

Be Careful,
Be Responsible!
#Living_with_COVID19

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ESTABLISHED IN 1981

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF: ABDULLAH BIN SALIM AL SHUEILI

VOL. 39 NO. 238 | PAGES 22



HIS MAJESTY GREETES SOUTH SUDAN PRESIDENT

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Salva Kiir Mayardit of the Republic of South Sudan on his country’s Independence Anniversary.
In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere greetings along with best wishes of good health and happiness to President Mayardit, and the friendly people of his country further progress and prosperity. — ONA

BE WELL
INFORMED TO
COEXIST WITH
COVID-19

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH

MUSCAT: Keeping informed is essential for adaptation to the virus. The virus has caused a major shock to the world, and has forced mankind to think in terms of coexisting with it.
To ensure that the economy and life move on till the time a vaccine is a reality, we have to coexist with COVID-19, said an official from the Ministry of Health.
“Learning to live with the virus is the way forward in terms of thinking and protecting ourselves and others”, said Dr Thamra al Ghafri, Director of Planning and Studies at the Directorate General of Health, Ministry of Health.
So what is needed to live with the virus?
Dr Thamra advises, “When you say adapting to a virus it means you are living with a virus, and we all know by now that we have limited tools in the absence of a vaccine or a specific medicine. We are working with tools like washing hands with soap and water, masks and maintaining physical distance. Everyone has heard it more than a hundred times. But there are other matters one should be aware of and one of the most essential prerequisites is to keep oneself informed and that means well informed.
“We must understand the details of why we are washing hands and maintaining physical distancing whether at home, work or when with friends”.
While we are living with the virus we need to slowly and gradually return to our routine, explains Dr Thamra, as there is no way individuals can be isolated forever.



PROLONGED
USE OF
MASKS DOES
NOT CAUSE
OXYGEN
DEFICIENCY

The prolonged use of face masks when worn properly, does not cause CO2 intoxication nor oxygen deficiency, confirmed the World Health Organization (WHO) on Wednesday. **DETAILS ON P2**

NEW TAX INCENTIVES
FOR BUSINESSES

MUSCAT: The Oman Tax Authority has announced a new set of incentives to help businesses to overcome various challenges. The incentives were approved by the Supreme Committee on COVID-19.
A statement issued on Wednesday said: “The new incentives include suspension of additional tax resulting from the non-payment of the income tax due to be paid for the year ending December 31, 2019. The previously specified date extends for cases where a fiscal year ends at a later date for a maximum period of nine months from the date of the end of its fiscal year”.
The authority said that tax due for the year 2019 can be paid in instalments, while those from the previous years can be rescheduled.
The Oman Tax Authority has suspended fines and penalties due to the failure to submit declarations and accounts for 2019 and any additional tax due from the original taxes payable for previous years from January 1, 2020 to September 2020.

1,210 new COVID-19 cases, total crosses 50,000-mark

STAFF REPORTER

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Health on Wednesday announced the death of nine people due to COVID-19 in the past 24 hours, taking the total death toll in Oman to 233. With this, the number of deaths over the past five days in the country has gone up to 40. MoH also announced 1,210 new cases of COVID-19 in the Sultanate, including 939 Omanis and 271 residents, which brought the total number of positive cases to 50,207. According to MoH, a total of 3,987 people were tested in the last 24 hours, taking the total number of tests in

the Sultanate to 221,181. The ministry also reported that 1,005 new patients recovered from COVID-19 during the past 24 hours, taking the total recoveries from the disease to 32,005. A total of 64 people were admitted to the hospital on Wednesday, taking the number of people in hospitals to 469, including 128 in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU). The ministry has called upon everyone to take individual and social responsibility and comply with precautionary measures, especially wearing masks and following social distance.



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IGCC is a reputed and professionally managed company in the Sultanate of Oman, having diversified interest in building construction and maintenance. We are looking forward to recruit the following personnel with immediate effect.

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Interested candidates may send their resumes alongwith details of current salary, expected salary, pp size photograph & passport copy to igcc.res@gmail.com or Fax to 00968-24816976

PROLONGED USE OF MASKS DOES NOT CAUSE OXYGEN DEFICIENCY

VINOD NAIR

MUSCAT: The prolonged use of medical masks when properly worn, does not cause CO2 intoxication nor oxygen deficiency, confirmed the WHO on Wednesday. "The use of medical masks can be uncomfortable. However, it does not lead to CO2 intoxication nor oxygen deficiency", the WHO added. The WHO confirmation is significant, as the use of a mask will be mandatory for all types of travel in the future, including long flights. According to IATA quoting a study, wearing a mask can reduce the forward distance by an exhaled breath and its droplets by more than



20 per cent. The face mask, however, can be effective only if it fits properly and worn correctly. It will be also more effective in combination with handwashing habits. Oman has made it mandatory for everyone to wear face masks in public places, including all permitted commercial and industrial activities, workplaces in the public and private sectors and public transportation.

KARWA MOTORS



The TENDERS Committee announces the following tenders:

Tender No.	Subject	Document Fees	Tender Bond	Closing Date
MJN-KWM-EQ-TED-00005	Supply, installation & commissioning of main assembly line equipment for Karwa Motors Project	OMR 100/-	5% of Bid Value	28 th July 2020
MJN-KWM-EQ-TED-00006	Supply, installation & commissioning of Forklift, Stacker & Tow Tractor for Karwa Motors project	OMR 100/-		
MJN-KWM-EQ-TED-00007	Supply, installation & commissioning of Hand tools and equipment for Karwa Motors project	OMR 30/-		

CONDITIONS:-

- The tender documents package can be obtained from the Finance Department of the company on 9th, 12th and 13th July 2020 from 7:00 AM – 3:00 PM, upon payment of a non-refundable document fees to the following bank account and providing proof of deposit and signed authorization letter to collect tender document with company stamp.
- Payment should be processed by bank transfer or deposit to the following bank coordinates or by cash:
Account Name: Karwa Motors
Bank Name: Meethaq Islamic Banking
Bank Branch: Al Khuwair Islamic Branch
Account Number: 0625500193570001
Swift Code: BMUSOMRXISL
- **KEY DATES:**
 - Issue Tender Package – 9th July 2020, 12th July 2020 & 13th July 2020
 - Last Date for Queries – 19th July 2020
 - Last Date for Submission – 28th July 2020
- Tender should be submitted not later than 12.00 noon on the closing date and must be deposited. **Karwa Motors Tendering Office, located Office No 5-25, 2nd Floor, Finaa Al Fardan Building No.254, Way 4204, Plot No 836, North Al Ghubra, Postal Code: 1115, Muscat,** and should be in sealed envelopes addressed to: **Tender Committee, Karwa Motors quoting the Tender No. and subject.**
- Offers arriving after the closing date & time shall not be accepted.

E-Mail: tendercommittee@karwamotors.com

PACA REVIEWS READINESS FOR RESUMPTION OF FLIGHTS



MUSCAT: The National Committee for Civil Aviation Security and Facilitation at the Public Authority for Civil Aviation (PACA) held a meeting on Wednesday.

The committee reviewed the sector's preparedness for the gradual resumption of scheduled operations, once approved by the Supreme Committee, in accordance with the relevant national laws and the health protocols for aviation safety.

UNFPA LAUDS OMANI WOMEN'S STATUS

KABEER YOUSUF

MUSCAT: Women in the Sultanate have achieved great heights as they have been guaranteed equal opportunity, freedom and security, thanks to the constant efforts of the government and its ministries of health, social development and education, according to the UNFPA.

Speaking to the Observer at the GCC SWOP (State of the World Population) 2020 launch and regional virtual launch, Asr Toson, UNFPA representative, said Omani women have achieved much in the past four decades.

"Omani women have excelled in almost all areas of the society, thanks to the incessant efforts of the government and the ministries of health, education and social development. Omani women are given equal opportunity in all the spheres of life."

Women in Oman work in good economic conditions, where men are on par in terms of work, production and investment opportunities. They are also able to carry out political work through roles such as membership in the Council of Ministers and the Council



of Oman. Toson added that Oman is in a better position when it comes to women's empowerment and the protection of their rights.

"This unique position that Omani women enjoy is the direct result of the development of women's social status. A woman's role as an educated and working woman has assumed significance at all levels," adds Toson.

COVID-19 ANXIETY

The UNFPA representative said that the hotline number instituted for pregnant women and adolescent girls has been a success wherein more than 100 calls were received and given adequate advice.

