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ON HIS ORDERS

Committee formed to handle COVID-19 economic impact

MUSCAT: The Private Office on Sunday issued a statement as follows: “In the light of the local and global economic impacts of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik gave his Royal orders to form a committee emanating from the Supreme Committee tasked with tackling developments resulting from coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

“The committee will be chaired by the Minister of Interior, Chairman of the Supreme Committee. It will deal with the economic consequences of the pandemic by devising an appropriate mechanism that ensures a speedy resumption of commercial activities to accelerate economic growth rates.

“May the Almighty Allah protect His Majesty the Sultan and keep him as a source of pride for this dear homeland”.

— ONA

COVID-19 CASES HIT A NEW SINGLE-DAY PEAK AT 1,404

FATALITIES MOSTLY IN THE AGE GROUP OF 60-69

VINOD NAIR

MUSCAT: Keeping its trend over the past few days, over 1,000 new cases were again reported on Sunday, which was also a record for a single day.

The Ministry of Health (MoH) announced 1,404 new positive cases of COVID-19, including 400 Omanis and 1,004 residents, which brought the total number of positive cases to 23,481, including 104 deaths.

According to the ministry, a total of 3,596 people were tested in the last 24 hours.

Five new deaths were reported due to COVID-19 on Sunday, taking the



total to 104.

The ministry said that 41 patients recovered from COVID-19 during the past 24 hours, taking the total recoveries from the disease to 7,530 in Oman.

A total of 39 people were admitted to the hospital on Sunday, taking the number of people in hospitals to 313, including 100 in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU).

Of the total deaths reported so far, 67

of them are residents and 37 Omanis.

Of the total deaths reported, 59 of them are in the age group of 15-69 and 45 in the 60+ group. More specifically, 26 of them are in the age group 60-69, 20 in the age group 40-49, 19 in the age group 50-59, 16 in the age group 30-39, 13 in the age group 70-80, six above the eighties and four in the age group 20-29.

Visit, Express visa validity extended till June 30

KABEER YOUSUF

MUSCAT: The Royal Oman Police (ROP) have assured the holders of Visit and Express visa that both types of visas will be automatically extended till June 30, 2020.

Speaking to the *Observer*, a top official said the move further extends the validity



Visit and Express visas of all those who are in the country but are overstaying due to the closure of airport, are automatically renewed and extended till June 30.

ROP SOURCE

of the two visa types by two more weeks.

“Visit and Express visas of all those who are in the country but are overstaying due to the closure of airport, are automatically

renewed and extended till June 30”, the ROP source said.

Thousands of tourists and visitors who arrived in Oman but are overstaying due to closure of the

airports, heaved a sigh of relief.

“I came as a guest of a leading college here, but the airports were closed the day I was supposed to travel. Now I’m overstaying here. I’m really relieved with the news and I thank the country for supporting people like me”, a professor who visited a well-known college here, said.

OMAN

COVID-19 SPIKE SHOCKS SALALAH

WITH 82 NEW PATIENTS, TOTAL CASELOAD NOW AT 163 IN DHOFAR

KAUSHALENDRA SINGH

SALALAH: The latest bulletin of the Ministry of Health on the number of new COVID-19 cases sent a shockwave among the residents and citizens of Dhofar as it reported 82 new cases in one day taking to 163. Out of 82 new cases, 81 are in Salalah, which now has a total number of 153 cases. Al Mazyouna has two and Shaleem and Al Halaniyat has eight cases. Out of 153 cases in Salalah, 35 have recovered, 117 are currently sick and



one fatality reported. Salalah was maintaining a very low number of COVID-19 cases and people now are worried about today's new cases. Even as decision to stop entry into Dhofar became effective on Saturday, the new numbers are a matter of surprise. The Dhofar entry

restrictions are in place till July 3. As the lockdown of Dhofar has been effective, the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI) have issued restriction guidelines and movement of trucks carrying essential goods. "Only one driver is

allowed in one truck to enter with essential goods in Dhofar. He will have to remain seated in the vehicle at the time of unloading and he has to drive back from Dhofar Governorate within 24 hours. He is supposed to have no interaction with people in the governorate during his

stay in the governorate", said the MoCI guideline. The Directorate of Health in Dhofar is geared up with measures to tackle the situation and called upon the citizens and residents to adhere to the pandemic protocols of hygiene and wearing face masks in public places. Dhofar Municipality has reiterated its resolve to take measures to maintain health and safety of citizens and residents. It already has launched a cleanliness drive in most parts of the governorate in association with the respective municipalities.





Sultanate of Oman
Ministry of Health



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الرابطة العمانية لطب النساء والولادة
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OmanHealth



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Signbook

Al Raffd disburses loans worth over RO 99 million

ZAINAB AL NASSRI

MUSCAT: The Al Raffd Fund has financed about 2,563 loans till April 2020 across the Sultanate worth over RO 99 million.

This was revealed during the video conferencing meeting of the Board of Directors chaired by Dr Ali bin Masoud al Sunaidy, Minister of Commerce and Industry.

The Fund provided 4,229 direct job opportunities to Omani youths distributed among males (64.7 per cent) and females (35.3 per cent). Repayment rate has reached 83.9 per cent of the loan's value.

Tariq al Farsi (pictured), CEO of the Fund, said Al Raffd continued to provide various types of support to SMEs, based on the Royal Directives of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and the economic importance of SMEs.

During the meeting, the members were briefed on the initiatives of Al Raffd Fund to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on projects.

The meeting also addressed the measures taken to ensure safety of all, and initiatives to contain the effects of the current situation on the economy especially when a large number of entrepreneurs were affected due to

the lockdown on some activities and the decline in purchases, which caused a decrease in sales rate for projects benefiting from the Fund.

Al Farsi stressed, "Since the beginning of the COVID-19 in the Sultanate, the Fund has worked to implement the decisions of the Supreme Committee including postponing loan installments of small and medium enterprises for a period of six months, in coordination with the Oman Development Bank.

The Board of Directors decided to reduce the deferred premium returns by 50 per cent of the total returns, which is equivalent to RO 292,685."

"The other initiative was "shop from home" in cooperation with MoCI and

Riyada by urging all beneficiaries to provide home delivery services in innovative ways to reduce the impacts of low sales," Al Farsi said.

About Sanad centres for services and the job opportunities they offer, Al Farsi said, "The number of Sanad centres has increased in the first quarter of 2020 by 7 per cent to 853 centres compared to the first quarter of 2019. Job opportunities in the centres increased 0.3 per cent during the first quarter of 2020 compared to the same period in 2019 to reach more than 2,300."



Now, know your accident claim online

MUSCAT: The Capital Market Authority (CMA) launched new insurance e-service to calculate the accident claim.

The move comes as part of CMA endeavours to ease the processes and improve services.

The claim is calculated based on depreciation of the first month set at 1.25 per cent and 15 per cent at the end of the first year, 28 per cent at the end of the second year, 38 per cent at the end of the third year and 48 per cent at the end of fourth year and so on until the fourteenth year. Thereafter the percentage will be 80 per cent according to Table (1) for private vehicles. As for commercial vehicles, the percentage is fixed at the tenth year and thereafter at 80 per cent as per Table (2) of First Annexure of the Policy.

Motor insurance accounted for 26.7 per cent of the insurance portfolio with gross premiums at RO 129.8 million while the claims paid by insurers were RO 95.5 million. — **ONA**

OMAN DAILY
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Waste disposal project covers most of Muscat

SAMUEL KUTTY

MUSCAT: The waste disposal programme launched by Muscat Municipality, in cooperation with Oman Environmental Services Holding Company (be'ah), has covered over 95 per cent of the area in the governorate.

"With this landmark achievement, the municipality moves forward to develop the waste management in Muscat Governorate in a way ensuring the best practices of addressing the urban challenge," the civic body said in a statement.

The municipality and be'ah reached a cooperation agreement following a Royal Decree that the former shall take care of the cleaning operations and the latter will transfer the waste to the landfills.

Since the signing of the agreement, the state-owned utility company has, in phases, added different wilayats in the governorate to the waste disposal programme with the Wilayat of Seeb included in August 2017.

In July 2019, the municipality transferred the Wilayat



of Al Amerat, Muttrah in October 2019, Qurayat in March 2020, and finally Bausher in April 2020.

"The overall completion rate of the project exceeds 95 per cent in Muscat Governorate," the statement said.

Waste management infrastructure in Muscat includes an engineered landfill in Al Amerat and waste transfer station in Bausher.

Be'ah increased the number of bins in each

With this landmark achievement, the municipality moves forward to develop the waste management in Muscat Governorate in a way ensuring the best practices of addressing the urban challenge. Muscat Municipality

wilayat and added new 2,400-litre bins for the first time in Muscat, to help mini-

mise the number of small bins in populated areas.

