للشركات المساهمة المقتلة باستخدام وسائل التقنية الحديثة نود أن نلفت عنايتكم إلى الآتي :

- الالتزام ببقود وشروط الخدمة التي تقدمها المنصة الإلكترونية لشركة مسقط للمقاصة والإيداع .
- يحق للشخص الاعتباري دون غيره تفويض شخص طبيعي آخر لحضور الاجتماع والتصويت على القرارات المتخذة نيابة عنه من خلال وسائل التقنية الحديثة على أن يكون لهذا الشخص الطبيعي رقم مستمر لشركة مسقط للمقاصة والإيداع .
- يبدأ التصويت (عبر النظام المخصص لذلك) على أي من البنود المطروحة في جدول الأعمال قبل تاريخ انعقاد الجمعية بمدة لا تزيد على (3) ثلاثة أيام وحتى انتهاء عملية التصويت على البند المطروح يوم الاجتماع وفي حالة تغيير رصيدي أي مساهم بالنقصان سيتم إلغاء أي عملية تصويت قام بها قبل انعقاد الجمعية ، وعليه إعادة التصويت مرة أخرى إذا رغب في ذلك .

كما يجب على جميع المساهمين التأكد من تحديث بياناتهم لدى شركة مقشن لخدمات النفط والغاز وخاصة رقم الهاتف النقال للمساهم ولزيم من الاستفسارات أطلب نسخة من التقارير المالية يرجى الاتصال بالفاضل / محمد بن علي السهيلي على أرقام الهواتف التالية : 24231218/24231219 .

رئيس مجلس الادارة

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100% ISO 14001:2015

100% ISO 45001:2018

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مقشن لخدمات النفط والغاز ش.م.ع.م

MAQSHAN OIL & GAS SERVICES SAOC

رقم السجل التجاري : 1079797 COM. Reg. No :

إعلان

الدعوة لاجتماع الجمعية العامة العادية السنوية

يتشرف مجلس إدارة شركة مقشن لخدمات النفط والغاز (ش.م.ع.م) بدعوة المساهمين الكرام لحضور اجتماع الجمعية العامة العادية السنوية للشركة والمقرر عقده في تمام الساعة 10:00 صباحاً من يوم الأربعاء الموافق 29 يوليو2020م، وذلك عبر المنصة الإلكترونية لاتخاذ الجمعية العامة العادية السنوية والتي يمكنكم الدخول إليها عبر موقع شركة مسقط للمقاصة والإيداع (WWW.mcd.gov.om) وفي حال عدم اكتمال النصاب ستعقد الجمعية العامة العادية السنوية ثانية في تمام الساعة 10:00 صباحاً من يوم الأحد الموافق 09 أغسطس 2020م ويكون الاجتماع صحيحاً ايا كان عدد الاسهم الحاضرة ، وذلك لمناقشة بنود جدول الأعمال التالية :

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3. دراسة مقترح توزيع أرباح نقدية على المساهمين بنسبة (264 %) من رأس المال وذلك بمبلغ قدرة (2.64) ريال عن كل سهم والموافقة عليه .
4. الإحاطة بالعمليات التي أجرتها الشركة مع الأطراف ذات العلاقة خلال السنة المالية المنتهية في 2019/12/31.
5. التصديق على بدل حضور جلسات مجلس الإدارة واللجان المنبثقة والتي تفاضها أعضاء مجلس الإدارة عن السنة المالية المنتهية في 2019/12/31. وتحديد مقدار البديل للسنة المالية التي تنتهي في 2020.
6. مكافأة أعضاء مجلس الإدارة بمبلغ (50,000) ريال عماني عن السنة المالية المنتهية في 2019/12/31.
7. تخصيص مبلغ (15,000) ريال عماني لدعم المجتمع المحلي عن السنة المالية المنتهية في 2020/12/31.
8. تعيين مراقب الحسابات للسنة المالية التي ستنتهي في 2020/12/31 وتحديد أتعابهم .

ووفقاً للنظام الأساسي للشركة والقرار الوزاري الخاص بضوابط انعقاد الجمعيات العامة للشركات المساهمة المقتلة باستخدام وسائل التقنية الحديثة نود أن نلفت عنايتكم إلى الآتي :

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مقشن للخدمات والاستثمار (القابضة) ش.م.ع.م

MAQSHAN SERVICES & INVESTMENT (HOLDING) SAOC

رقم السجل التجاري : 2152967 COM. Reg. No :

إعلان

الدعوة لاجتماع الجمعية العامة العادية السنوية

يتشرف مجلس إدارة شركة مقشن للخدمات والاستثمار (القابضة) (ش.م.ع.م) بدعوة المساهمين الكرام لحضور اجتماع الجمعية العامة العادية السنوية للشركة والمقرر عقده في تمام الساعة 10:30 صباحاً من يوم الأربعاء الموافق 29 يوليو2020م ، وذلك عبر المنصة الإلكترونية لاتخاذ الجمعية العامة العادية السنوية والتي يمكنكم الدخول إليها عبر موقع شركة مسقط للمقاصة والإيداع (WWW.mcd.gov.om) وفي حال عدم اكتمال النصاب ستعقد الجمعية العامة العادية السنوية ثانية في تمام الساعة 10:30 صباحاً من يوم الأحد الموافق 09 أغسطس 2020م ايا كان عدد الاسهم الحاضرة ، وذلك لمناقشة بنود جدول الأعمال التالية :

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- 3- دراسة مقترح توزيع أرباح نقدية على المساهمين بنسبة 51% من رأس المال بمقدار 0.510 ريال عماني عن كل سهم والموافقة عليه.
- 4- الإحاطة بالعمليات التي أجرتها الشركة مع الأطراف ذات العلاقة خلال السنة المالية المنتهية في 2019/12/31.
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WORLD

FRANCE TIGHTENS MASK RULE

PARIS: France will make the wearing of face masks compulsory in indoor public places from next week, the government said on Thursday as it noted “signs” of an uptick in the coronavirus outbreak.