"We received more than 100 calls on the hotline number instituted for pregnant and adolescent girls giving them COVID-19 related information and how to stay healthy with the right frame of mind. The majority of them were anxious about their health and their babies' well-being during the pandemic," he added.

Although Omani women have achieved many of their ambitions, they must continue to respond to the issues and challenges facing them to ensure that women's experience is reflected in all aspects of society.

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OMAN EMBASSY TO STUDY IMPACT OF US IMMIGRATION RULE ON STUDENTS

STAFF REPORTER

MUSCAT: The Embassy of the Sultanate in the United States said that it is in contact with the American authorities concerned (government and universities), regarding the new immigration rule.

Foreign students attending US colleges that will operate entirely online this fall semester cannot remain in the country to do so, according to new regulations released on Monday by US Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

The embassy clarified it seeks to find out details of the decision and its impact on the students (including those currently in the Sultanate).

The embassy assured Omani students and their parents that they will spare no effort to overcome all



difficulties and achieve what is in their best interest and stability in order to complete their studies easily and successfully.

“Students will be provided with the latest updates of the decision through the official electronic platforms.”

Many US colleges were scrambling to modify plans for the fall semester in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic a day after the

Trump Administration issued an order that could force tens of thousands of foreign students to leave the country if their schools hold all classes online.

The announcement blindsided academic institutions grappling with the logistical challenges of safely resuming classes, particularly after the federal government had granted exceptions to the rules limiting online learning for foreign

students when colleges and universities in March rushed to shutter campuses and move to online classes as the pandemic forced lockdowns.

There are more than a million foreign students at US colleges and universities, and many schools depend on revenue from foreign students, who often pay full tuition.

The US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agency said institutions moving entirely to online learning must submit plans to the agency by July 15. Schools that will use only in-person learning, shortened or delayed classes or a blend of in-person and online learning must submit plans by August 1.

The guidance applies to holders of F-1 and M-1 visas, which are for academic and vocational students.

THAILAND TO ALLOW PATIENTS FROM OMAN, WITH CONDITIONS

STAFF REPORTER

MUSCAT: Patients from Oman who wish to visit Thailand are required to contact the country's embassy in Muscat and submit their requests to know the available flight times.

It may be noted that no commercial flights are able to enter Thailand as of now.

The following documents are required for the travel of patients, which include the entry permit from the Thai Embassy in Muscat:

- A medical certificate confirming that the patient's condition is suitable for travel;
- The COVID-19 Clearance Certificate issued 72 hours before the date of travel;
- Three people will be allowed to accompany the patient;

Proof of ability to bear the costs of treatment and all other expenses, including insurance covering COVID-19 treatment with a coverage of at least \$100,000;

A letter from a health institution in the Sultanate confirming the need to travel;

A confirmation letter from a Thai hospital that the patient needs to stay in the hospital for at least 14 days. The patient undergoes several tests to ensure safety from the virus attack.

Thai authorities have taken new measures and procedures to allow some groups of foreigners to enter in a limited manner, including patients who have work or residence permits, and tourists are not allowed at this time.

Travel is now limited to Thai evacuation aircraft only.



SULTANATE OF OMAN

MINISTRY OF HEALTH

ANNOUNCEMENT



Auction (1/2020)

Gifts & Flower Shop Rental at Nizwa Hospital

The Ministry of Health, represented by Nizwa Hospital would like to announce the Auction No. 1/2020 on leasing a Gift & Flower shop at Nizwa Hospital, in which, offers should be submitted in sealed envelopes.

Specialized Companies and establishments may collect auction documents and specifications from the Financial Affairs Department in the Hospital between 8.00 am and 12.00 pm during official working hours till July 23, 2020. Bringing a copy of a valid commercial register is a must.

A Bank Guarantee or a Certified Cheque valid for 90 days issued by a local bank for (1%) of the Auction Value addressed to Ministry of Health shall be enclosed with the bid as an auction bond that may be reimbursed to unsuccessful bidder. A bid unaccompanied by the auction bonds will be rejected.

Offers enclosed in the sealed envelope duly signed and stamped in the original form shall be addressed to The Chairman of Tender Committee in Nizwa Hospital providing the title of the auction viz:

“Auction No. 01/2020 – for Lease of a gift & flower shop in Nizwa Hospital”. Envelopes shall not bear any sign that refers to the bidder's name or identity.

Offers shall be deposited at the tender box in the Main Hall of the Hospital by 12.00 afternoons on Wednesday, August 05, 2020. Offers submitted after the deadline will not be considered.

The Ministry is not bound to assign any reason for rejected bids.

OMAN HAILED FOR ENCOURAGING GIRLS TO STUDY ENGINEERING

LONDON: The Guardian daily has commended the support and encouragement given by the Sultanate's government to Omani girls to study engineering, which, the paper said, will enhance the girls' role in domestic development programmes. In a report published on its website, the Guardian said that the Sultanate's government has made extensive efforts to encourage Omani girls to study in renowned world universities. The Sultanate's government also followed up the girls through career advisers and, accordingly, it is not a coincidence that more than half of the Omani engineers are women. The paper took the example of Razan al Lawati, a pipeline engineer who works on a programme to develop the performance of graduates in Petrofac, provider of oilfield services to the international oil and gas industry. Razan affirmed that more than 40 per cent of engineers registered in the postgraduate studies programme are women. The Guardian described the Sultanate as one of the globally topmost countries having a large percentage of women engineers by ratio of population. The United Kingdom and many Western countries work hard to attract women to the profession of engineering, said the



paper, adding that women's representation in this field is the highest in Eastern Europe and countries of the south. Quoting the Unesco, the paper said that in Britain only 12 per cent of engineers are women, compared to 50 per cent in the Sultanate, Malaysia and a third of countries such as Costa Rica, Vietnam and Algeria. In the same context, a report published by the US institution Conservation commended the government's efforts to develop the skills of women in the Sultanate. It said that a study on Oman Vision

2020, which was replaced by Vision 2040, showed that attention accorded to developing women's skills is part of the social commitment in the Sultanate. Oman is a major motivator of personal and professional development of women employed in low-income jobs or having more basic educational background, said the US institution, noting that the government in Oman offered such women many learning, training and employment programmes aimed at helping them contribute to the national economy. — **ONA**

4 held as police foil drug smuggling bid

MUSCAT: The Directorate for Combating Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances at North Al Batinah police command, in cooperation with the Coast Guard Police, apprehended four Asians who attempted to illegally enter the country via the sea to smuggle in drugs. The smugglers were monitored by the police and one of them was arrested as he disembarked on the beach while Coast Guard boats pursued and seized their boat. The police seized 14 kg of crystal meth. Legal procedures against the defendants are still underway. The ROP said it continues its efforts to combat drug crimes

THE SMUGGLERS WERE MONITORED BY THE POLICE AND ONE OF THEM WAS ARRESTED AS HE DISEMBARKED ON THE BEACH WHILE COAST GUARD BOATS PURSUED AND SEIZED THEIR BOAT through monitoring and tracking the smugglers and traffickers of narcotic drugs, commending the cooperation of citizens and expatriates through reporting suspicious activities of drug dealers on the toll-free number 1444 or at the nearest police station. — **ONA**



SULTANATE OF OMAN

MINISTRY OF HEALTH

ANNOUNCEMENT



Auction (2/2020)

Provision of Car Cleaning Service at Nizwa Hospital

The Ministry of Health, represented by Nizwa Hospital would like to announce the Auction No. 2/2020 on providing car cleaning service in Nizwa Hospital, in which, offers should be submitted in sealed envelopes.

Specialized Companies and establishments may collect auction documents and specifications from the Financial Affairs Department in the Hospital between 8.00 am and 12.00 pm during official working hours till July 23, 2020. Bringing a copy of a valid commercial register is a must.

A Bank Guarantee or a Certified Cheque valid for 90 days issued by a local bank for (1%) of the Auction Value addressed to Ministry of Health shall be enclosed with the bid as an auction bond that may be reimbursed to unsuccessful bidder. A bid unaccompanied by the auction bonds will be rejected.

Offers enclosed in the sealed envelope duly signed and stamped in the original form shall be addressed to The Chairman of Tender Committee in Nizwa Hospital providing the title of the auction viz:

“Auction No. 02/2020 – for providing car cleaning service in Nizwa Hospital”. Envelopes shall not bear any sign that refers to the bidder’s name or identity.