In a tweet, be'ah said in April that the company collected around 2.5 tonnes of waste every day from 40 quarantine centres across the Sultanate.

According to the tweet, the company was coordinating with healthcare institutions to deal with COVID-19 related medical waste. It said that bins, containers and trucks are sterilised too as part of the overall process.

Webinar on COVID-19 and climate crisis

STAFF REPORTER

MUSCAT: Ithraa's Inside Stories webinar on Tuesday will discuss challenges as well as opportunities of COVID-19 and climate for businesses.

"Climate change is no longer a distant threat but something that's now impacting economies worldwide. However, on the flip side, many companies see business potential in the climate crisis. Over 200 of the world's largest corporations have highlighted roughly \$2.1 trillion of pos-



sible opportunities in a warming world, with the majority expected to materialise within the next five years," says Ishaq al Busaidi, Ithraa's Director-General of Marketing and Corporate



Communications and organiser of the popular Inside Stories initiative.

Nasima al Balushi, Ithraa's Director-General of Investment and Exports, says: "We need to think now about what this will mean

for our everyday life and what it'll mean for our business community. We have to apply the lessons of COVID-19 and see how we can transform the challenges that will arise into opportunities. Indeed, there are already a number of exciting circular economy projects connected to this listed on the Invest in Oman portal."

There is considerable evidence that decisive climate action generates economic vitality. In fact, ILO studies suggest climate policies could potentially create 24 million new jobs.

TRC takes part in UN virtual conference

MUSCAT: The Research Council (TRC) participated in the virtual meeting of the UN's Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD) of the twenty-third session.

Dr Sharifa al Harthy, Director of the Planning Department at TRC; Dr Obaid al Saeedi, Adviser at TRC; and Dr Badr al Hinai, expert at TRC took part in the meeting.

Dr Sharifa discussed how Oman used science, technology and innovation to tackle COVID-19 such as the implementation of the COVID-19 Research Program at TRC, the creation of a range of locally engineered items designed to reduce the spread of the virus, such as respirator masks, face shields and hands-free door opening devices at Makers Oman and the implementation of the best application to monitor people diagnosed with COVID-19 competition at TRC's Smart City Platform.

Dr Sharifa illustrated several examples on how Oman is fighting against the spread of COVID-19 through the use of science and innovation and underscored the importance of international collaboration and shared



Dr Bader al Hinai



Dr Obaid al Saeedi



Dr Sharifa al Harthy

knowledge during such significant times.

The meeting also included several ministerial and high-level discussions and addressed two priority themes: harnessing rapid technological change for inclusive and sustainable development, as well as

exploring space technologies for sustainable development and the benefits of international research collaboration in this context. It also reviewed progress made in the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS). — ONA

RO 40m pact to develop Daba Fishing Port

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries signed an agreement on Sunday for developing the fishing port in the Wilayat of Daba in Musandam Governorate, at a cost of RO 40 million. The project involves four basic components aimed at serving Oman's fisheries sector, providing facilitations for the commercial and logistic sectors and Royal Oman Police in addition to several service facilities at the fishing port including two 200-metre wave breakers equipped with marine lighting at the entrance and 10-metre deep dock.

The Daba Fishing Port development project comes as part of the government's economic diversification strategy and is aimed at developing the Sultanate's fishing ports and transforming them into investment-attractive destinations.

— ONA



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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:

1. To consider and approve the report of the Board of Directors for the financial year ended March 31, 2020.
2. To consider and approve the Auditors' report, Balance Sheet and Profit & Loss Account for the financial year ended March 31, 2020.
3. To inform the related party transactions carried out during the financial year ended March.31, 2020 as per Annexure 1.
4. To consider and approve related party transactions for the year ended March 31, 2021 as per Annexure 1.
5. To appoint Auditors of the Company for the year 2020-21 and to fix their remuneration.
6. 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:

- 1.To discuss the financial position of the Company as required under Article 129 of Commercial Companies Law.
- 2.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 Roushdhi on Ph. 26750623.



SULTANATE OF OMAN
MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
ENGINEERING SERVICES
Tenders Announcement

Ministry of Defence invites Contractors specialized in the under mentioned works and registered with the Govt. Tender Board and Ministry of Defence to participate in the following tenders.

Tender No	Tender Name	Contractors Grade	Last date to obtain tender	tender submission date	Tender Price (RO)
008/2020	Operation and Maintenance work- (Electromechanical work-Elevators)- Various locations	First and Above	25 June 2020	28 th July 2020	400/-
011/2020	Electromechanical work (STP)- Raysoot	Electromechanical specialist	25 June 2020	04 August 2020	125/-

The Payment should be made electronically by depositing the Tender Fees to the below account details:

Account Name	Ministry of Defense S.T Committee
Account No.	3107-201008-500
Bank	Oman Arab Bank-MAM
Swift Code	OMABOMRU

- Tender Documents (Electronic Tender Document) can be obtained from the Tender office, Through the E-mail: ste.sg@mod.gov.om after depositing payment of the tender fee, bidders should notice MOD through the same E-mail above.
- The Bid to be accompanied by Tender Bond in the value of (1%) of the bid value in the form of a Bank Guarantee or Certified Cheque issued by a local bank and addressed to HE the Chairman of the Tender Committee SOFT copy has to be attached with the E-Submission and subsequently the original bond will be requested .
- E-Bids are to be submitted in two Folders (Financial and Technical) addressed to HE the Chairman of Tender Committee and marked with Tender Number and Name.
- E-Bids to be sent before 0900 hours on the assigned day for submission of the Tender.
- We would like to draw your attention to the importance of adherence to the submission date; request and any queries related should not be submitted to MODES fourteen days prior to submission of offer.
 1. You are requested to submit the following items within your tender submission, failure to submit the required information may result a disqualification of your offer without any further notification.
 2. Percentage of Omanisation within the company supported by an authenticated certificate from the Ministry of Manpower (Updated Copy).
 3. Detailed priced breakdown to be specified as per scope and drawings.
 4. Full set of stamped drawings.
 5. All addendums and circulars.
 6. List of sub-contractors/suppliers and their acceptance letter to this project.
 7. List of current and executed projects.
 8. Valid Registration Certificates from Tender Board.
 9. Financial Statement for the last Three years.



Ministry of Higher Education

ELECTRONIC TENDER

The Internal Tenders Committee of the Ministry of Higher Education announces the tendering of the tender shown in the following table:

Tender No.	Tender Name	Company that are entitled to participate	Tender Price	Last Date for Purchasing Tender	The deadline for Submission of tenders
13/2020	Providing a programmer for E-Academic programs center	Specialized in providing Same service and registered with the Tender Board with Grade: Excellent & First	(25/= R.O) Twenty Five Omani Rail Only	4/07/2020	24/7/2020

The purchasing of the tender documents by E-Tendering system will starting on **Monday 15/ 06 /2020; at 07:30 am.** To purchasing, please visit the following link:

<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om/>

All companies that are bidding must provide a bank guarantee or a certified cheque from a bank operating in the Sultanate for at least (1%) of the tender value on behalf of His Excellency Dr. / Chairman of the Internal Tender Committee, Ministry of higher Education.

Preference will be given to companies' or small and medium enterprises registered with the General Authority for the development of Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) that includes the largest proportion of its tender Omanization.

Ministry is not bound to accept the lowest or any other tender.

Chairman of Tender Committee
Ministry of Higher Education



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SUMMARY OF ASSETS & LIABILITIES (MONEY CHANGING ESTABLISHMENT)

AS at 31st December 2019

(In RO. 000's)

No.	ASSETS	2019	2018	No.	LIABILITIES	2019	2018
1.	Cash in hand	1,014	1,075	1.	Capital and Reserves	2,414	2,421
2.	Deposits with CBO	100	100	2.	Borrowings from Banks	588	281
3.	Balances due from Banks	1,846	1,432	3.	Balances due to branches	-	-
4.	Balances due from branches	-	-	4.	Balances due to Money Changers	138	132
5.	Balances due from Money changers	128	226	5.	Loans and Advances payable	-	-
6.	Cheques and drafts purchased	-	-	6.	Cheques and Drafts issued & Outstanding	-	-
7.	Loans and Advances	-	-	7.	Other Liabilities	417	277
8.	Fixed Assets	315	156				
9.	Other Assets	154	122				
	TOTAL	3,557	3,111		TOTAL	3,557	3,111

Auditors:- PKF LLC



His Highness Sayyid Kamil bin Fahd al Said, Assistant Secretary-General for the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers, donates blood on Sunday.