Already obligatory gear on trains, metros and buses, masks will now also become mandatory in shops, supermarkets and other enclosed spaces frequented by the public, Prime Minister Jean Castex said in the Senate.

“The wearing of a mask, along with barrier measures (such as social distancing and regular handwashing) is an effective method of prevention and protection,” he said.

The announcement came as Health Minister Olivier Veran noted signs of a “resurgence” in the coronavirus epidemic that has claimed 30,120 lives in France to date.

Constant “vigilance” was required by all, he told MPs, “at a time when a certain number of indicators seem to show that there are signs



of a resurgence” of the virus.

Veran earlier told public radio that: “We are witnessing in certain hospitals in Paris weak signs of an epidemic resurgence, which is why I urge the French to remain particularly vigilant, active, against the virus.”

An outbreak hotspot has been reported in Mayenne, northern France, where indoor mask-wearing became compulsory with immediate effect already on

Thursday.

According to the latest official data, released on Wednesday, France had 133 new coronavirus patients hospitalised in 24 hours, and 17 more people in intensive care, for a total of 482.

This was down from a high of 4,281 people hospitalised in one day in April, and more than 7,100 people in intensive care at the height of the epidemic.

Veran said an uptick in

hospital admissions and telephone calls to emergency services were among the indicators of a possible epidemic upturn that required “special attention”.

One of the hardest-hit countries in Europe, France has all but emerged from a weeks-long countrywide lockdown to contain the COVID-19 epidemic, which had placed immense pressure on its hospital system.

— **AFP**

World’s first e-pilgrimage at French shrine

TOULOUSE: France’s Lourdes Roman Catholic shrine, which usually attracts millions of pilgrims every year, on Thursday organised the first ever e-pilgrimage designed to gather people from all over the world, but virtually.

Lourdes is usually thronged in summer with pilgrims who travel, sometimes across the world, to light a candle in the sanctuary where Catholics believe the Virgin Mary appeared.

But with flights grounded, many international borders still closed and social distancing rules in place due to the coronavirus pandemic, Lourdes had to find another way.

The sanctuary in southwest France broadcast mass and prayers all day in five different languages on television and

social media for the e-pilgrimage, dubbed “Lourdes United”.

A live two-hour celebration took place during the afternoon from the Grotto, to mark what the faithful believe is the eighteenth and last apparition of Mary to young girl Bernadette Soubirous in 1858.

The Grotto, a cave, is where Soubirous is said to have seen the mother of Jesus.

The site also boasts a spring with reputed healing powers, from which pilgrims drink.

Even virtually, “there is a real communion between pilgrims,” said Olivier Ribadeau-Dumas, rector of the Sanctuary of Lourdes.

The anniversary is the “opportunity for all those who are far to get together, even if it will never replace coming on a pilgrimage,” he added. — **AFP**

UK ACCUSES RUSSIA OF HACKING

LONDON: Britain on Thursday risked worsening fraught diplomatic ties with Russia by accusing Moscow-linked hackers of targeting labs conducting coronavirus vaccine research.

The government pointed the finger at the Kremlin after the country’s cyber-security agency said a hacking group called APT29 was “almost certainly” linked to Russian intelligence.

In a separate claim, London said “Russian actors” sought to disrupt last year’s UK general election by circulating leaked trade documents between Britain and the United States.

Both accusations came even before the publication in the coming days of a long-awaited parliamentary report into alleged Russian interference in the 2016 Brexit vote.

Russia quickly rejected the accusations as “groundless”.

The two countries have been at loggerheads since Moscow was accused of trying to kill double agent Sergei Skripal with a powerful military-grade nerve agent in 2018. — **Reuters**

Solar Orbiter gives scientists unprecedented look at Sun



PARIS: Scientists said on Thursday they had obtained the closest ever images taken of the Sun as part of a pan-European mission to study solar winds and flares that could have far-reaching impacts back on Earth.

The European Space Agency's solar Orbiter blasted off from Florida's Cape Canaveral in February and completed its first fly by of our star last month,

sending back unprecedented images of phenomena close to its surface.

"The first images are exceeding our expectations," said Daniel Muller, solar Orbiter project scientist at ESA.

"We can already see hints of very interesting phenomena that we have not been able to observe in detail before.

In particular, the team observed dozens of miniature

solar flares, known as "campfires", which until now had never been captured on film.

David Berghmans, from Belgium's Royal Observatory, said the campfires were several million times smaller than solar flares, which can be observed from Earth.

Nevertheless, the smallest the team observed still measured around 400 kilometres across

The team observed dozens of miniature solar flares, known as "campfires", which until now had never been captured on film.