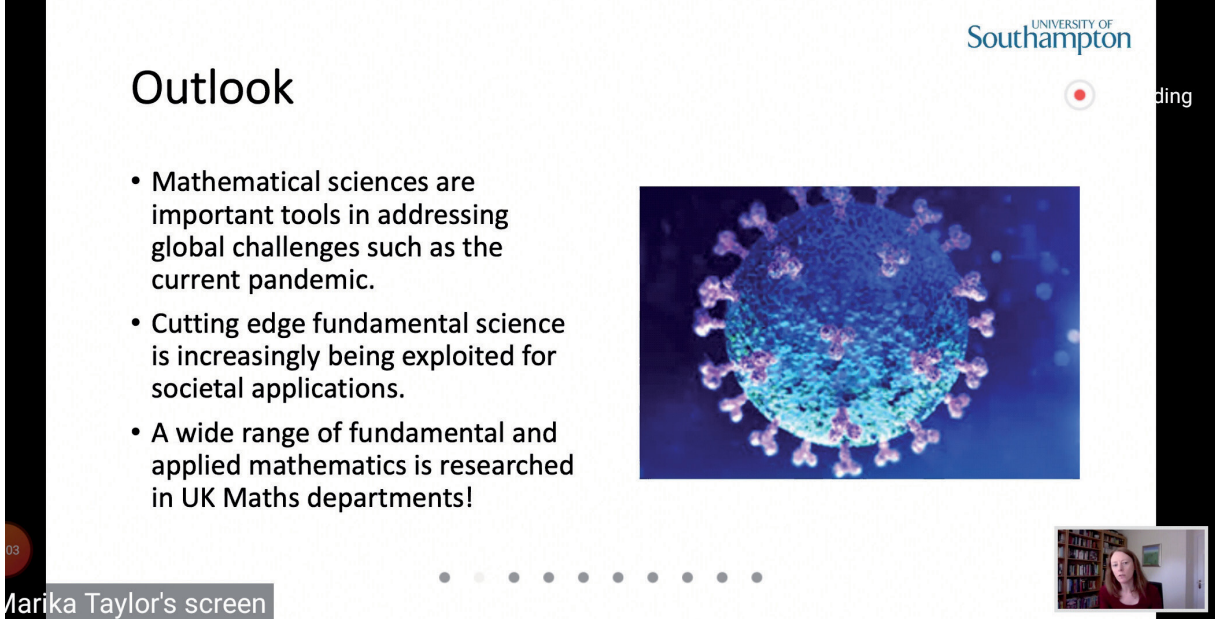
Offers shall be deposited at the tender box in the Main Hall of the Hospital by **12.00 afternoons on Wednesday, August 05, 2020**. Offers submitted after the deadline will not be considered.

The Ministry is not bound to assign any reason for rejected bids.

OMAN

Webinar debates role of maths in combating the coronavirus

MUSCAT: The Research Council (TRC), in collaboration with Data Academy of Horizons Consulting and Training, on Tuesday organised a webinar titled 'The Mathematics of COVID-19', as part of the Council's efforts to disseminate scientific and research knowledge about the coronavirus, the role of various pure and applied sciences in dealing with the pandemic, as well as supporting and encouraging Omani SMEs that specialise in education, online training and data sciences. The webinar was presented by Prof Marika Taylor, Head of Mathematical Sciences at the University of Southampton and a Fellow of the Alan Turing Institute, who talked about the importance of mathematics in exploring the spread



of the coronavirus, its various effects and potential implications by analysing health data to figure out the proper and scientific way of relaxing a lockdown. Prof Marika's talk stressed on the importance of mathematical sciences in addressing global challenges, such as the current pandemic. She also highlighted how cutting-edge fundamental science is increasingly being

exploited for societal applications. In her presentation, Prof Marika talked about the new mathematical techniques that have been developed to look for structure and patterns in data. In addition, she discussed how mathematical sciences is being used to explore the spread of COVID-19, as well as its repercussions and impacts. The discussion also

focused on mathematical models, data analysis and the presentation of model forecasting tools to help authorities make the right decisions to respond to the pandemic and work to manage them in a scientifically codified manner. Data Academy is an online learning and training platform with a vision of building generations competent in data sciences.



Council panel hosts SQU team to discuss status of teachers



MUSCAT: The Education and Research Committee of the State Council on Wednesday hosted officials of Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) as part of its study on 'the status and future of teachers in the Sultanate'.

The meeting, presided over by committee head Mohammed bin Hamdan al Toobi, was attended by the panel members and the Secretariat employees. The committee reviewed with the Sultan

Qaboos University delegation several areas of study, including: the legislations related to selection, qualification, appointment, promotions and acceptance ratios for college admissions. The committee also dis-

cussed on-the-job training programmes and plans for the teachers, ethics and values of the teaching profession, and laws regulating it, in addition to informing about education policies and strategies. The committee also touched on the objectives of the study. The university delegation included Prof Dr Sulaiman bin Mohammed al Balushi, Dean of the College of Education at SQU; Dr Hussein bin Ali al Kharousi, lecturer at the College of Education; Dr Abdullah bin Salem al Hinai, Assistant Dean of the College of Education for University Studies; and Dr Fawzia bint Aziz al Siyabiya, Assistant Dean of the College of Education for Training and Community Service.

Central Asia struggles with resurgent COVID-19 after reopening



BISHKEK: A man in his 60s, distraught and tearful, cries “I don’t know what to do now” as medical staff in protective gear carry the body of his dead wife out of a former bakery converted into a makeshift clinic in Bishkek, capital of Kyrgyzstan.

Kyrgyzstan and other Central Asian nations are struggling with a surge in COVID-19 cases which is now testing their healthcare systems to breaking point after they relaxed tough lockdown restrictions in May.

Uzbekistan, the region's most populous nation, said on Wednesday it would impose a second lockdown from July 10 to August 1, with the closure of all non-food shopping malls, cafes, restau-

rants, parks and entertainment venues.

Neighbouring Kazakhstan also imposed a second lockdown from July 5, citing a jump in COVID-19 cases.

Authorities in the region, located between Russia and China, are converting sports arenas, hotels and other venues into temporary hospitals and mobilising interns, fresh graduates and even doctors who were struck off due to criminal convictions.

“The situation is dire,” said Nurilya Cholponbay, a bank marketing executive who has become a volunteer in Bishkek.

“Many people arrive in grave condition... They opened a day patient facility in the Sports Palace, but peo-

ple with severe cases started arriving there and all it has is beds, lights and intravenous drip stands.”

The former bakery is also not properly equipped to handle severe COVID-19 cases but patients can visit to get intravenous drips, preferably using medicines they have bought themselves.

It is also one of few places where Bishkek residents can see a doctor at all as hospitals are full.

Such makeshift facilities exist largely thanks to donations from businessmen and volunteers who raise funds and organise supplies of food, protective gear, medicines and ventilators through social networks and messenger apps.

Kyrgyzstan, with a population of 6.5 million, saw a sharp increase in COVID-19 infections in June and has now confirmed 8,486 cases with 112 deaths.

Many ordinary Kyrgyz do not bother with tests. Akzhol, a 40-year-old unemployed economist, said he developed COVID-19 symptoms such as the loss of smell after attending a funeral of his friend's mother who died from pneumonia two weeks ago.

“I did not even try to get hospitalised,” he said. “The rush was on already by that time, hospitals were not taking in patients. People would queue up and pay \$200-300 (in bribes) to get a family member in as soon as a bed freed up.” — **Reuters**

DENMARK INTRODUCES COVID-19 CERTIFICATE FOR TRAVELLERS

COPENHAGEN: Denmark has introduced a so-called COVID-19 certificate aimed at making it easier for nationals planning to travel abroad during the pandemic, the Health Ministry said on Wednesday. The digital certificate was to show if the individual has a negative PCR (polymerase chain reaction) test. Some countries require such a test to allow entry. The certificate could also be used to be exempt from quarantine regulations, the ministry added. The certificate would be available free of charge after undergoing a COVID-19 test in Denmark, and the test results were completed. The test must not be

older than seven days to be valid. Certificates were to be available for adults over the age of 18 who have residency in Denmark. Parents with minors would from mid-July able to download a similar certificate for children.