DONATE BLOOD AND SAVE LIVES

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Health represented by the Department of Blood Banks Services and in collaboration with the World Health Organization Office in the Sultanate organised a blood donation campaign on Sunday, coinciding with World Blood Donor Day themed 'Safe Blood Saves Lives'.

His Highness Sayyid Kamil bin Fahd al Said, Assistant Secretary-General for the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers, participated in the campaign by donating blood. Oman WHO office personnel further participated in the campaign by donating blood.

During the recent



press conference of the Supreme Committee on COVID-19, Dr Ahmed bin Mohammed al Saidi, Minister of Health, had thanked the blood donors for saving many lives, urging them to continue their

generous contribution. The Department of Blood Banks Services called on citizens and residents to continue donating blood. The department thanked all blood donors for their unlimited support.

— ONA

Forum discusses food safety amid COVID-19

STAFF REPORTER

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Regional Municipalities and Water Resources held an online forum to discuss the precautionary measures for handling food products amid COVID-19 pandemic.

The forum was moderated by Badriyah bint Ahmed al Hattaliyah, assistant-director of the development and planning department, Ali bin Rashid al Ghafri, assistant director of food licencing department at the Food Safety and Quality Centre and Nasser bin Said al Wahaibi, assistant director of legal department.

The forum discussed several issues including the procedures that should be followed at the food outlets to ensure the safety of workers and consumers, the procedures that should be followed upon delivery and receipt of food orders and the role of the consumers in protecting themselves against the virus.

The online forum is held as part of the ministry's efforts aimed at increasing public awareness through the social networking sites and electronic media.



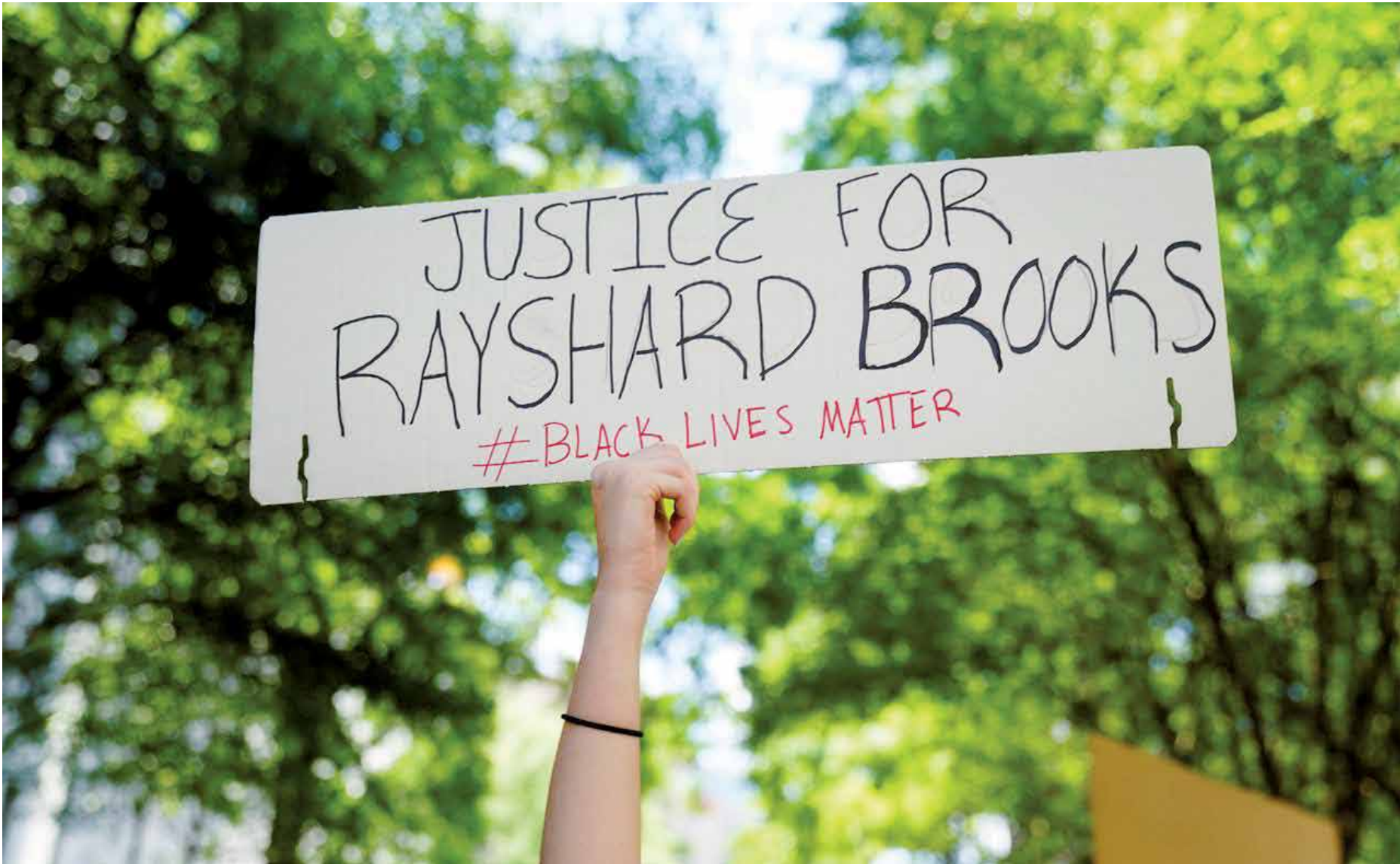
Atlanta police chief resigns after officer kills black man

WASHINGTON: The police chief in the US city of Atlanta resigned after an officer fatally shot a black man during an arrest, the mayor said, with the new killing injecting fresh anger into protests against racism and police brutality. Images on local media showed hundreds of protesters in the streets on Saturday and flames engulfing a Wendy's restaurant where 27-year-old Rayshard Brooks was killed.

The officer who shot Brooks was dismissed on Saturday and identified by Atlanta police as Garrett Rolfe. The second officer was placed on administrative duty, according to ABC News.

In televised comments made earlier in the day, Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms said that Shields, with more than two decades of experience in the force, "has offered to immediately step aside as police chief."

Demonstrators were out on the streets before night fell on Saturday, with one group blocking a highway



Protesters rally against racial inequality and the police shooting death of Rayshard Brooks, in Atlanta, Georgia, US. — Reuters

near the Wendy's restaurant and facing off with police. Dozens of protesters were arrested, CNN quoted the Atlanta police as saying. The unrest comes as the US faces a historic reckoning on systemic

racism, with mass civil unrest ignited by the May 25 killing of another African-American man, George Floyd, while in police custody. Floyd died after a white Minneapolis police officer knelt on his neck for nearly nine minutes.

Protests which spread first around the country then the globe, have forced a conversation on the legacies of slavery, colonialism and white violence against people of color, as well as the militarisation of police in America. — AFP

BOLLYWOOD MOURNS DEATH OF YOUNG HEARTTHROB

MUMBAI: A young Bollywood heartthrob lauded for his portrayal of cricket star M S Dhoni on the silver screen has died, Mumbai police said on Sunday. "Police found Sushant Singh Rajput's body at his residence on Sunday afternoon," Mumbai police spokesman Pranaya Ashok said, confirming that the 34-year-old had taken his own life. Rajput, renowned for his numerous hits on the big and small screens, reportedly battled depres-



sion. He passed away just a few days after the shock death of his former manager Disha Salian. "It pains us to share that Sushant Singh Rajput is no longer with us," Rajput's management team said in a statement. Born in Patna in the eastern state of Bihar, Rajput quit his studies in engineering to pursue a career in acting and dance. He got his big break in Bollywood in 2013 with Kai Po Che, a film about cricket, love and politics that won acclaim at the Berlin film festival. — Agencies

Lanka holds mock election to test virus measures

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka staged a mock election on Sunday to test measures aimed at preventing the spread of the coronavirus during a parliamentary vote in August. The poll was due to be held on April 25 but was put off and then postponed indefinitely due to the epidemic, which official figures show has infected nearly 2,000 people and killed 11. The election commission said last week that the vote would be held on August 5. The island nation of 21 million people has steadily lifted its lockdown restrictions, although a night curfew remains.

WORLD

Second wave fears as China reports more new infections

BEIJING: China reported its highest daily number of new coronavirus cases in months on Sunday with parts of Beijing still under lockdown, offering a second wave warning as more European countries prepare to open their borders for travel.

The shock resurgence in domestic infections has rattled China, where the disease emerged late last year but had largely been tamed through severe restrictions on movement that were later emulated across the globe.

It also gives a bleak insight into the difficulties the world will face in conquering COVID-19 — even as Europe prepares for the summer holiday season after an encouraging drop in contagion, with some countries set to welcome visitors from elsewhere on the continent from Monday.