-- "about the size of a small European country," said Berghmans.

Solar winds and flares emit billions of highly charged particles that impact planets, including Earth. But the phenomena remain poorly understood despite decades of research.

The largest solar storm on record hit North America in September 1859, knocking out much of the continent's telegraph network and bathing the skies in an aurora viewable as far away as the Caribbean.

Solar ejections can also disrupt radar systems, radio networks and can even render satellites useless, though such extremes are rare. — AFP

IN BRIEF

Gabon names woman PM

LIBREVILLE: Gabon President Ali Bongo on Thursday promoted his defence minister, Rose Christiane Ossouka Raponda, to prime minister on Thursday, the first time a woman has held the role in the country.

Ossouka Raponda, 56, is the sixth prime minister appointed since Bongo succeeded his father in 2009. Her first job is to form a new government after her predecessor, Julien Nkoghe Bekale, stepped down earlier in the day.

She will take on two major challenges: declining oil production and prices, which have weighed on growth in recent years, and the COVID-19 pandemic. The Central African country has registered nearly 6,000 cases to date.

Spain to cull 93,000 mink to curb virus

MADRID: Health authorities have ordered the culling of all 93,000 mink at a farm in eastern Spain to prevent human contagion after discovering that most of the animals there had been infected with the coronavirus.

The farm in the village of La Puebla de Valverde in the region of Aragon, 200 km (125 miles) east of Madrid, came to the attention of the authorities after the wife of one of its workers tested positive in May.

Joaquin Olona, head of the Aragon agriculture department, told reporters on Thursday that seven farm workers had subsequently tested positive, including the woman's husband.

Thunberg urges climate action

Stockholm: Greta Thunberg and three other young climate activists on Thursday launched an appeal to EU leaders to "face up to the climate emergency", in an open letter signed by 150 scientists and a host of celebrities.

In an open letter sent to the 27 heads of state and governments of the EU, who will be meeting for an extraordinary summit in Brussels this Friday and Saturday, Swedish teen Thunberg urged immediate action, including seven "first steps, essential to our chance of avoiding a climate- and ecological disaster."

The activists call for a halt on "all investments in fossil fuel exploration and extraction," and an end to "all fossil fuel subsidies," both "effective immediately."

ANALYSIS



A campaign poster is displayed in Aleppo on Wednesday. — AFP

War-torn Syria goes to the polls

MAHER AL MOUNES

Syria prepared for parliamentary elections to be held on Sunday as President Bashar al Assad marked a second decade in power mired by war, international sanctions and economic woes. The legislative polls, to be held across 70 per cent of territory under government control, are the country's third since the start of the war in 2011. As the war-battered economy wanes, some 2,100 candidates — including prominent businessmen under Western sanctions — are competing for 250 seats. Several lists were allowed to run across the country but any real opposition is absent from the poll, no surprises are expected and the ruling Baath party's hegemony is guaranteed. The elections, held every four years and so far always won by Assad's Baath party and its allies, were due in April but twice postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The global economic carnage wreaked by coronavirus has

compounded Syria's woes, which include stinging inflation and the free fall of the national currency on the black market. With many Syrians choking from the soaring cost of living, most candidates have pledged to stem the price hikes. Food prices have doubled nationwide over the past year, in a country where more than 80 per cent of people already live in poverty, the World Food Programme says. Other candidates are running on promises of reconstruction, fixing war-ravaged infrastructure and bringing home millions of refugees. Those displaced from areas still outside government control will be able to cast their ballots in polling stations set up specially for them across the country. But Syrians outside the country, including millions of refugees, cannot take part. "Expatriates are not allowed to vote in the parliamentary elections except in the polling centres inside the country according to the elections law," electoral commission member Riad al Qawas said. — AFP

BLAZING A TRAIL IN VIRUS FIGHT

SOPHIE BOUILLON

Raised by a Cameroon-raised, Harvard-trained molecular biologist, the African Centre of Excellence for Genomics of Infectious Diseases (ACEGID) has been at the forefront in the fight of killer diseases such as Ebola, Lassa fever - and now COVID-19. The force behind the lab is Professor Christian Happi, who has a steely belief in catapulting young African scientists to the top of scientific research. Happi founded his laboratory in 2016 in an ageing building at Redeemer's University in Ede, an unassuming town in southwest Nigeria, with the help of funding from the World Bank and Nigerian and foreign philanthropists. Since then, nearly 1,000 scientists, most of them Nigerians and the others from West Africa, have passed through its doors to gain top-level experience in biochemistry and genomics. Happi's team in Ede has developed a fast-track test that has already been certified by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and is currently being vetted for use in Nigeria and across Africa. The test - which resembles the kind of simple dip stick used for pregnancies - costs

around \$3 (2.60 euros) each, against around \$100 for polymerase chain reaction (PCR) tests, a method that requires an expensive, well-equipped lab. In Cameroon, where he caught malaria as a child, Happi trained in biochemistry before going to Britain in 1998 at the age of 30 to attend a conference on malaria. It wasn't his interest in malaria that brought him home, but Lassa fever - a deadly haemorrhagic cousin of Ebola. In 2007, learning about the disease that killed around 700 Nigerians each year, Happi was stupefied to find that tests for Lassa were sent to Germany. In the time it took to get the results back, 90 per cent of patients had already died. He spent the next year raising funds and headed to Irrua, in southern Nigeria, where he built a lab. Today, Lassa tests are carried out much faster and with less trepidation. The disease, which is endemic to Nigeria, claims between 100 and 200 lives each year. Bolstered by this experience, Happi founded ACEGID, which became a crucible of learning about African microbes - he recently discovered the Ekpoma 1 and Ekpoma 2 viruses, among hundreds of viral strains that inhabit tropical forests in West Africa. — AFP