AFRICA SURPASSES HALF A MILLION COVID-19 CASES

CAPE TOWN: Africa has recorded more than half a million COVID-19 infections, with many countries experiencing a sharp rise in cases, the World Health Organization (WHO) said on Wednesday. So far, the virus has claimed 11,595 lives on the continent, the WHO said. COVID-19 infections have more than doubled in 22 countries in the region over the past month, with Algeria, Egypt, Ghana, Nigeria and South Africa accounting for about 42 per cent of

all cases. South Africa is the continent's worst affected nation, shouldering 29 per cent of Africa's total caseload, according to the WHO.

INDIAN CITY IMPOSES ‘TRIPLE LOCKDOWN’ AS CASES SURGE

KOCHI: The capital of an Indian state that won praise for its early handling of the coronavirus pandemic has enforced a strict lockdown after a surge in cases, with one minister saying the city was “sitting on an active volcano”.

Thiruvananthapuram in the southern state of Kerala implemented what it called a “triple lockdown” this week, as India overtook Russia to record the world's third-highest number of coronavirus infections. — **Agencies**



US Deputy Secretary of State Stephen Biegun is greeted by his South Korean counterpart Lee Do-Hoon in Seoul on Wednesday. — Reuters

US says still open for talks with North Korea

SEOUL: The US has underlined that it remains open for dialogue to resolve the nuclear dispute with North Korea, countering remarks by a Pyongyang official suggesting the North is not interested in discussing the issue.

“Ambassador Lee Do-Hoon and I discussed recent developments on the Korean Peninsula and the potential for us to continue to make progress together on our goals on the Korean peninsula”, US Special Representative for North Korea Stephen Biegun said in a statement.

“I also want to be very clear on one point”, Biegun added. “I do not take my direction from Vice-Minister Choi Son Hui, nor from Ambassador John Bolton”.

Both focus only on the negatives, “rather than thinking creatively about what is possible”, he said.

Biegun said he was guided by a vision to create durable peace on the Korean Peninsula and “when Chairman Kim appoints a counterpart to me, who is prepared and empowered to negotiate on these issues, they will find us ready at that very moment”.

He also rejected reports that North Korea had been unwilling to meet him, saying, “We did not request a meeting with the North Koreans. This visit is to meet with our close friends and allies, the Republic of Korea, and we had an excellent discussion”.

Nuclear talks with the US have not resumed since a failed Trump-Kim summit in Vietnam in February 2019. North Korea has said repeatedly since then that it is not interested in fresh talks until Washington comes up with new proposals.

Meanwhile, China said on Wednesday the United States holds the key to breaking the stalemate on the Korean Peninsula, amid renewed tensions as Pyongyang refuses to return to denuclearisation talks with Washington.

Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian made the remarks during a press briefing in Beijing.

Biegun earlier rejected reports that he was seeking to meet North Korean officials during a visit to South Korea this week but reiterated that Washington is open to resuming talks.

NUCLEAR TALKS WITH THE US HAVE NOT RESUMED SINCE A FAILED TRUMP-KIM SUMMIT IN VIETNAM IN FEBRUARY 2019. NORTH KOREA HAS SAID REPEATEDLY SINCE THEN THAT IT IS NOT INTERESTED IN FRESH TALKS UNTIL WASHINGTON COMES UP WITH NEW PROPOSALS.

— Agencies

IN BRIEF

Mexican president to hold talks with Trump

MEXICO CITY: Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador will hold talks with his US counterpart Donald Trump during a working visit aimed at marking the launch of the new North American trade agreement. Lopez Obrador's first visit abroad since he took office 1.5 years ago is meant to strengthen “the strategic alliance” between the neighbouring countries, which are among each other's largest trade partners, the Mexican government said. The 66-year-old leftist president was due land in Washington, according to a programme published by Mexico. He will lay wreaths at two monuments and later hold talks with Trump both in private and in the presence of his delegation, which includes his foreign affairs and economy ministers.

Ethiopia violence toll rises to 239: Police

ADDIS ABABA: The death toll from demonstrations and ethnic violence that erupted in Ethiopia last week following the murder of a popular singer from the Oromo ethnic group has risen to 239, according to a tally of police figures. Pop star Hachalu Hundessa, a hero to many Oromo who saw him as the voice of their marginalisation, was shot dead by unknown attackers on Monday of last week, fuelling ethnic tensions threatening the country's democratic transition. Protests broke out in the capital Addis Ababa, as well as the surrounding Oromia region which is the homeland of the country's largest ethnic group, who have long felt sidelined and oppressed in the diverse nation.

Russia tells US to ‘mind own business’ over media freedom

MOSCOW: Moscow has angrily told the US Embassy to “mind your own business” after Washington's diplomatic mission raised concern about curbs on media freedom in Russia. Rebecca Ross, the spokeswoman for the US Embassy, on Tuesday expressed concern about a clampdown on journalists in Russia. “Watching arrest after arrest of Russian journalists — it's starting to look like a concerted campaign against #MediaFreedom”, she tweeted. “Mind your own business”, the Russian foreign ministry tweeted late on Tuesday.

— Agencies



A boy stands in front of a graffiti promoting the fight against the coronavirus disease in the Mathare slums of Nairobi, Kenya. — Reuters

In Africa, lack of data raises fears of ‘silent epidemic’

KATHARINE HURELD AND DAVID LEWIS

When the new coronavirus hit Tanzania in mid-April, President John Magufuli called for three days of national prayer to seek God's protection from the scourge. Barely a month later, he claimed victory over the disease and invited tourists to return to his East African nation.

His rush to reopen came despite alarm from the World Health Organization (WHO) over an almost total lack of information on the spread of the virus in the country of 55 million people, which has one of the region's weakest health care systems.

The shortage of reliable data afflicts many African nations, with some governments reluctant to acknowledge epidemics or to expose their crumbling health systems to outside scrutiny. Other nations simply can-

not carry out significant testing because they are so ravaged by poverty and conflict.

Sharing information is vital to tackling the pandemic in Africa - both for planning the response and mobilising donor funding - public health experts say. As things stand, it is impossible to gauge the full severity of the contagion across the continent.

According to the latest data collated by Reuters, Africa, with a population of 1.3 billion people, had over 493,000 confirmed cases and 11,600 deaths. By comparison, Latin America, with roughly half the population, had 2.9 million cases and 129,900 deaths. The official numbers make it seem as though the illness has skirted much of Africa, but the real picture is certain to be worse, with WHO special envoy Samba Sow warning on May 25 of a possible "silent epidemic" if testing was not prioritised.

— Reuters

Employment centre's role in exceptional circumstances



Ali Al Matani
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Just six months have passed since the National Centre for Employment was formed in January 2020, the country started confronting extraordinarily social, economic and health circumstances. The unusual health related issues caused by the pandemic led to economic downturn shrinking the job opportunities. Despite all this, employment of 16,000 people in both public and private sectors is nothing but a positive development. It will encourage all other employers to hire Omanis in various sectors.

This is because nobody had expected that this whopping number of people will get jobs particularly during the last six months. This was despite the entire world, including our own country, was shaken by one incident or the other. For the Sultanate of Oman, it was a major achievement because it was made during this exceptional situation. It shows that the country has made qualitative changes in the employment sector.

It is heartening to note that when millions of people are being laid off in the world, including in Europe, the government of the Sultanate of Oman with its National Centre for Employment has gone on a recruitment spree in all sectors. What it has done during the last six months has surprised many. This development should be welcomed with a positive mind. Both employers and employees agreed for these jobs, and found themselves in a win-win situation.

Perhaps, the Sultanate of Oman is one of the very few countries in the world which makes it mandatory for the companies to give jobs to citizens. In this situation, it becomes difficult for the employers to terminate the jobs of the citizens except in extremely difficult situations. This is a positive aspect of the employment sector in this country for which one should be grateful. This also should be made a successful and sustainable experience with the display of mutual cooperation between the employers and employees.

There were certain errors which were natural when you are publishing a list of 16,000 at a time. If such issues are exaggerated and blown out of proportion, it would not serve any purpose. There are demands for transparency in the management of job-seekers so that it becomes clear in the public mind. Whatever measures have been taken following these demands are positive.

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BUSINESS

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MULTILATERAL CONVENTION ON TAX TO ENTER INTO FORCE IN OMAN ON NOVEMBER 1

CONRAD PRABHU

MUSCAT: The Sultanate has deposited its instrument of ratification of the Multilateral Convention (MLI), thereby formally affirming its commitment to a global effort to combat tax avoidance by multinational corporations.

The announcement was made by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), an inter-governmental economic organisation, currently with 37 member countries, founded in 1961 to stimulate economic progress and world trade.