Of the 57 new cases logged by Chinese authorities, 36 were domestic infections in the capital, where a large wholesale food market at the centre of the outbreak has been closed and nearby housing estates put under lockdown.

“The meat sellers have had to close. This disease is real-



Chinese paramilitary police officers guard an entrance to the closed Xinfadi market in Beijing on Sunday. — AFP

ly scary”, said a fruit and vegetable trader surnamed Sun at another central Beijing market, adding there were fewer customers than normal. Others were more sanguine. “As long as you wear a face mask, it should be fine... Anyway, I have to buy food, right?” said shopper Song Weiming.

At least 429,000 people worldwide have died from the respiratory illness, nearly halfway through a year in

which countless lives have been upended as the pandemic ravages the global economy.

The total number of confirmed cases has doubled to 7.7 million in slightly over a month and the disease is now spreading most rapidly in Latin America, where it is threatening healthcare systems and sparking political turmoil.

Brazil has the second-highest number of virus

deaths after the United States, surpassing Britain's toll, and the Chilean health minister resigned on Saturday amid a furore over the country's true number of fatalities.

There is still no treatment for COVID-19, but pharmaceutical group AstraZeneca said it has agreed to supply an alliance of European countries with up to 400 million doses of a possible vaccine. — AFP

Australia’s largest states further ease curbs

SYDNEY: Australia’s two largest states will further ease public coronavirus restrictions at libraries, community centres and nightclubs, officials said on Sunday, despite recording increases in new infections. New South Wales (NSW), the most populous state, said that from July 1, a 50 person limit on indoor venues such as restaurants and churches would be scrapped, so long as the venues observed a one person per four square metre rule. Nightclubs and music festivals would also be allowed to operate from August if new cases remain low, NSW Premier Gladys Berejiklian said.

Irish parties close in on coalition deal

DUBLIN: Ireland’s Fianna Fail, Fine Gael and Green parties are on the cusp of forming a new coalition government after more than four months of deadlock, a member of one of the negotiating teams said on Sunday. “The three negotiating teams agreed most of a programme for government this morning. A small number of issues have been left to the party leaders to decide later today. A lot of good stuff in there”, Green Party lawmaker Ossian Smyth said on Twitter at 0334 GMT following 19 hours of talks.

Arrests in London after Black Lives Matter protests

LONDON: More than 100 arrests were made after thousands of Black Lives Matter and far-right protesters rallied in London on Saturday despite calls for them to stay away, the Metropolitan Police said. Prime Minister Boris Johnson suggested that much of the violence came from the right-wing counter protesters, who were separated from the Black Lives Matter protesters by barriers and police lines. The police said the protests were largely peaceful with “pockets of violence directed towards (police) officers”. — Agencies



People wearing face masks queue to enter a reopened Primark store in Madrid, Spain. — Reuters

Risk of new lockdowns rises with fear of second wave

KATE KELLAND

Fears of a second wave of COVID-19 infections grew with a record daily increase in India, warnings against complacency in Europe and word from half a dozen US states that their hospital beds were filling up fast. Health officials worldwide have expressed concerns in recent days that some countries grappling with the devastating economic impact of lockdowns may lift restrictions too swiftly, and that the coronavirus could spread during mass anti-racism protests. Wall Street took its biggest dive in three months on Thursday on worries of a resurgence and on Friday, shares around the world extended a four-day losing streak. In China, where the new coronavirus originated, new cases of COVID-19, the disease it causes, were recorded in the capital, a

day after the city government delayed plans for some students to return to school. India opened most public transport, offices and malls last week after nearly 70 days even though health officials said it was weeks away from flattening the rising infection curve. The health ministry said registered cases rose by 10,956 on Friday, a record, with many of them new in the cities of Delhi, Mumbai and Chennai. The official death toll, at 8,498, is relatively small, however. Syed Ahmed Bukhari, the head of Delhi's Jama Masjid, one of India's biggest mosques, ordered a halt to congregations until the end of the month. "What is the point of visiting mosques at a time when the virus is spreading so fast?" he said. While new infections are slowing in most of Europe, health experts see a moderate to high risk that post-lockdown rises may warrant new restrictions. — Reuters

Days of struggle to make a living...



ABDULAZIZ AL JAHDHAMI
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It seems that 2020 has been bringing us tough times and surprising us with unexpected challenges! Since the early dawn of this year, we witnessed heartbreaking news and incidents! As the days passed, out of a sudden we woke up to the news of coronavirus pandemic rapidly spreading in the world. What a strong slap on the face that coronavirus gave to the world! The lockdown of cities and closure of many business activities had a great impact on the economy of the nations, income generation process of corporates and government bodies, and eventually sources of people's livelihood. Many corporates and owners of businesses went into a slump due to loss in business and lack of customers and clients. The 'stay home' approach was also another reason for the collapse of businesses and people lost their jobs and daily income. Consequently, some businesses broke exposing the owners to grave risks. They could not withstand the strict closures, partial or full lockdown of towns and markets, and running on negative revenues. On the other hand, there are corporates, which were experiencing a slight effect due to

the decline in their sales and profits. Though, they could manage to fight back, are looking forward for life to come back to normalcy. Both parties have been and still on the same boat of struggle in battle with coronavirus. However, unlikely each party has taken a different approach to face the music of this challenging and tough time for their business. Unfortunately, some have taken the easy way of saving their business by firing their employees to cut costs and sustain businesses. Others opted for a win-win situation by deducting some amount from their employees' salary, whether it is done by force or consent! At least, this approach is better than dismissing employees and leaving them jobless. This pandemic is a common crisis attacking one and all across the world including individual employees, as a case in a point. However, those sacked employees can't be scapegoats for what happens to their employers. Having years of dedication to employers and sacrificing their time and efforts to make a living cannot be simply disregarded. In such scenarios, authorities concerned shall interfere and take a call on this issue.

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OPPORTUNITIES ABOUND FOR OMANI SMES IN DRONE SERVICES

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FISHERIES,
AQUACULTURE
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PROMISING AREAS**



CONRAD PRABHU

MUSCAT: The Sultanate's authorities are urging young Omani tech entrepreneurs, as well as small businesses, to explore opportunities that harness the capabilities of unmanned aerial vehicles – also known as drones – to deliver services in a number of areas, notably the food and agriculture sector, aquaculture farming and fisheries, pollution control and the environment.

Drone technology has already been adopted in the Oil & Gas and Logistics sectors, among other related areas, but its potential for further exploitation in a number of food related areas – a key priority for the Omani government – was highlighted at a webinar hosted by *The Business Year* last week.

Dr Saud bin Hamoud al Habsi, Under-Secretary for Fisheries at the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, noted: "Drones are already being used in the agriculture field, but there are opportunities for use of this technology in, for example, the monitoring of illegal fishing, tracking of tuna in the open seas, and in environmental issues like oil spills. We have to unlock these opportunities for the youth of Oman."

The Ministry, said Dr Al Habsi, is in continuous dialogue with Oman Technology Fund (OTF), the govern-



Drones are already being used in the agriculture field, but there are opportunities for use of this technology in, for example, the monitoring of illegal fishing, tracking of tuna in the open seas, and in environmental issues like oil spills.

**DR SAUD BIN HAMOUD
AL HABSI,**

Under-Secretary for Fisheries

ment-backed venture capital investment fund, which is already supporting a number of tech start-ups involving the use of drones, among other technologies.

One such start-up being supported by OTF is the Intelligence Laboratory (iLab), which is focused on the devel-

development and marketing of unmanned surface vessels (USVs) to transport fish feed to offshore aquaculture farms.