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

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making life easy

Petroleum Development Oman sets 2020 capital budget at \$5.5 bn

CONRAD PRABHU

MUSCAT: Notwithstanding a “perfect storm” of developments currently buffeting the company, Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) — the country’s biggest oil and gas producer — has earmarked a capital budget of \$5.498 billion for 2020. This compares with a capital expenditure (capex) of \$5.3 billion and operating expenditure (opex) of \$2 billion in 2019, the majority state-owned energy firm announced in its newly published Sustainability Report 2019.

At the same time, the company has embarked on one of the most ambitious cost reduction exercises in its history in response to the challenges unleashed by the oil price shock and the resulting economic slowdown — designed to achieve a 30 per cent cut in its activities and operational costs.

“At time of writing this report, PDO was facing the ‘perfect storm’ entailing the concurrent macro-economic and health threat of the COVID-19 pandemic, combined with a collapse in oil prices, and large national unemployment and exponentially rising debt,” said PDO in its report.

“We have established several teams focused on the Near Term Sustainability Programme (NTSP) aimed at addressing a step change in structural cost reductions and productivity improvements on a far greater scale than achieved throughout the history of PDO, with a 30 per cent unit cost reduction in every single activity, process and deliverable across the

Dr Mohammed al Rumhy

Raoul Restucci

Company. Our Cost Optimisation Reviews (CORs) will continue to provide the platform for engaging with contractors to identify mutually sustainable, more resilient and more efficient ways of working,” it stated.

In a foreword, Dr Mohammed bin Hamad al Rumhy, Minister of Oil and Gas and Chairman of the Board of Directors of PDO, summed up the formidable challenges confronting the energy sector and the wider economy. “These are challenging times for the entire nation,” the Minister declared. “The COVID-19 emergency, oil price instability, production restrictions, pressure on the public finances, climate change concerns, substantial technological disruption and

continuing geopolitical instability have combined to create a testing environment.”

Dr Al Rumhy nevertheless underscored the importance of the sector to the national economy, stressing, “There is no doubt that the sector, as the Sultanate’s key engine for revenue, has adapted and must continue to adapt to meet these pressures.”

But despite the cash-constrained environment and ongoing oil price volatility, PDO delivered its highest hydrocarbon production in nearly two decades — representing a combined daily oil, gas and condensate output of 1.210 million barrels of oil equivalent per day, according to Managing Director Raoul Restucci.

PERFECT STORM:
‘THESE ARE CHALLENGING TIMES FOR THE ENTIRE NATION’: DR RUMHY, MINISTER OF OIL AND GAS AND CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF PDO

“The average oil production was 616,380 bpd — the highest since 2005 — representing a 6,210 bpd increase on 2018,” he said in the Managing Director’s foreword. “The average Government daily non-associated gas production during 2019 was 62.2 million cubic metres per day, which was in line with customer demand and commensurate with PDO’s role as swing producer. Condensate production was 77,950 bpd, almost 20 per cent (more than 8,000 bpd) higher than the 2018 average. This exceeded 94,000 bpd in the fourth quarter, driven by the start-up of the Rabab Harweel Integrated Project (RHIP), the largest in our history,” he further noted.

Also during 2019, PDO bolstered its hydrocarbon reserves with the booking of a total of 136 million barrels of oil and 1.1 trillion cubic feet (Tcf) of non-associated gas as Commercial Contingent Resource volumes for the year. The company also achieved the lowest unit finding cost for oil in a decade at just \$1 per barrel, he added.

BUSINESS

Oman attends GCC eGov, and Post and Telecom meetings

BUSINESS REPORTER

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Technology and Communications (MTC) participated in the 22nd meeting of the GCC eGovernment Executive Committee and 28th meeting of GCC Committee for Under-Secretaries for Post and Telecommunications which were held virtually through conference video calls. The Sultanate's team was headed by Dr Salim bin Sultan al Ruzaiqi, CEO at MTC.

During the meeting, the committee discussed the General Secretariat report and what has been implemented of the decisions that had been agreed on in its 21st meeting. The Committee also reviewed some suggestions on developing the GCC portal and preparing a standard model for the implementation of the GCC eGov Guidelines Strategy as well as issuing a report containing GCC Egov achievements.

The committee also went through the developments of eGovernment programmes of the GCC countries in the United Nations eGovernment survey which was issued recently by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. The committee also reviewed the report of the General Secretariat on the future direction of the committee's work and the ICT initiatives of the GCC countries in facing the spread of coronavirus. In addition, the committee was briefed on Saudi initiatives to protect kids in cyberspace and empower women in cyber-security.

The agenda of the 28th meeting of the



GCC Committee for Under-Secretaries of Post and Telecommunications discussed a number of topics related to telecommunications, IT and post services including the unified draft law regulating the activities of private companies and institutions working in the field of international urgent post and parcels and the importance of updating it in accordance with the current developments, as well as restructuring the working teams and committees in postal services at the GCC countries. In addition, the committee emphasised the importance of studying the inter-connectivity between the GCC countries.