The Organisation had spearheaded the drafting of the Multilateral Convention to Implement Tax Treaty Related Measures to Prevent Base Erosion and Profit Shifting (Multilateral Instrument or MLI), a landmark initiative by countries to reduce any effort by multinational enterprises to engage in tax avoidance. The Convention entered into force on July 1, 2018.

"Today (July 7, 2020), Oman deposited its instrument of ratification for the Multilateral Convention to Implement Tax Treaty Related Measures to Prevent Base Erosion and Profit Shifting (Multilateral Convention or MLI) with the OECD's Secretary-General, Angel Gurría, thus underlining its strong commitment to prevent the abuse of tax treaties and base erosion and profit shifting (BEPS) by multinational enterprises," the OECD said.



LANDMARK TAX LEGISLATION:

Last November, the Sultanate became the 92nd tax jurisdiction globally to have formally signed the Multilateral Convention (MLI), a move described by tax experts as an affirmation of Oman's commitment to tackling 'tax treaty abuse, improve the coherence of international tax rules and ensure a more transparent tax environment'.

"For Oman, the MLI will enter into force on 1 November 2020. With 94 jurisdictions currently covered by the MLI, today's ratification by Oman now brings to 49 the number of jurisdictions which have ratified, accepted or approved it," the Paris-headquartered international organisation noted.

Last November, the Sultanate became the 92nd tax jurisdiction globally to have formally signed the Multilateral Convention (MLI), a move described by tax experts as an affirmation of Oman's commitment to tackling "tax treaty

abuse, improve the coherence of international tax rules and ensure a more transparent tax environment".

According to global professional services firm KPMG, MLI is a common agreement between various jurisdictions which allows them to swiftly integrate the BEPS inspired tax treaty changes into their existing networks of bilateral treaties.

"Such changes may cover a range of tax treaty matters, such as: treaty abuse, artificial avoidance of permanent establishment, hybrid mismatch arrange-

ments, dispute resolution, dual residence, transparent entities, withholding taxes and capital gains tax. The MLI allows a signatory to indicate those of its treaties (referred to as Covered Tax Agreements or CTAs) to which the MLI shall apply," the firm explained.

In a briefing to clients, KPMG described the signing of the Multilateral Convention as an important development for Oman's tax treaty network.

"Multinationals operating in Oman need to review their holding, financing and operational structures to ensure that they remain relevant in light of current and potential business needs and BEPS developments. New investments into, from or via Oman will need to take into account the expected changes," the tax and audit services firm added.

Inflation falls 0.73 per cent in June

MUSCAT: The Sultanate's Consumer Price Index (CPI)-based inflation declined by 0.73 per cent during June 2020 compared to the same month of 2019, according to the latest data released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) on CPI.

According to the report, the inflation rate in June 2020 rose by 0.42 per cent compared to May 2020.

The food and non-alcoholic beverages group witnessed a price rise by 3.39 per cent; health by 0.98 per cent; education by 2.21 per cent, and restaurants and hotels by 0.88 per cent.

However, the prices of transport fell by 6.95 per cent; furnishings, household equipment, and routine household maintenance declined by 0.31 per cent; housing, water, electricity, gas, and other fuels dropped by 0.52 per cent; communication by 0.09 per cent; and miscellaneous goods and services by 1.62 per cent in June 2020 compared to the same month of 2019.

Meanwhile, among foods and non-alcoholic beverages category, a marked rise was witnessed in the price of fruit; vegetables; bread and cereals; fish and seafood; and meat by 4.78 per cent; 10.55 per cent; 0.27 per cent; 0.43 per cent and 1.62 per cent, respectively. However, the price of milk, cheese and eggs fell by 0.51 per cent.

Non-alcoholic beverages registered a price rise of 14.17 per cent while those of clothing and footwear declined by 1.13 per cent in June 2020 against the same period of 2019. — **ONA**



448 Omani firms receive privileges for manpower friendly policies

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Manpower recently added a number of new incentives and privileges to private sector establishments holding the Best Performing Firms (BPF) Card.

The initiative seeks to make the private sector more attractive by promoting establishments that excel in their performance. It is one of labour market and recruitment initiatives espoused by the Ministry of Manpower, with support from the Implementation and Follow-up Support Unit (Tanfeedh).

The package of privileges benefits 448 Best Performing Firms that are holders of the BPF Card, as of May 2020. The initiative aims to motivate private sector establishments to revolutionise work environment and make it more attractive to national manpower through the realisation of a set of criteria and terms constituting prerequisites to obtaining the BPF Card.

The privileges will contribute to expediting the finalisation of transac-

The initiative seeks to make the private sector more attractive by promoting establishments that excel in their performance. It is one of labour market and recruitment initiatives espoused by the Ministry of Manpower, with support from the Implementation and Follow-up Support Unit (Tanfeedh).

tions, including permits and clearances.

Private sector establishments aspiring for BPF card status are required to achieve certain criteria pertaining to upgrading the work environment and realising the 2018 standards set for First Class Establishments and above. The standards and criteria include realising the prescribed Omanisation percentage in each sector, Omanising the job of 'personnel director' or 'human resources manager' and implementing the Labour Law and ministerial decisions in force.

Significantly, the privilege card project is one of 10 different initiatives on ISFU's dashboard for delivery as part of its effort to align manpower and labour practices with

the goal of enhancing Oman's economic diversification.

Notable among the initiatives currently in various stages of implementation include the following: Enhancement of Labour Disputes System; Development of a Sustainable System for Establishing, Monitoring and Implementing Occupational Standards; Labour Solution Package for Construction Sector; Labour Solution Packages to assist Economic Sectors in Achieving Omanisation; National Leadership Development Programme to support Omanisation in Middle and Upper Management Positions (Etimad); and Part-Time and Temporary Work and Enable Flexible Movement of Labour.

— **ONA**

BUSINESS

OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG OMANIS IN DELIVERY SERVICES

Given the evolving demands of the labour market, the recent exhortation of Dr Ahmed al Futaisi, Minister of Transport, who urged young Omanis to seize available job opportunities — particularly part-time openings — in delivery services, is a pertinent one. This kind of job opens a new window of opportunity for those who wish to spend their free time in productive and rewarding work.

The aspiration that we look to in the future is to see young Omanis in prestigious jobs and high-end institutions that suit their scientific capabilities and academic qualifications in order to serve their country.

However, economic and social conditions compel job seekers anywhere in the world to consider temporary jobs as well.

For their side, the Omani youth is also interested in participating in any new experience in digital



HAIDER AL LAWATI

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transformation and working with apps that can generate legitimate revenue for them, even in the delivery services sector.

Today we have many apps that the Omani youth have created to serve customer demands, facilitate their business, and make good use of their time.

These start-ups they have created are working today to meet the demands of customers and clients in the delivery of their various products, but unfortunately most of the people who perform these services are expatriates who are working until midnight to meet customer requests.

This is what prompted the Minister of Transport to urge young Omanis to consider part-time opportunities in delivery services, at least until time

they get full-time jobs.

With the continuation of the pandemic, customer orders are escalating daily.

According to one study, deliveries of food parcels from restaurants totaled around 14,000 – 15,000 orders in Muscat Governorate alone. Given that the average meal price is RO 7, the value of home delivery orders is in the RO 100 – 120 million range annually.

We believe that the presence of Omanis in delivery services will increase their monthly income, but the matter needs to find foundations and legislation in this profession to protect them from interference or other abuses, while this profession also needs to deal in confidence sometimes with people's information and

places of their orientation.

The decision to “Omanise” online delivery jobs comes due to the large increase in e-commerce platforms in the country during the last period.

According to the data of the Ministry of Transport, about 15,000 requests are submitted through some e-commerce platforms daily, and most of the income from these connections goes into the pockets of expatriate workers some of whom engage in ‘hidden trade’ practices, while some of them work illegally as well.

With this pandemic continuing, the e-commerce industry is making positive strides, but most domestic platforms use expatriates for delivery services.

This opens up the opportunity to replace them with Omanis, particularly students and part-time jobseekers. This is an opportunity for youngsters and others to be productively engaged until to secure full-time employment.

Oman Air operates 69 cargo flights during pandemic

MUSCAT: Oman Air operated a total of 69 chartered cargo-only flights from April to June, including the highest-ever cargo load the airline has carried.

Oman Air has delivered cargo from 9 cities in India, Pakistan, China, Iran, Malaysia and UAE, for the Royal Oman Police, Ministry of Travel and Tourism, and several commercial customers.