TURN TO PAGE 11



INVITATION TO TENDER – CATERING AND ASSOCIATED SERVICES

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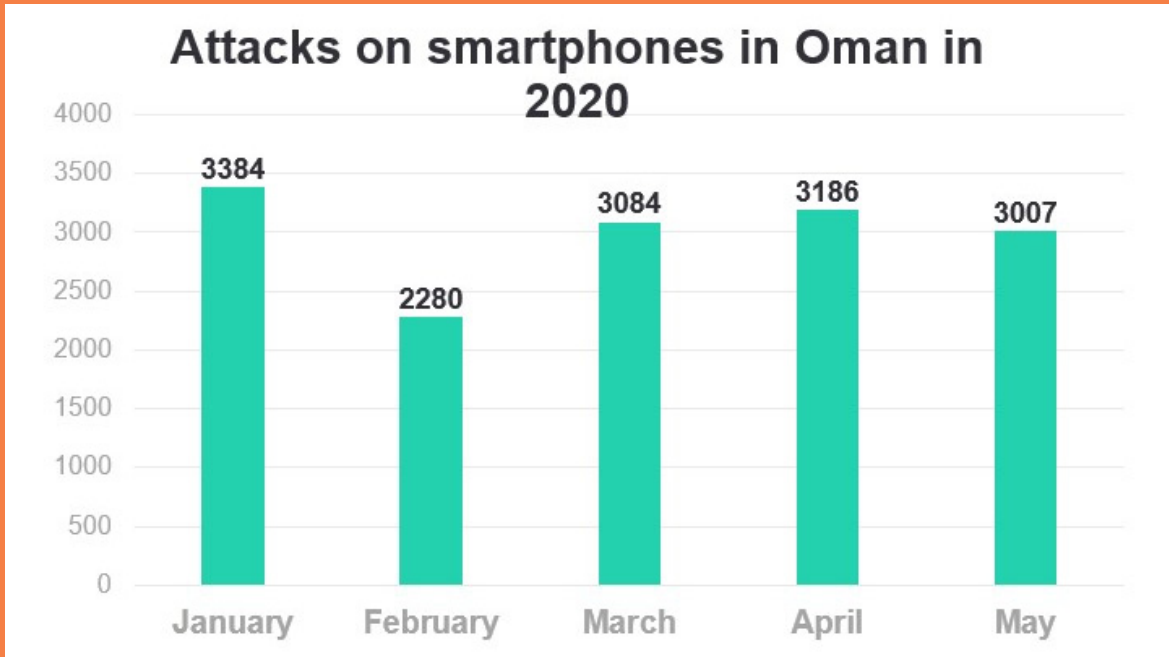
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SMARTPHONE USERS IN OMAN LOG 15,000 CYBERATTACKS



MUSCAT: The number of malicious attacks on mobile users in the Sultanate reached 14,941 during the January – June 2020 period, according to researchers. In compari-

son, the figure for Kuwait was 20,000, 12,000 for Qatar and around 5,000 for Bahrain. The overall dynamics were clearly showing that quarantine did not have a dampening

influence on the Oman threat landscape, the researchers noted. As mobile platforms influence grows, the role of smartphones in business processes and day to day life is growing rapidly. In response, cybercriminals are paying more attention to how they are distributing malware and the attack vectors used, increasing their activity in times of crisis. In many scenarios, a properly chosen timing can be a key part of the success of a malicious campaign today, taking advantage of those users who are changing their

security practices under pressure and do not have any reliable security solutions installed on their phones. Throughout the year, the number of attacks was not changing dramatically, which means that the implementation of quarantine measures did not influence mobile threat landscape in the region. It would account for approximately 2000-3000 attacks monthly. This can be explained by the fact that mobile platforms were initially made to be independent from the physical location of the user and are adjustable to different lifestyles. “While 3,000 attacks on mobile users every month may seem to be a big number for a relatively small country, it is great to see that Bahrain smartphones’ and tablets’ owners remained vigilant during the crisis and did not fall for scammers tricks,” said Victor Chebyshev, security expert at Kaspersky.

Opportunities abound for Omani SMEs in drone services

FROM PAGE 10

Another start-up, receiving funding support from OTF, is TrackBees, which enables Omani beekeepers to manage their bee farms by remotely monitoring temperature, humidity and hive cell activity with the aid of drones. Working in collaboration with the government-led One Million Date Palms Project, another Omani tech start-up is studying the commercial potential for drones to be used in wide-scale pollination activities and enhancing honey production. Dr Al Habsi cited Behar – an e-commerce fisheries auction platform launched by young Omanis with the support of OTF – as an example of the example of the Ministry’s desire to see technology being harnessed to offset the effects of the pandemic. Technology, he noted, also offers the only attractive route for young Omanis to pursue livelihoods in traditional sectors such as agriculture and fisheries. “When considering opportunities in these traditional sectors, young Omanis will likely look at the business environment first, more than the salary being offered; and technology will facilitate their entry into these fields.”

GCC chemical industry must plan for post-COVID-19 phase

MUSCAT: The chemical industry in the Arabian Gulf must plan and prepare for the post-COVID period, turning adversity into advantage, and capitalize on the lessons learned to retain and enhance its global competitiveness, according to the Gulf Petrochemicals and Chemicals Association (GPCA). In a newly released white paper entitled ‘COVID and Chemicals’ GPCA provides exclusive insights into the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on supply and demand, petrochemical prices, the dual shock from the pandemic and the oil price collapse, as well as the implications on the region’s supply chain and international trade. According to the paper, the pandemic is revealing flaws in the supply chain that the chemical industry has relied upon for decades, which presents an invaluable



opportunity to address existing weaknesses and transform the region’s supply chain. Like the chemical industry globally, the GCC petrochemical sector has felt the strain from the COVID-19 pandemic in the form of plunging petrochemical prices, disruptions on the Chinese market, travel and export restrictions, as well as collapsing demand due to a slowdown in key end-user industries. On the positive side, demand for products used in the manufacturing of sanitising products, personal protection, and health care remained upbeat and the production of fertilizers was not impacted. For chemicals used to fight COVID-19, prices have stayed moderate, while fertilizer prices improved by 3 per cent in March 2020 compared with February 2020.

BUSINESS

Oman Post launches stamp on COVID-19



MUSCAT: Oman Post has launched an exclusive stamp in recognition of the efforts of the Omani authorities in combatting the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

The "Oman Faces Corona" stamp is available from June 22 and 40 per cent of the proceeds will be donated to the Ministry of Health's Endowment Fund, which was recently established to help support health services.

Depicting some of the frontline workers who are selflessly working to keep the country safe, the unique issue includes stamp, souvenir sheet, and first day cover.

Abdulmalik al Balushi, CEO of Oman Post, said, "Every single day, our frontline workers remind us about the humility and the preciousness of life, whether it be our doctors, nurses, police officers, military and security forces, journalists, postal workers, or those working in essential services.

We thank them for the immense sacrifice they continue to make for us, but also the sacrifices their families and loved ones are making.

This stamp is our way of expressing our gratitude, to contribute to the efforts of the government to fight the pandemic, but also as a keepsake. So that when all this is over, its not the destruction of the virus we remember, but the heroism of the people who fought it."

The new COVID-19 stamp will be available starting June 22 in the following branches: Ruwi, Al Khoud, Salalah central post office, Al Khuwair, Sinaw, Sur, Nizwa, Sohar, Rustaq, Al Buraimi, Ibri, and Khasab

MTC AND CISCO JOIN HANDS TO BOOST ICT



MUSCAT: As part of its efforts to build partnership with large IT companies to further boost the information and communications technology (ICT) sector in the Sultanate, the Ministry of Technology and Communications (MTC) has signed a Memorandum of Cooperation (with Cisco International Limited.

The MoC was signed digitally by Dr Salim bin Sultan al Ruzaiqi, CEO of MTC, and Ali bin Mohsen al Lawati, GM Oman and Yemen, Cisco.

As part of the MoC, MTC and Cisco will conduct capacity building and training workshops, hackathons and boot camps in ICT latest trends and solutions developed by Cisco.

Cisco will also support MTC to encourage potential startup ideas and successful solutions to develop and grow through Cisco platform and featuring them in Cisco innovation centers. In addition, Cisco will provide access to its sandbox environment (Cisco DevNet) for testing and creating new solutions.

Both MTC and Cisco will organize design thinking framework sessions on artificial intelligence and internet of things projects to facilitate solutions development. This MoC will also promote further cooperation between MTC and Cisco to enable knowledge sharing and best practices adoption by government entities and SMEs.

Mazoon Elec, be'ah ink pact for collection of batteries

MUSCAT: In line with its environmental sustainability practices, Mazoon Electricity Company, the leading electricity provider in Oman, has signed an agreement with Oman Environmental Services Holding Company (be'ah) for safe collection and disposal of lead acid batteries (LAB).

The agreement will help Mazoon Electricity to safely dispose of chemicals used in the battery units in the main electrical stations. Be'ah will be



responsible for collecting and transporting LAB from Mazoon Electricity to certified processing and recycling facility. Be'ah's action will help Mazoon Electricity ensure that its work processes are in accordance with the stipulated environmental laws of the Sultanate.

Be'ah will also provide Mazoon Electricity with approved LAB waste collection pallets that help hinder acids from leaking.

SOHAR INTERNATIONAL ‘VIEWPOINTS’ DISCUSSES COVID-19

MUSCAT: As part of its value proposition, Sohar International is hosting Lord Gerry Grimstone of Boscobel Kt, the Minister of Investment in the United Kingdom for its 1st virtual session and 6th edition of ‘Viewpoints — Sohar International Chairman’s Forum. The guest speaker will address the topic “Has everything changed? — The post COVID-19 world” in an insightful and thought-provoking session that will be streamed live via the bank’s YouTube channel on June 15, 2020 starting at 7:30pm.