The participants also discussed the need for coordination of visits for social media companies, with the aim of shar-

ing knowledge and expertise among the GCC countries, as well as urging companies providing Internet services and applications to meet the requirements and needs of the GCC countries in this field. The committee also addressed the recommendations of the Technical Committee of the Technical Office for Communications related to radio interference between the GCC countries and neighboring countries and the results of The World Telecommunication Conference held at the end of last year.

Finally, the committee addressed the efforts of the GCC countries, the role of the telecommunications and information technology sector and business continuity plans in facing and recovering from the pandemic.

MENA M&A transactions totalled \$50 bn in first half of 2020

BUSINESS REPORTER

MUSCAT: Investment banking fees in the Middle East and North Africa reached an estimated \$522.1 million during the first half of 2020, down 25 per cent from last year and a three-year low with declines recorded across equity underwriting, M&A advisory, and syndicated lending, according to Refinitiv, the world's leading provider of financial markets data.

Equity capital markets underwriting fees declined 62 per cent to \$17.1 million,



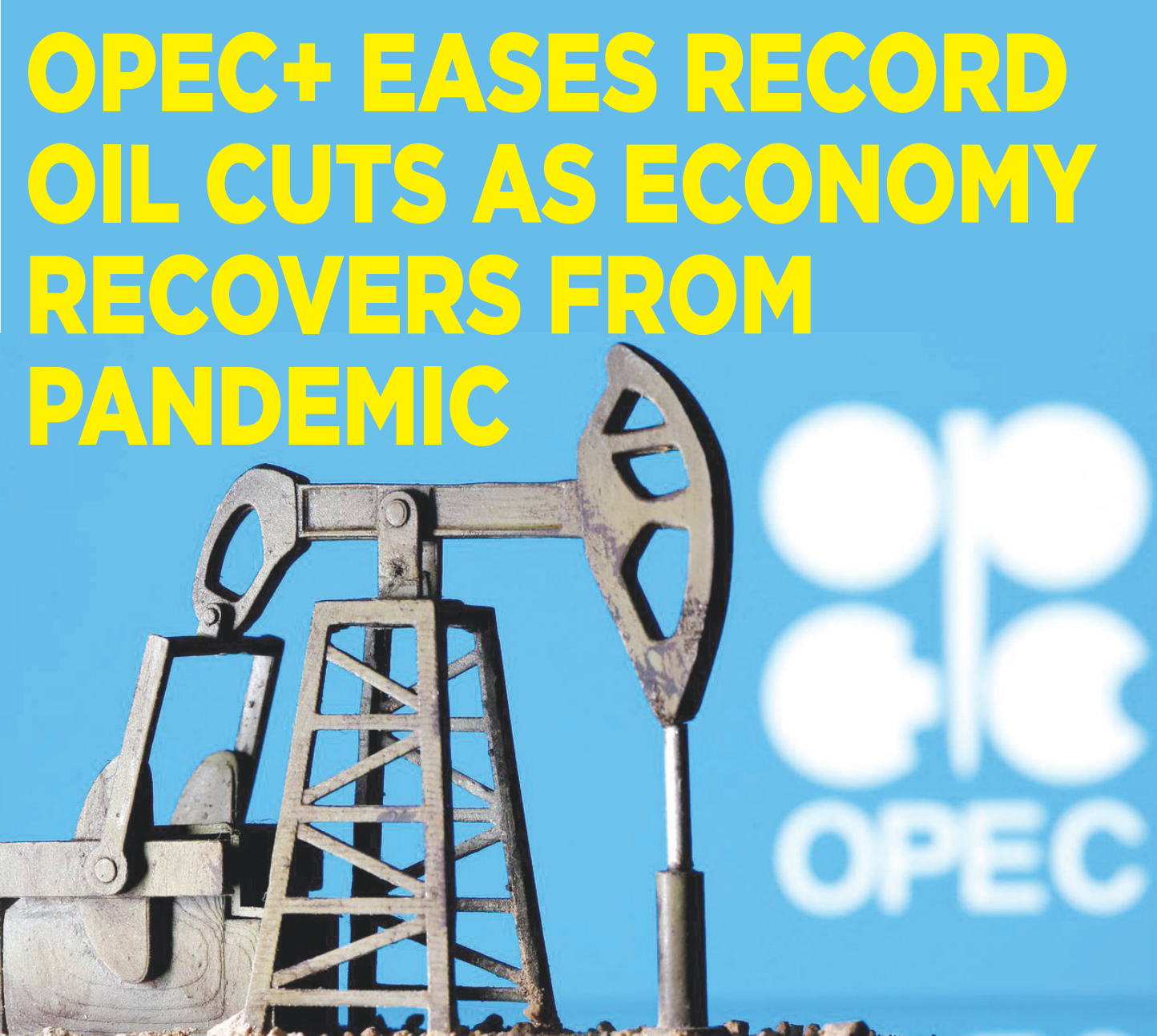
marking the lowest first half year total for equity fees in the region since 2009. Advisory fees earned from completed M&A transactions generated

\$206.4 million, down 7 per cent year-on-year, while syndicated lending fees fell 50 per cent to a five-year low of \$137.7 million. Debt capital markets under-

writing fees increased 6 per cent year-on-year to \$161.0 million, the highest first half total since our records began in 2000, the report said.