Twenty-seven flights were operated in coordination with Ministry of Health, using wide-body aircraft, with a total freighted volume of over 386,000 kgs.

Another 42 cargo flights contributed to the transportation of over 1 million kg of food, commodities



and medical equipment to the Sultanate, in coordination with several governmental and private-sector clients.

Three of the flights, from Shenzhen, China, to Salalah,

delivered medical supplies for the United Nations' effort to help people in Yemen.

One flight, an Airbus A330 from Bangalore, India, to Muscat, delivered 49,593

kgs of fruit, vegetables and other perishable food to the Sultanate, which is the heaviest cargo delivery Oman Air has transported in one flight.

In the course of operating 25 flights to repatriate passengers to and from the Sultanate, Oman Air has also brought over 248,000 kg of food and supplies to Muscat using the planes' cargo capacity.

Oman Air's international cargo network, in coordination with accredited freight forwarders and using the latest cargo applications, provided shipments to a number of European cities through passengers flights to London, Frankfurt and Paris.

BankDhofar offers best interest rates

MUSCAT: As part of its endeavor to provide best banking experience for customers and fulfil their needs, BankDhofar provides the chance for customers to secure their future through Long Term Deposit Account. The account ensures peace of mind for customers when it comes to fulfilling their retirement dream, or achieving their children dreams for higher education, with the best competitive interest rate in the Sultanate.

Commenting on the Account, Dr Tariq Taha **(pictured)**, Chief Retail Banking Officer noted: “At BankDhofar, we are eager to provide our customers with the best services, products and financial solutions. Keeping in mind that financial plan for future is essential, we are providing our customers with Long Term Deposit Account, through which they may save a monthly amount for a specific period and get an increased amount rate after the deposit period. Customers may save to fulfil their retirement dream with the Retirement Plan, or their children higher education dream with the Education plan.”

Deposit Account, customers may save a monthly amount for specific deposit period and enjoy additional credit facilities. Customers may go for the education plan, to save for the children's higher education, and benefit from the interest rate of up to 5.5 per cent. For example, if a customer saves RO 50 for 18 years, the amount will be more than RO 18,000 at the end of the period and the customer will get interest amount of more than RO 7,000.



EY appoints Omani as MENA Tax Leader

MUSCAT: Global professional services firm EY has appointed Ahmed al Esry **(pictured)**, an Omani national, as Tax Leader across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, leading a team of tax professionals across 16 countries and 21 offices.

Abdulaziz al Sowailim, MENA Chairman and CEO, EY, says: “A strong tax function has become critical to the success of businesses today, especially with new laws and regulations being applied in the MENA region on a national, regional, and global level. It has also led to a need for specialty services that require a nuanced understanding of government practices as well as digital solutions that can create a seamless reporting and payment experience for corporations.”

Ahmed el Esry, MENA Tax Leader, EY, says: “I am very excited to be leading the Tax team at EY for the MENA region. We are currently in a transitional time for tax, with numerous opportunities to grow the function as more governments implement regulations such as double tax treaties, VAT, and corporate tax.”



WINNERS OF OMANTEL MAKASIB UNVEILED

MUSCAT: Omantel, the pioneer integrated telecommunication services provider in the Sultanate, announced winners of the Makasib Campaign, which included a number of valuable rewards such as Jeep Renegade 2020 in addition to cash rewards that will be credited to the winners' e-floos accounts.

Commenting on Makasib Lucky Draw, Usama al Rawas, Acting Senior Manager Customer Life Cycle at Omantel Retail Unit “We are proud of our customers' responses towards the Makasib loyalty programme. The programme, which achieved great success during the past years becoming the most popular loyalty scheme in the Sultanate that seeks to enrich the lives of customers with added value communication services.”

“The recently concluded campaign presented many valuable prizes that included a Jeep Renegade and cash prizes that will be credited to customers e-floos accounts. All individual Omantel customers can join the Makasib Programme and start earning points on every call or subscription and redeem these points with free local and international calls, mobile broadband, bill discounts, vouchers and purchases”, he added.



Mazoon Electricity launches chat services

MUSCAT: With an intention to enhance support experience for customers, Mazoon Electricity Company, the leading electricity provider in Oman, has launched chat services through its website.

The easy and convenient service provides a perfect platform for the company to communicate with customers in real time. With no wait time, customer queries and requirements are promptly addressed through the chat service. Through this platform, customers can reach out for assistance by chatting, rather than placing a traditional call to the contact centre.

To avail the chat service, customers have to login to the Mazoon Electricity website and fill in a form that requests for contact and nature of chat details like request, inquiry and complaints.



BUSINESS



The full moon is seen rising behind skyscrapers at Canary Wharf and the London skyline, London, Britain. — Reuters

UK to announce jobs and housing boost for economy

LONDON: Britain is set to announce measures to promote youth employment and stimulate the housing market, as it braces for the severe economic impact of the coronavirus pandemic.

Chancellor of the Exchequer Rishi Sunak is expected to announce a job scheme for people aged between 16 and 24, reduce a tax on house sales, and pledge some 3 billion pounds (\$3.8 billion) for improving energy efficiency in homes and public buildings.

Last week, Conservative Prime Minister Boris Johnson promised to spend 5 billion pounds on infrastructure projects and launch a 2-billion-pound house-building programme to kick-start Britain's economic recovery.

The 2-billion-pound jobs scheme will involve the government paying minimum wages for up

to 300,000 young people hired by firms for six months from August, the *Financial Times* reported.

THE 2-BILLION-POUND JOBS SCHEME WILL INVOLVE THE GOVERNMENT PAYING MINIMUM WAGES FOR UP TO 300,000 YOUNG PEOPLE HIRED BY FIRMS FOR SIX MONTHS FROM AUGUST.

"The move will be part of a series of targeted measures to shore up the jobs market and boost confidence in Britain's economy as it emerges from the coronavirus crisis," the newspaper said.

Carolyn Fairbairn, director general of the Confederation of

British Industry (CBI), welcomed the jobs plan as "a much-needed down payment in young people's futures."

"By investing in skills, the government can lessen the potential scarring impact of the pandemic for the next generation," Fairbairn tweeted. "business and government must now work to deliver at speed."

Larger British firms have announced plans to cut tens of thousands of jobs in recent weeks, while many small businesses, especially in the service sector, are not expected to reopen after the coronavirus crisis.

Anneliese Dodds, shadow chancellor for the main opposition Labour party, urged the government to save jobs by extending a furlough scheme that has paid most of the wages of people laid off during the pandemic.

— dpa

GOLD ABOVE \$1,800 AN OUNCE, FIRST TIME SINCE 2011

LONDON: Gold reached above \$1,800 an ounce Wednesday for the first time since 2011, with the precious metal benefitting from its haven status as the coronavirus outbreak triggers global economy fears.

Gold hit \$1,800.86 an ounce around 0830 GMT on the London Bullion market, the highest level in 8.5 years, as a weaker dollar also makes the metal priced in the US unit attractive to investors.

"It is little surprise that the original safe haven is continuing its rally," said Carlo Alberto De Casa, chief analyst at ActivTrades.

"Investors are still buying stocks but it seems they want to be covered in case of any market correction."

Neil Wilson, chief market analyst for markets.com, said gold was winning support also thanks to fears of high inflation caused by central bank stimulus to prop up the global economy.

"The gold bull thesis rests not only on the requirement for safe assets given the economic uncertainty, but also longer term on fears of a surge in inflation caused by the massive increase in the money supply," he said in a client note. Gold's record-high stands at \$1,921.18 an ounce. — AFP



An employee shows gold bullions at Degussa shop in Singapore. — Reuters



ALONSO GOES BACK TO THE FUTURE WITH RENAULT F1 TEAM

LONDON: Double world champion Fernando Alonso will make a Formula One comeback at the age of 39 next year with Renault, the team he won his titles with, after two seasons out of the sport.

The French manufacturer announced the Spaniard's return on Wednesday, with the 32-times race winner set to partner 23-year-old Frenchman Esteban Ocon at the team that finished fifth last season.

The two-times Le Mans 24 Hours endurance winner and former Ferrari driver, who turns 39 this month, secured his championships in 2005 and 2006 and most recently raced for McLaren in 2018.

"Renault is my family, my fondest memories in Formula One with my two World Championship titles, but I'm now looking ahead," he said in a team statement that did not say how long the deal was for.