With his vast experience spanning private and public sectors, Lord Gerry Grimstone’s address on a key topic is slated to offer a complete picture of the changes that will shape the state of the world in a post COVID-19 world.

Speaking on the 6th edition of ‘Viewpoints — Sohar International Chairman’s Forum that is being held in a virtual format for the first time, Mohammed Mahfoudh al Ardhi, Chairman of the Board of Directors at Sohar International, said: “As economies around the world continue to grapple with the diverse challenges and economic



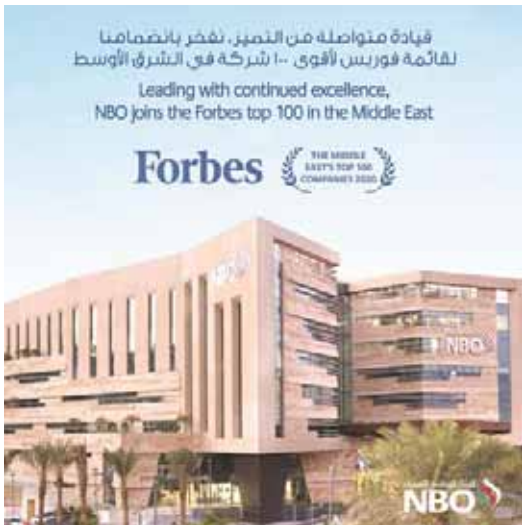
implications of COVID-19, we are pleased to welcome Lord Grimstone, the UK’s Minister of Investment to this fully virtual, webinar-style session of the Sohar International Chairman’s Forum. He will address a plethora of Oman’s political and industry leaders and dignitaries, and offer valuable insights on the challenges and opportunities governments and corporations around the globe can expect to address in navigating a post COVID-19 world.”

NBO among Forbes’ Top 100 companies

MUSCAT: A testament to its position as a market leader and its growing global reputation, National Bank of Oman (NBO) has been recognised among Forbes Middle East’s Top 100 Companies 2020.

The publication’s annual list ranks the largest and most profitable companies on the region’s stock exchanges and analyses their market value, sales, assets, and profits. With the banking and financial services sector making up almost half of this year’s entries, NBO’s inclusion demonstrates its success as it continues to raise the bar on innovative and value-laden banking services.

Chairperson Amal Suhail Bahwan, said, “This is a proud moment for NBO and our inclu-



sion in the list for the first time testifies to the fact we are emerging as a major player in the Middle East and a reflection of the soundness of our strategy and our strong ability to execute it. Although these are unprecedented and challenging times, we are confident of our path, as with fortitude and resoluteness, we continue to drive the country’s banking sector.”

Sayyid Wasfi bin

Jamshid al Said, Acting CEO of NBO, added, “The strong prevalence of banks on the list shows that they continue to be one of the most valuable sectors in the region’s stock markets, offering a safe haven for investors.

Despite the economic impact of coronavirus, NBO has managed to remain agile and resilient, and our focus on digitalisation has helped us to quickly adapt to a rapidly altered landscape while continuing to support our customers.

We are proud to have been included on Forbes’ list and take it as a welcome confirmation of our uncompromising commitment to innovation and our customer-first approach, as we continue to drive Oman’s banking sector.”

OAB resumes normal working

MUSCAT: In light of the Supreme Committee’s recent decision to lift the lockdown in most of the Sultanate’s wilayats, Oman Arab Bank has announced the reopening of all its 60 branches and offices according to its normal operating hours.

Highlighting the importance of this decision, Rashad al Shaikh (pictured), Acting Head of the



Retail Banking Division at OAB, said, “OAB is always committed to offering seamless, high-quality services to our customers, therefore we have decided to adapt to the current situation and gradually return to work, in accordance with the directives of the Supreme Committee.

The Bank’s branches, which had been closed during the previous period to ensure the safety of customers and employees, will be resuming work as per normal working hours.

We have implemented various precautionary measures and preventive guidelines, as requested by the concerned authorities, to ensure that the highest of safety standards are maintained for our customers and employees.”

During the onset of the pandemic, Oman Arab Bank launched an internal integrated programme to mitigate the risks of infection. ‘Wiqaya’, which was directly supervised by OAB’s Human Resources Division, saw a successful reduction of employees at the workplace as well as the activation of remote working procedures.

The Retail Banking Division worked tirelessly through the Bank’s digital platforms to meet customer needs, and minimising their need to visit a branch.

BUSINESS

Virus crisis puts Nigeria corrupt fuel subsidy system in spotlight

LAGOS: Plunging oil prices and collapsing state revenues have seen Nigerian authorities vow an end to a controversial fuel subsidy scheme long criticised as a graft-ridden drain on public finances.

But there are major doubts that Africa's most populous country is finally ready to wean itself off a system that has helped some in high places syphon billions from government coffers.

The fuel subsidy scheme has been described as a sprawling web of patronage and mismanagement that encapsulates the dysfunction plaguing the continental powerhouse.

Despite being Africa's largest oil producer, Opec member Nigeria has limited refinery capacity and actually imports the bulk of its refined products, including fuel.

That fuel is then sold at a subsidised rate in an opaque system aimed at keeping average Nigerians happy — but it also left plenty of scope for corruption by officials and traders.

Over the past few months the coronavirus crisis and turmoil worldwide has upended all this.

The fall in global oil prices means that fuel coming in from outside no longer needs to be subsidised, just as Nigeria's state revenues have taken a major hit.

Taking advantage of the slump to save its much-needed reserves, the Nigerian authorities announced an end to the old system in April.

"There is no subsidy and it is zero forever," said Mele Kyari, the head of state-run Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC).

From now on, officials pledged, the market would determine the cost at the



Construction workers are seen at the Dangote Oil Refinery, which is being built on the outskirts of Lagos, Nigeria. — Reuters

pump.

As so often in Nigeria's murky world of big money and vested interests, not everything has turned out quite so straightforward.

Despite the insistence of the authorities that the subsidy system is over, many in the industry complain the government refuses to relinquish control.

So far the authorities have continued to set a pricing band that they say retailers must stick to.

"Nigerians shouldn't be overcharged, that's what we are saying," said Apollo Kimchi, spokesman for the state Petroleum Products Pricing Regulatory Agency.

"We advise marketers — this is how you sell, you shouldn't go above (this) price because if you go above it, you will be exploiting people, that's it."

For Tunji Oyeibanji, chairman of the Major Oil Marketers Association of

Despite being Africa's largest oil producer, Opec member Nigeria has limited refinery capacity and actually imports the bulk of its refined products, including fuel.

Nigeria, official action has fallen well short of the pronouncements.

"We don't really understand what the government is up to," he said.

"Where are (the) market forces determining price in this?"

His organisation — which represents large filling station owners — has long pushed for the government to let pump prices go free.

"We maintain that a full deregulation and liberalisation of the downstream sector is the solution," Oyeibanji said.

The current scrap over

the fuel subsidy is just the latest tussle about change to a system that has helped some at the top grow seriously wealthy over the years.

International lenders like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund have long decried a scheme that swallows up vast sums that should otherwise be spent on sectors such as health or education.

President Muhammadu Buhari shook things up after his election in 2015 on a platform to tackle Nigeria's endemic graft.

He took over the oil ministry and ordered state behemoth NNPC to become the sole fuel importer into the country.

The move may have cut out some of the more egregious abuses under the previous administration of president Goodluck Jonathan. — AFP



‘SEPTEMBER IPL IN SRI LANKA IS VIABLE OPTION’

“

If the ICC believes that the World T20 can happen, then having the IPL looks difficult because it could only be held if the World T20 is postponed. But after the announcement (of opening the stadiums for fans by Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison), the IPL in October looks difficult.

SUNIL GAVASKAR,
FORMER INDIA
CAPTAIN

MUMBAI: Batting great Sunil Gavaskar said the Indian Premier League could be staged in Sri Lanka in September with Australia's chances of hosting the Twenty20 World Cup in October looking bright.

The Twenty20 international showpiece is scheduled to take place from October 18 to November 19 but had been under threat because of the coronavirus pandemic.

However, Australia's decision to allow crowds of up to 10,000 in sports stadiums from June has breathed life into the staging of the tournament, with the International Cricket Council set to make a decision next month.

"If the ICC believes that the World T20 can happen, then having the IPL looks difficult because it could only be held if the World T20 is postponed," the former India captain told local television channel Aaj Tak.

"But after the announce-



ment (of opening the stadiums for fans by Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison), the IPL in October looks difficult."

Indian cricket chiefs are desperately trying to salvage the cash-rich IPL this year even if it means taking it overseas or playing in empty stands.