Government & Agency fees accounted for 36 per cent of total investment banking fees earned in the region during the first half of 2020, up from 24 per cent during the same period last year. Saudi Arabia generated the most fees in the region during the first six months of the year, a total of \$206.0 million accounting for 39 per cent, followed by the United Arab Emirates with 29 per cent.

BUSINESS



A 3D printed oil pump jack is seen in front of displayed Opec logo in this illustration picture. — Reuters

LONDON: Opec and allies such as Russia agreed on Wednesday to ease record oil supply curbs from August as the global economy slowly recovers from the coronavirus pandemic but said a second wave of the virus could complicate rebalancing in the market.

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and its allies, known as Opec+, have been cutting output since May by 9.7 million barrels per day, or 10 per cent of global supply, after the virus destroyed a third of global demand.

From August, cuts will officially taper to 7.7 million bpd until December. However, Saudi Arabian Energy Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman said the effective curbs would be deeper because countries which overproduced in May-June would make extra cuts in August and September to make up, so total cuts would end up amounting to about 8.1 million to 8.3 million bpd.

“As we move to the next phase of the agreement the extra supply resulting from the scheduled easing of production cuts will be consumed as demand continues on its recovery path,” Prince Abdulaziz after a meeting of a ministerial advisory panel to Opec+, known as the JMMC.

He said Saudi oil exports in August would remain the same as in July because about 0.5 million bpd of extra barrels the kingdom was set to pump would be used domestically.

The recovery has allowed some US producers to resume production. Russia and Opec rely heavily on oil revenue but they will be keen not to push prices too high to give a further boost to rival US oil output growth

Oil prices have recovered to almost \$43 a barrel from a 21-year low below \$16 in April.

The recovery has allowed some US producers to resume production. Russia and Opec rely heavily on oil revenue but they will be keen not to push prices too high to give a further boost to rival US oil output growth.

On Tuesday, Opec said it saw demand recovering by 7 million bpd in 2021 after falling by 9 million this year.

However, fears of a second wave of coronavirus are weighing heavily on the market and Opec+ said in documents seen by Reuters that “a second strong wave” could deepen the hit to demand to 11 million bpd this year.

Under such a negative scenario, Opec would fail to address a huge global stocks overhang by the end of the year, it said.

— Reuters



A man wearing a face mask walks past the European Commission headquarters as the spread of COVID-19 continues in Brussels. — Reuters

EU pushes for deal on mass economic stimulus

WARSAW: EU countries nudged towards an agreement on a mass stimulus scheme to kickstart economies hammered by the coronavirus but disagreements persisted over the scale and access to funds before Friday's summit.

The 27 national EU heads will meet face-to-face for the first time since COVID-19 pushed Europe into a sweeping lockdown. They will haggle over their next budget proposed at 1.074 trillion euros (\$1.22 trillion) for 2021-27 and an attached recovery fund of 750 billion euros in grants and loans.

The Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, Finland and Austria - the wealthy but thrifty net contributors to the bloc's joint coffers - want to lower the scale of funding, favour loans over grants for their southern peers hit harder by the pandemic and demand economic reforms as preconditions for accessing the money.

Differences also linger over procedures to assess and approve, or reject, applications for handouts from the 750 billion new fund as well as framing conditions on respecting democratic values and fighting climate change to win aid.

“Rationally speaking, a deal is possible, but summits are not always rational,” said one senior EU diplomat ahead of the talks planned for Friday and Saturday.

“The only thing that the frugals have not entirely accepted is the grants and loans split... they want to reduce the amounts, as well as insist on issues of governance, rebates, the overall balance.”

European Council President Charles Michel, who will host the Brussels talks, has put forward a compromise plan that goes some way to assuaging the concerns of the frugal camp, weary of bankrolling peers they see as fiscally reckless and wanting to keep their EU budget reductions.

— Reuters



A man wearing a face mask walks past China's central bank in Beijing. — Reuters

China's economy rebounds after steep slump

BEIJING: China's economy returned to growth in the second quarter after a deep slump at the start of the year, but unexpected weakness in domestic consumption underscored the need for more policy support to bolster the recovery after the shock of the coronavirus crisis.

Asian share markets and the Chinese yuan fell, partly reflecting the broad challenges facing the world's second-largest economy as it grapples with the double-whammy of the pandemic and heightened tensions with the United States over trade, technology and geopolitics.

Gross domestic product (GDP) rose 3.2 per cent in the second-quarter from a year earlier, the National Bureau of Statistics said on Thursday, faster than the 2.5 per cent forecast by analysts in a poll, as lockdown measures ended and policymakers ramped up stimulus to combat the virus-led downturn.

The bounce was still the weakest expansion on record, and followed a steep 6.8 per cent slump in the first quarter, the worst downturn since at least the early 1990s.

"As we previously highlighted, policy support is still needed despite recovering growth momentum," Betty Wang, ANZ bank's senior China economist.

"The possibility of resurgences in

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local COVID-19 cases, global economic uncertainty and the deteriorating China-US relationship all pose downside risks to China's H2 growth outlook," Wang said.