"It's a great source of pride and with an immense emotion I'm returning to the team that gave me my chance at the start of my career and which now gives me the opportunity to return to the highest level."

Alonso's third stint at



It's a great source of pride and with an immense emotion I'm returning to the team that gave me my chance at the start of my career and which now gives me the opportunity to return to the highest level.

FERNANDO ALONSO,
RENAULT F1 TEAM

Renault, after also racing for them in 2008 and 2009 after a fiery 2007 season with McLaren, closes another door to four-times world champion Sebastian Vettel.

Vettel faces an uncertain future after Ferrari announced the German would leave at the end of the year and be replaced by Spaniard Carlos Sainz, who grew up with Alonso as his role model.

Alonso will be the oldest



driver in Formula One if Alfa Romeo's Kimi Raikkonen, now 40, does not continue for another season.

"I have principles and ambitions in line with the team's project," Alonso said.

"Their progress this winter gives credibility to the objectives for the 2022 season and I will share all my racing experience with everyone from the engineers to the mechanics and my team-mates. The

team wants and has the means to get back on the podium, as do I."

The Spaniard's return had been the subject of mounting speculation from the moment it was announced Australian Daniel Ricciardo would leave Renault for McLaren at the end of 2020.

That created a vacancy alongside Ocon, who told reporters in Austria last week that he would be keen to race alongside Alonso.

— Reuters

SPORTS

Soderling says free of anxiety after nine-year struggle

LONDON: Former world tennis number four Robin Soderling says he has come through a nine-year battle with anxiety and panic attacks and has called for athletes' mental health to be given more focus.

Soderling, twice a runner-up at the French Open, was struck down by glandular fever after winning the Swedish Open in Bastad in July 2011 and did not play again, retiring four years later.

The Swede said he was also battling mental health issues since 2011 and had finally overcome them this year.

"I am happy and lucky to have come out on the other side now... Like myself, most professional athletes are high-achieving perfectionists, dedicating their lives to their sport," the 35-year-old wrote on Instagram.

"Being an athlete can be incredibly challenging for your mental health, and for me, my own strive for perfection, as well as the constant pressure I was putting on myself was in the end almost killing me. "... Putting pressure on yourself and working very hard can be very rewarding. But if you cross that thin line — if you don't listen to your body and give it time to recharge and recover, it can ruin your career, and your life."

Soderling said that it was time to address the issue among professional athletes.

"Data shows that up to one in three elite athletes suffer from mental health issues which can manifest as stress, eating disorders, burnout, depression and anxiety," he wrote.

"We need to start discussing it and make sure that the next generation of athletes will come better prepared than myself."

The men's tour has joined up with Sporting Chance and Headspace to help players and staff deal with mental health problems and look after their well-being during the COVID-19 shutdown. — **Reuters**



I am happy and lucky to have come out on the other side now... Like myself, most professional athletes are high-achieving perfectionists, dedicating their lives to their sport.

ROBIN SODERLING,
FORMER WORLD NO 4





OFA TO TAKE STRICT PRECAUTIONS BEFORE RESUMING FOOTBALL SEASON

ADIL AL BALUSHI

MUSCAT: The medical team at Oman Football Association (OFA) prepared the detailed proposal of precautionary measures and medical protocols to be implemented after resuming the football activities in the Sultanate.

The OFA will look at implementing all the precautionary measures recommended by the Supreme Committee dealing with COVID-19 for the season which is expected to begin by September.

The medical considerations guidance is in full compliance to the Fifa and Asian Football Federation (AFC) rules and regulations and in direct coordination with the local Ministry of Health instructions.

Based on the plan, all the football players will have to apply for the COVID-19 test prior to resuming the domestic sporting season in an enough period and that could be before two weeks. The medical staff in each team should follow up with the players continuously and report accordingly in case of registering any new positive cases or presence of the symptoms. Besides the COVID-19 test, all the footballers should do the normal test which cover the blood, ECG and other related tests to confirm the player's fitness to play.

The social distancing should be implemented during all the training sessions. Two weeks later from the test and after re-starting the warm up ses-

sions, it is recommended as per the plan that each group of four players to train away from the other groups. During this period, the technical staff may focus on raising the physical and fitness level. Two weeks later and after confirmation of all the test reports, the teams may return back to their technical and tactical training sessions with much closer of the players taking into consideration all the precautionary measures and players to follow all the preventive health guidelines.

The resuming of the footballing activity and domestic competitions will be after six weeks from completion of the tests and groups training. The local football unit to take the

right decision on continuity of resuming the matches in case if all the things moved as per the plan without any negative impact on the health of the players. The matches should restart without attendance of big crowds and people who are above 65 years are prohibited to attend the stadiums. Proper and continuous implementation of sanitisation should be done at the whole complex facilities. Any player who has tested positive cannot rejoin the team after receiving the formal letter from the local health body. Also, in case of contacting any positive patient, the player has to be away from the team for a period of 14 days until he is free of all the symptoms on him.

SPORTS



VARDY EQUALISER SPOILS ARSENAL PARTY

ANDY JALIL

LONDON: After having much the better of the first half, Arsenal allowed Leicester to get back strongly to battle it out for a 1-1 draw with Jamie Vardy finding the equaliser six minutes from normal time.

Arsenal coach, Mikel Arteta said: "For long periods of the game we deserved the three points. We should have scored three or four goals but we didn't. I was proud of the way we dominated".

After being down to ten men with the sending off of Eddie Nketiah in the 75th minute, Arsenal lost much of their momentum. Nketiah went for the loose ball but he was late and high on Leicester defender

James Justin with studs up and after initially being shown the yellow card, VAR intervened and he was giving marching orders. He had been on the field for just three minutes after coming on as substitute.

Arteta said: "He didn't see the player coming. He goes for every single ball and wants to win every challenge. But they are young and need to learn from these situations".

It took Leicester just nine minutes after Nketiah's dismissal to equalise. Demarai Gray, on the right, put in a superb low cross, which Ayoze Perez failed to reach but it went through to the unmarked Vardy who slotted the ball into the corner, maintaining his position as leading



scorer in the Premier League.

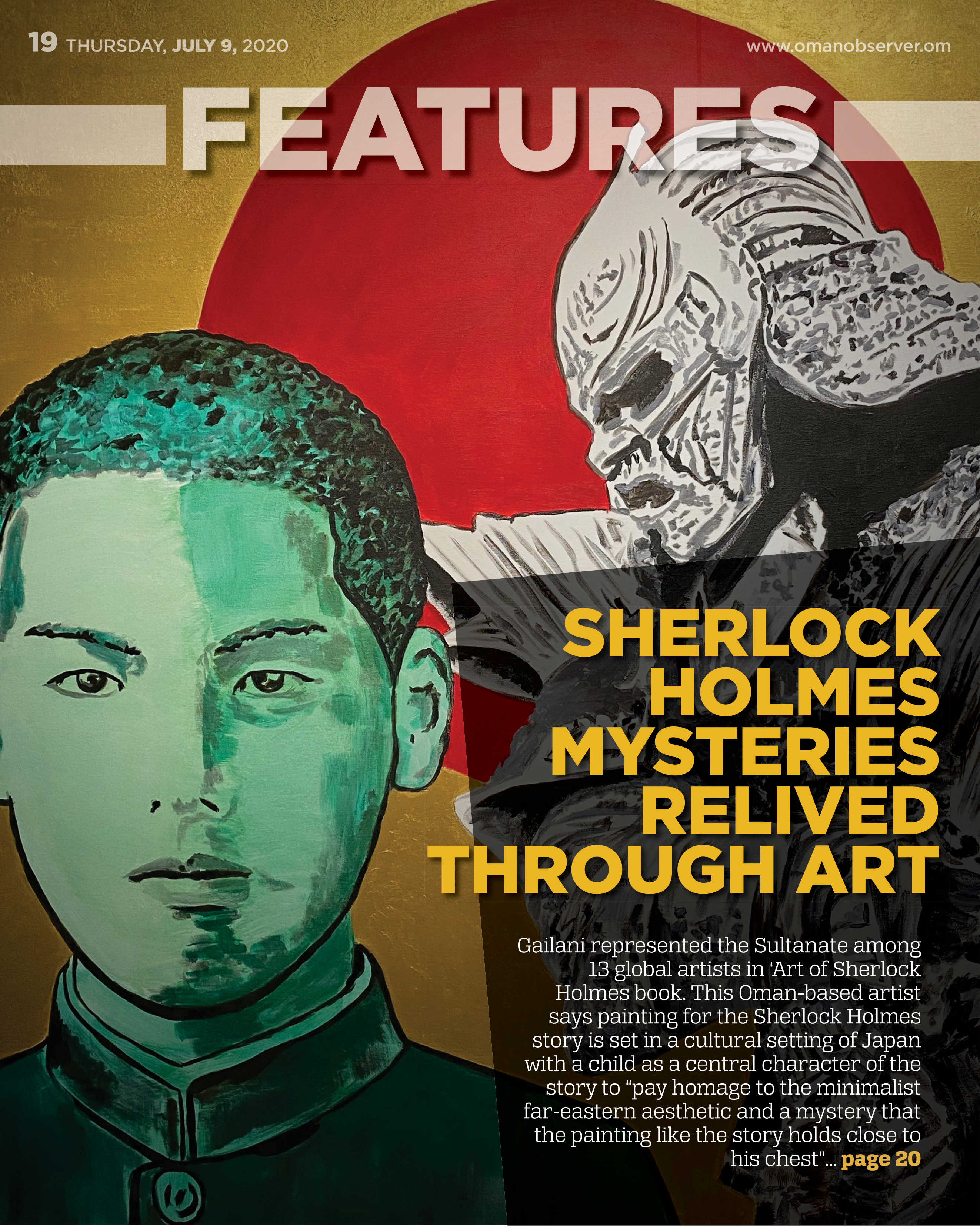
Leicester coach Brendan Rodgers pleased with the second half performance, said: "It shows the youthfulness of the players. It's in how they react to the instructions and that's