IPL chairman Brijesh Patel said the league could be moved out of India if the virus

threat does not ease in the next two months.

The league has earmarked a possible September-October window for the event.

With the monsoon expected to bring heavy rains to India in September, staging a shortened version of the competition in Sri Lanka that month could be a viable option, Gavaskar said.

"In September, you can't have the IPL in India due to monsoon," said Gavaskar.

"But maybe (it can be held) in Sri Lanka from early September with teams playing each other once instead of double-headers. Maybe you can think of that," said Gavaskar.

The United Arab Emirates and Sri Lankan cricket boards have already shown interest in hosting the tournament this year.

The world's wealthiest Twenty20 tournament has twice been held outside India in years that it clashed with national elections. — **AFP**

SPORTS

Davies admits Spurs needs fast start

LONDON: Tottenham defender Ben Davies has urged his teammates to make a fast start when they restart their Premier League campaign on Friday.

Jose Mourinho's side face a vital showdown with Manchester United in north London in their first game since the coronavirus lockdown in March.

Tottenham go into the game in eighth place, four points behind fifth-placed United and a further three adrift of fourth-placed Chelsea in the race to qualify for the Champions League.

Tottenham were struggling before the pandemic, going six games without a win in all competitions and crashing out of the Champions League and FA Cup.

But they will be boosted by the return from injury of Harry Kane, Son Heung-min and Moussa Sissoko, and Davies believes they can hit the ground running against United.

"It is a huge game in our season. If we start off on the front foot it can really give us a big platform and confidence to push on for the rest of the season," Davies told Tottenham's website.

"We know that this game is vital going into the final bit of our season to where we want to finish. It's been a long preparation for it but we can't wait to get going."

Davies played in a two-hour training match against Norwich on Friday, after which the fragility of the restart process was made

“

It is a huge game in our season. If we start off on the front foot it can really give us a big platform and confidence to push on for the rest of the season.

BEN DAVIES,
TOTTENHAM
DEFENDER

apparent when it was reported a Canaries player had tested positive for the virus.

Tottenham issued a statement confirming that the player in question had not breached any social distancing rules during the match, and preparations for the United fixture would proceed accordingly.

Speaking before news of the test, Davies added: "It was really nice to be back and it is something we are going to have to get used to - playing in an empty stadium and making sure we're up and at it." — AFP





OMAN BASKETBALL COACH OSTOJIC SHARES EXPERIENCE OF COACHING JUNIORS

ADIL AL BALUSHI

MUSCAT: The training and development committee at Oman Basketball Association (OBA) recently started the series of virtual coaching training through using the “Zoom” application.

The committee decided to use the modern communication means to proceed further in the implementation of the development plan for the domestic coaches. The first virtual course was presented by the head coach of the junior national basketball teams, Mladen Ostojic, who focused on delivering the right techniques for coaching the junior players. The Bosnian coach explained to the local coaches, who took part in

the online course, the methodology on proper discovering of the talented players, improving and shaping their technical skills and the selection mechanism of the talented players for the national teams.

Coach Mladen Ostojic **(pictured)** told *Oman Daily Observer* coaching of the young players differs a lot than the other team categories.

“During the virtual course, I shared my experience with the national coaches on some of the main technical fundamentals including: shooting, passing, running, defending and other

technical aspects. It is necessary for each coach to be patient during the training sessions of the cadet players’ category. He has to deliver the technical skills training clearly to the kid’s players with more repetitions,” he added.

The 63 years old explained the selection parameters for the talented players among thousands.

“Height is one of the significant elements besides the other technical skills including running, positioning long feet ball, monitoring the ball and other technical sides. Furthermore, there are

players who could not perform well during the tests period at festivals and the coach should give them equal chances in the next gathering and festivals to select new players. After the selection, the coach should commence with implementation of the modern training style of attacking and defending. The training sessions should be diversified and match with the ability and capability of the players,” said the former coach of UAE team

The training and development committee at OBA will announce the schedule of the weekly online lecturers very soon. It is expected that some trainers from Asian and International arena will present the upcoming virtual sessions.



SPORTS

BELGRADE: World number one Novak Djokovic lost one of his two opening singles matches on Saturday at the charity tournament he organised, and his day got worse when news broke that one of the event's four legs has been scrapped due to coronavirus concerns.

Shortly after beating fellow Serbian Viktor Troicki in his opening match, Djokovic said he was disappointed that the Adria Tour's third leg in Montenegro, scheduled for June 27-28, had been called off.

Djokovic's younger brother Djordje and the Adria Tour director, released a statement saying the event's board had decided to scrap the Montenegro leg.

Asked at a news conference after his defeat by Filip Krajinovic whether there was an alternative host nation able to replace Montenegro in a fortnight, Djokovic said:

"We are looking at several alternative options and locations which I don't want to reveal at this point.

"We are running out of time so we will know

DJOKOVIC BEATEN AS TOUR'S MONTENEGRO LEG IS SCRAPPED

“

I am so sad for the Montenegro leg. We tried everything, but the borders are still not open and we don't have time to organise it all

**NOVAK
DJOKOVIC,**
WORLD
NUMBER ONE

"I am so sad for the Montenegro leg", he told the Balkan nation's Sport Klub television in a court-side interview in front of a capacity 4,000 crowd.

"We tried everything, but the borders are still not open and we don't have time to organise it all". With 12,251 confirmed cases and 253 deaths related to COVID-19, Serbia is among the countries whose residents are not allowed to travel to its southern neighbour Montenegro.

Earlier on Saturday,

where we stand either tomorrow or the day after".

The second leg will be held in Croatia's coastal resort of Zadar on June 20-21 and the final one in Bosnia's Banja Luka on July 3-4.

The tournament, organised by Djokovic while international tennis remains suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic, has drawn some household names and adopted a more streamlined format than the main tour events.

— AFP

FEATURES

FOR THE LOVE OF TEA

Having a cup of tea is a ritual seen all over the world. But finding that perfect blend of unique flavors can be hard. This passion for tea what made Latifa Al Bimany launched her very own brand of tea blends 'Teaqueen' in November 2019... **page 20**

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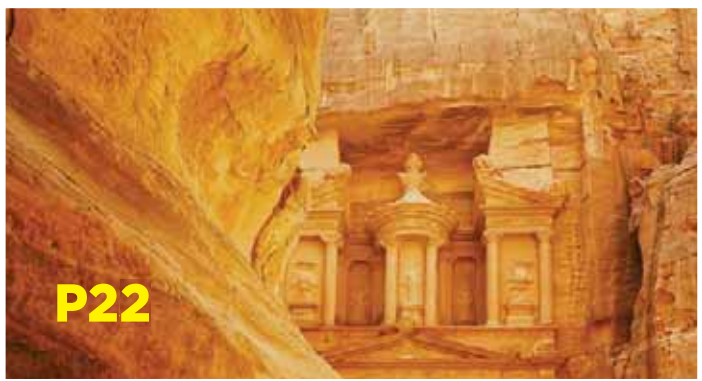
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Ancient Petra a ghost town as pandemic hits Jordan tourism



P22

FOR THE LOVE OF TEA

TITASH CHAKRABORTY

The ritual is seen all over the world and across cultures. If you state that you're not feeling well, the chances are that you will be offered a cup of tea. We all find tea physically soothing and emotionally comforting; perhaps that's where the association of health and the tea-making ritual began. The simple act of brewing, sipping, and savoring a good cup of tea calms your senses in the fast-moving chaos of life in the modern world. That magical cup full of flavour, serenity, and vitality brings both inner peace and health, and encourages interpersonal connection and happiness but finding that perfect blend of unique flavors can be hard. This passion for tea made Latifa Al Bimany launched her very own brand of tea blends 'Teaqueen' in November 2019.

"I have always had a passion for tea but found it hard to find the different types of blends that I wanted in Oman. So rather than continue to always shop online for tea from around the world, I decided that I should fill this gap in the local market and create an Omani company that makes the best blends locally. I was in a very successful position in one of the government entities so taking this step was a huge leap of faith but it was one I am very proud of." Says Latifa

"One of my favourite times of the day is when I am brewing the perfect cup of tea. Watching the water turn into a beautiful shade of amber while the lovely aroma of tea fills the air and then looking at the beautiful sight of milk filling the dark

voids in a cup of tea is both tranquil and calming. In a world of social media and streaming platforms we spend a lot of time online, so having 20 minutes to disconnect and unwind by brewing a cup of tea is both beneficial and delicious!" says Latifa

Imported from all over the world and blended with local spices and herbs, Teaqueen offers unique blends, created to fit every tea lover's taste buds and all of Teaqueen's recipes are a result of Latifa's passion for tea.