Those risks were partly reflected in separate retail data that showed Chinese consumers kept their wallets tightly shut, pointing to a bumpy outlook at home and overseas, as many countries continue to grapple with the COVID-19 pandemic — led by surging infections in the United States.

Though June indicators and GDP numbers largely beat expectations, Rodrigo Catril, a foreign exchange strategist at NAB in Sydney, said they

also revealed "the China consumer remains behind in terms of the recovery story."

"It's very much a story of government stimulus-led recovery, which is very much focused on the industrial side. The consumer remains very cautious. That cautiousness is something the market is looking at in terms of countries where the consumer plays a bigger role, so that's obviously relevant for the US as well."

Retail sales were down 1.8 per cent on-year in June — the fifth straight month of decline and much worse than a predicted 0.3 per cent growth, after a 2.8 per cent drop in May.

Domestic job losses have been one of the worries for consumers, as many businesses struggled to stay in the black.

Wanda Film, for example, China's largest cinema chain operator which has more than 600 cinemas, on Tuesday warned of a first half net loss of 1.5-1.6 billion yuan (\$214-228 million), after the coronavirus kept its cinemas shut for almost the entire period.

In the first half of the year, the economy contracted 1.6 per cent from a year earlier, underscoring the sweeping impact of the virus which first emerged in China late last year and has killed over 583,000 people worldwide. — Reuters

SPORTS



OCC to conduct webinars in August



ADIL AL BALUSHI

MUSCAT: The Oman Chess Committee (OCC) is gearing up to set up a series of virtual courses in August after registering productive sessions in the last few months. The OCC was one of the first committees which began the webinar sessions by using advanced applications including 'Zoom' and 'MS Teams' to utilise the lengthy break due to COVID-19 pandemic.

The August plan by OCC will feature webinars for the club members and chess learners who look to develop their technical skills.

An online course 'Organisation of international chess tournaments' is currently underway, which outlines the main require-

ments which should be taken into consideration to host an international chess event. The second edition of the course came after a successful first edition which had featured participation of 100 participants during May end. The objective of OCC was to teach upcoming Oman chess players in different wilayats to understand the main aspects of the international federation requirements to be implemented in the chess tournaments.

The OCC is gearing up to organise its 'school chess programme' in most of the Sultanate's wilayats.

The second edition of the online programme will conclude on Saturday. It includes the following topics: The general aspects on posting and approving

the chess events in the annual calendar, the main policies and regulations for special competitions and championships, the annual awards of the Fide, methodology on submitting the bids to host international championships, the inspection process at the venue of the championships by the Fide committee, the evaluation and submitting process of the bids and invitation, technical instructions of Fide for hosting international championships, guidelines for the disabled, the rules of international classifications and rankings.

The course is attended by 48 participants from Oman, GCC countries, Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Libya, Lebanon, Morocco, Somalia, Yemen, and Tunisia. The e-course is being held in direct coordination of OCC with the Asian Chess Federation and the International Chess Federation (FIDE). International lecturer Mahdi Abdul Rahim from the UAE is the trainer for the programme and all the participants will receive international licenses if they pass in the written online examinations.

Qatar to host Asian Champions League ties for West Asia



KUALA LUMPUR: Qatar, which will host the 2022 World Cup, will be the regional hub for West Asia in this year's Asian Champions League matches, the continent's governing body said on Thursday.

Asia's elite club competition was suspended in early March because of the coronavirus pandemic, and will resume in Qatar on September 14.

The Asian Football Confederation said last week that group matches will be played in full in a round-robin format as originally planned while the knockouts will be single matches rather than the usual two-legged format.

Playing matches in the West Asia venue will be Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Iran and Uzbekistan.

The centralised venue for East Asia, where matches are scheduled to resume on October 16, is yet to be announced. Playing in that hub will be China, Thailand, Australia, South Korea, Japan and Malaysia.

"Member Associations have until July 24, 2020 to submit their interest to host the AFC Champions League matches in the East Zone," the AFC said in a statement.

The regional hubs in West and East Asia will host matches until the semifinals, with the final pitting the best teams from each region to be held on December 5 in the Western hub.

— Reuters

SPORTS

ARCHER MISSES SECOND TEST FOR BIO-SECURE PROTOCOL BREACH



MANCHESTER: England dropped quick Jofra Archer from the second Test against West Indies following a breach of the team's bio-secure protocols, announcing the decision hours before the start of the match at Old Trafford on Thursday.

"Archer will now commence five days of isolation and will undergo two COVID-19 tests in this period, which have to test negative before his self-isolation period is lifted," the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) said in a statement.

The ECB did not specify the nature of the breach in the statement but media reports said Archer exited the bio-secure bubble to visit his flat in Brighton between the series opener in

Southampton and the second match in Manchester.

The ECB said the West Indies team were satisfied with the measures taken.

"I am extremely sorry for what I have done," said Archer, who was part of the team that lost the series opener.

"I have put, not only myself, but the whole team and management in danger. I fully accept the consequences of my actions, and I want to sincerely apologise to everyone in the bio-secure bubble.

"It deeply pains me to be missing the test match, especially with the series poised. I feel like I have let both teams down, and again I am sorry."

Captain Joe Root was not keen to deliberate on Archer's shock late exclusion.

"Enough's been said (on the Archer situation)," Root said at the toss.