ENVIRONMENTALLY-FRIENDLY

Other than the bespoke blends of tea, another aspect of the brand is its packaging.

Latifa shared with us, "With the rapid increase in global warming we all have a responsibility to protect our planet and reduce pollution which is why having quality tea, sourced sustainably in packaging that's better for the environment was very important to me and this resulted in a delay in the launch but was one of the aspects that I would not compromise on and I am proud that all the 'Teaqueen' packaging is biodegradable. There is absolutely no plastic in any of the packaging including the window of the barrier bag, which is made of special biodegradable PLA."



LEARNING-CURVE

There's a lot more to blending than we think. Latifa explained, "I had to learn a lot about tea blending. Every supplier I looked into would have over 20-30 different kinds of similar quality teas and to find the right blend, you would have to sample them all to see if they were the right colour or flavour profile and to see if it had blendability. When blending, what you think might work, may not work or you could make a blend and

try it and it's lovely, but when you add sugar or milk, it doesn't taste as good - people take their tea differently, and this is something you have to bear in mind when making blends."

Teaqueen is located in Boushar at the Saeed Al Barwani Building near Al Amin Mosque. You can also order the Teaqueen blends online via the Drewel App. To find out more details, be sure to follow them on Instagram on [@teaqueen.oman](https://www.instagram.com/teaqueen.oman).

FEATURES

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



Baby dragons' go on display in Slovenia



SLITHERING THROUGH THEIR subterranean aquarium, three “baby dragons” have gone on display in a Slovenian cave, where they hatched in 2016 in a rare successful breeding, officials said Thursday. Only 30 visitors per day will be allowed to visit the so-called baby dragons — ancient underwater pred-

ators that can live up to 100 years and only breed once in a decade. “We are proud to present three out of the 21 baby olms, the world-famous ‘dragon’s offspring’, which we have kept a close eye on since 2016,” the Postojna cave said in a statement. The three are among 21 offspring that hatched in

2016 when one of the olms at the cave lay around 60 eggs in one of the observation tanks. To ensure their survival and gather more information about the creatures, cave authorities kept them far from visitors in a cave laboratory as their “best kept and most carefully guarded

secret” — until now. Reaching a maximum length of 35 centimetres (13.5 inches), the blind animal with its four tiny limbs is a far cry from the scary monsters conjured up in national folklore. Sometimes also referred to as “human fish”, the slim vertebrate sports three feathery gills on each side of its elongated snout. The body’s sheer pink skin makes it easy to spot the internal organs. The protected eel-like species can go without food for up to a decade. Found primarily in Balkan cave rivers, the olms have been living in the world-famous Postojna cave, 50 kilometres (30 miles) southwest of the capital Ljubljana, for what researchers say is millions of years. The baby dragons’ presentation comes only days after the cave — one of Europe’s largest that usually draws 700,000 visitors a year — reopened its doors following three months of closure due to the coronavirus epidemic.—**AFP**

FEATURES

Ancient Petra a ghost town as pandemic hits Jordan tourism

FOR OVER TWO millennia the ancient city of Petra has towered majestically over the Jordanian desert. Today its famed rose-red temples hewn into the rockface lie empty and silent.

As the novel coronavirus spread around the world, Jordanian authorities imposed a lockdown, and the last tourists left on March 16, a day before the Hashemite kingdom closed its borders.

"It's the first time I've seen this place so empty. Usually there are thousands of tourists," said Nayef Hilalat, 42, who has worked as a guardian at the ancient archaeological site for a decade.

"Every year at this time the place would be buzzing with people," he lamented, wearing a khaki cap bearing the Jordanian flag. "Today all we can hear is the birds singing."

One of the seven wonders of the world, and classified as a UNESCO world heritage site in 1985, Petra was once the capital of the nomadic Nabataean Arab peoples and dates back to at least 200 years BC.

With the passage of time, it has become a beacon for tourism in the country and the region.

Its spectacular Al-Khazneh, or Treasury, with its stunning sandstone facade, is one of Petra's most famous attractions, and was a location for Steven Spielberg's 1989 movie "Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade".

But now, the steep winding Siq path — a gorge over a kilometre long that leads into Al-Khazneh — is deserted. Gone are the tourists normally thronging the pathway on foot, or riding on donkeys or in horse-drawn carriages.

Life is in limbo. Tables at the site's cafes forlornly gather dust or are littered with forgotten plastic cups, while items like T-shirts in the souvenir shops fade in the desert sun.

'NEVER BEFORE'

The vast site, lying in a deep valley between the Red Sea, in the south, and the Dead Sea, to the north, is a ghost town.

Around 200 tour guides, along with 1,500 horse and donkey owners, are out of work.

It's "a catastrophe", said 55-year-old Naim Nawafleh, who has been a guide here for about 30 years.

Jordan welcomes some five million visitors a year, and tourism accounts for 14 percent of the country's GDP, employing about 100,000 people.

A father of six, Nawafleh used to earn some \$70 a day.

"In the past, the number of visitors varied according to the upheavals in the region. But today, there are no tourists at all. It's never happened before," he said.

Jordan was already in a precarious situation before the pandemic, with unemployment at 19.3 percent in the first quarter of 2020.

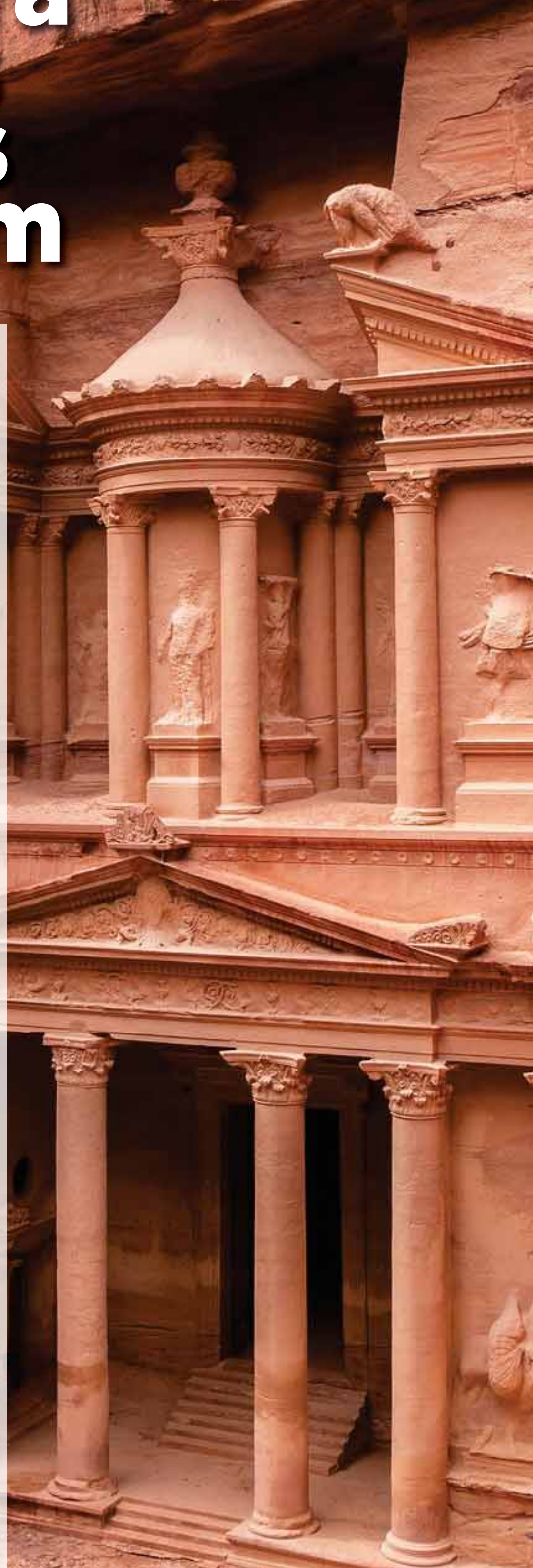
Bordering conflict-torn Syria and Iraq, and lacking the oil wealth of some of its neighbours, the kingdom has worked to revive its tourism industry.

Petra, an immense 264,000-square metre (2.8 million sq feet) site south of Amman, saw a record "1.13 million visitors last year, including a million from abroad", said Suleiman al-Farajat, responsible for tourism and development in Petra.

About 80 percent of the region's roughly 38,000 people who are mainly nomadic Bedouins, depend on tourism directly or indirectly, he said.

Like Nael Nawas, 41, a father of eight, who earned between \$40 to \$55 a day, transporting tourists to and from the site on the back of his donkey.

"We'll be in a real pickle" if the tourist industry doesn't pick up, he said, adding that since mid-March he has been working for a livestock seller. —AFP



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