Former England captain Alastair Cook felt the home side's attack would lack pace with the team having already decided to rest Mark Wood.

"It does throw it into a little bit of disarray," Cook told BBC Sport.

"England wanted to have some pace and bounce in their bowling attack throughout the summer but now they're going to be robbed of that." — Reuters

Petkovic hits back at Instagram troll

BERLIN: Andrea Petkovic has dealt with a critic on social media by telling him to try dealing with Petra Kvitova's serves after the German lost in straight sets to the former Wimbledon champion at an exhibition event in Berlin.

"You are so terrible! I think you should quit tennis and do [sic] a different career," wrote an Instagram user after Petkovic's 6-4, 6-1 defeat to Czech Republic star Kvitova, ranked 12th

in the world, on Monday.

However, Petkovic, 32, fired back in style on Twitter alongside a screenshot of the social media troll's comments.

"Missed this!," Petkovic replied after defeat in her first match for ten months.

"Bro, have you been living under a rock? 1) I have 3 careers going at the same and hate to toot my own horn but I'm awesome and 2) you try returning Petr's leftie serve on grass and

then get back to me. Love."

Petkovic, who is ranked 87th in the world having last been in the top 10 in 2015, had planned to end her career in 2020, but will play on into next year because this season has been affected by the coronavirus pandemic.

The German then followed up on Twitter by adding, "oh and btw, I got used to these things years back and do not care whatsoever." — AFP





QATAR'S AL BAYT STADIUM TO STAGE **OPENING GAME ON NOV 21**

FOUR GAMES A DAY

FOR 2022 WORLD CUP

DOHA: World Cup fans will be able to watch an unprecedented four games a day on television, spread out over 11 hours, during the group stage of the Qatar 2022 tournament after the schedule was confirmed on Wednesday.

With the relatively short travel distances for the venues in and around Doha, it could be possible for fans who travel to the 32-team tournament to attend multiple games each day.

The early games will kick off at 1300 local (1000GMT) with the fourth match starting at 2200 local (1900GMT) and finishing just before midnight.

The tournament's opening game on November 21, will be at the 60,000 capacity Al Bayt Stadium, with its distinctive 'tent' style covering.

The final on December 18 will be held at the 80,000



Lusail Stadium, which, like Al Bayt, will also host a semifinal.

"The World Cup is always a festival of football, a real celebration for the fans who come on-site and watch. In Qatar, with the compact nature, this is going to be amplified even more with 32 teams and 32 sets of supporters all in and around Doha," said Fifa Chief Tournaments and Events Officer, Colin Smith.

Fifa will wait until the draw for the tournament is held in March or April of 2022 before assigning specific games to

venues and time-slots. That will enable them to better align games with time zones for domestic television partners of the competing teams.

The tournament was switched from its usual June-July slot due to the heat in the Gulf state and is the first that will be held in the middle of the European season.

Nasser Al Khater, CEO of the Qatar World Cup organising company, said plans for the tournament were well on schedule with 90 per cent of the work finished on roads and infrastructure.

"When we talk about the stadiums, more than 85 per cent of the work has been completed and really now, the last two years, we're focusing on our operation readiness and making sure we get the fan experience plans in place," he said.

— Reuters

SPORTS



MAN CITY SINK
BOURNEMOUTH, SPURS
KEEP CL HOPES

Arsenal’s Alexandre Lacazette in action with Liverpool’s Fabinho. – Reuters

ARSENAL END LIVERPOOL RECORD BID

LONDON: Arsenal ended Liverpool's bid to set a new Premier League points record with a 2-1 win over the champions, while Manchester City pushed Bournemouth closer to relegation with a 2-1 victory on Wednesday.

Jurgen Klopp's side needed to win their final three games of the season to break Manchester City's record of 100 points set in 2018.

They were on course when Sadio Mane opened the scoring with a clinical finish from Andrew Robertson's cross at the Emirates Stadium.

But two careless mistakes condemned Liverpool to a third league defeat this season.

Virgil van Dijk's wayward backpass went straight to Alexandre Lacazette, who rounded Reds

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE RESULTS ON WEDNESDAY:	
Arsenal 2 (Lacazette 32, Nelson 44)	Liverpool 1 (Mane 20)
Burnley 1 (Wood 90+5-pen)	Wolves 1 (Jimenez 76)
Manchester City 2 (David Silva 6, Jesus 39)	Bournemouth 1 (Brooks 88)
Newcastle 1 (Ritchie 56)	Tottenham 3 (Son 27, Kane 60, 90)
ON TUESDAY	
Chelsea 1 (Giroud 45+3)	Norwich 0

keeper Alisson Becker to slot home in the 32nd minute.

Alisson was guilty of an equally costly blunder when his pass out was intercepted by Lacazette and

he picked out 20-year-old Reiss Nelson for a cool close-range finish.

Liverpool have failed to win three of their five matches since clinching the title. They have 93 points and with just two games left and can only reach 99 at the end of their first title-winning campaign for 30 years.

"Twice there was a massive lack of concentration. We took a break after 1-0. Those two moments killed the game for us," Klopp said.

"You can't win games when you concede chances like that. We have to learn from it, 100 per cent."

Arsenal climb to ninth place as they chase qualification for the Europa League.

Tottenham won 3-1 at Newcastle to keep their chances of European football next season on track by moving up to seventh. — AFP