great because the team is very coachable. We didn't quite press the game well enough or keep the ball well enough but we were more aggressive in the second half".

Arsenal had taken the lead in the 21st minute when Dani Ceballos drove the ball to the right to Bukayo Saka who went past Caglar Soyuncu and sped towards the goal before crossing for Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang to prod the ball into the net.

Rodgers was not disappointed with the result: "I'm happy with the response I got at half time. We showed enough quality to win the game but it's a very important point for us. I'm happy with the way we dealt with the pressure at 1-0 down".

FEATURES



SHERLOCK HOLMES MYSTERIES RELIVED THROUGH ART

Gailani represented the Sultanate among 13 global artists in 'Art of Sherlock Holmes' book. This Oman-based artist says painting for the Sherlock Holmes story is set in a cultural setting of Japan with a child as a central character of the story to "pay homage to the minimalist far-eastern aesthetic and a mystery that the painting like the story holds close to his chest"... **page 20**

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Sherlock Holmes mysteries relived through art

LIJU CHERIAN

A Muscat-based artist has been included in the Global Art project for Sherlock Holmes. Gailani Ibrahim, a self-taught contemporary artist of Iraqi decent living in Muscat, was chosen one of the 13 international artists to create art for Sherlock

Holmes book. 'The Art of Sherlock Holmes - Global 2 edition,' the coffee table book recently completed a virtual launch in London via a Zoom event where the publisher, curator, writers, and artist were virtually connected from all over the globe. Gailani chatted with his publishers from his studio room at his South Al Hail residence. An enthusiastic Gailani

says: "My painting for the Sherlock Holmes story is set in a cultural setting of Japan with a child as a central character of the story. I wanted to pay homage to the minimalist far-eastern aesthetic and a mystery that the painting like the story holds close to his chest." For Gailani, however the journey has been since two years when Phil Growik, the project creator, spotted his art in Miami at Art Basel in December 2018 and booked him instantly for the project. He hopes that a future art gallery event with all the painting in London will take place after the COIVD-19 pandemic ends. Published by MX Publishing House UK, the book was created and curated by Phil Growick, edited by David Marcum and compiled by Steve Emecz. On June 26, the family estate of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (the original British author of Sherlock Holmes stories) launched the authenticated prints of all of the art in Global 2. There will be a prize draw for the fans who attend and

stand to win some prints and other merchandise. Redbubble, the art merchandise supplier, will have multiple items from T-shirts to tote bags, masks to notebooks of his art available to be shipped globally. Phil Growick says 'The Art of Sherlock Holmes - Global Edition 2' has been a totally incredible experience for him. It is an inimitable interpretation of a truly unique Holmes story. "It was the fourth in my series of Art of Sherlock Holmes books, and I was honoured to have 13 of the world's most distinguished artists participate. I assigned one Sherlock Holmes short story to each artist and they created one piece of art encapsulating the essence of that story," he explains. Other than the Sultanate, the artists also came from Egypt, England, Finland, Morocco, Austria, Italy, Poland, Portugal, US, Belgium, Switzerland and Sweden. "In one big, beautiful, coffee-table art book, you have 13 incomparable Holmes mysteries, and 13 amazing pieces of art," says Growick.

FEATURES

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



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Vietnam opens world’s ‘first’ gold-plated hotel

FOR GUESTS at the “Dolce Hanoi Golden Lake” coffee comes in a gold cup and bath time is taken in gilded splendour. The world’s first self-proclaimed gold-plated hotel is open for business -- and the Vietnamese owners insist

they have the Midas touch despite the cramping of global travel during the coronavirus pandemic. The hotel cost \$200 million to construct with a 24-carat plating across lobbies, an infinity pool and rooms with even cutlery,

cups, shower heads and toilet seats receiving the golden treatment. While expensive for Vietnam, at \$250 a night it is not prohibitive for wealthy locals craving a few nights living like Donald Trump, the US President renowned for his love of all things that glitter. The hotel wants “ordinary people to the super rich... to check-in” both physically and on social media, said Nguyen Huu Duong, chairman of Hoa Binh group that owns the hotel. A gold-plated infinity pool overlooks the city, while meals at the 25-storey hotel in downtown Hanoi may be mixed with a mysterious “gold substance”, according to the owners. So far, the smattering of customers appear to be delighted with Hanoi’s flashiest new digs. “When I arrived here... I

felt like a king, you know, the Pharaoh... the king of Egypt,” joked Phillip Park, a South Korean guest. “I really enjoyed the luxury atmosphere,” added Vietnamese guest Luong Van Thuan, saying he felt his status had automatically been “raised”. The relatively modest construction price tag was achieved by sourcing the gold plating locally -- significantly reducing costs. “Our group has a factory that can do gold-plated stuff, so the cost for our equipment and furniture here is quite cheap,” Duong said. And the pandemic which has strafed global tourism has not put him off opening, with Vietnam winning praise for its swift lockdown which has contained the coronavirus spread. “For sure next year, we will make money,” he added.—**AFP**

FEATURES

Coping with Adversity Positively: The Coronavirus Edition

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WE OFTEN HEAR the statement “be positive” or “think positive.” But how easy is it to be positive while experiencing a global pandemic such as COVID-19? Not so easy at first.

What we can do however is learn how to manage our anxiety and fears more effectively. It is important to understand that being anxious right now is totally normal and to give ourselves the space to fully feel and accept our feelings. Accepting our feelings and allowing ourselves to feel them fully plays an effective role in reducing their negative impact on us. While it may be counterintuitive to some, accepting our feelings also makes our feelings more manageable and easy to tolerate.

Once we allow ourselves to accept our feelings, we can then move on to teaching ourselves to think positively.

What does thinking positively mean? Thinking positively doesn't mean I ignore the negative or scary aspects in my life or a certain situation, rather, it means I teach myself to focus on the positive aspects of my life or situation.

Our thoughts create our reality. If I teach myself to think positively about a certain situation or scenario, then I will be more likely to notice the positive aspects of a situation. This doesn't mean that all the bad goes away, but rather that it's the positive I train my brain to focus on.

Albert Ellis, the founder of Rational Emotive Therapy, believed that most humans were born with a larger pro-

portion of irrational and negative thoughts. He believed that being “positive” was something we need to train ourselves to be.

One way that we can train our brain to think more positively is by using positive affirmations. Positive affirmations are positive statements that reinforce positive thoughts, feelings, or attitudes. Repeating these affirmations daily (a minimum of 10x per day) help train our brains to think more positively.

As increased stress and negative thoughts decrease our immunity, thinking positively can play a pivotal role in increasing our immunity and greater resistance toward COVID 19 and the common cold, increasing our overall life span, lowering our rates of depression and levels of distress, and equipping us with better coping skills during hardship and times of stress such as the current period.

So if you feel a fever coming on, or feel your nose is a bit runny (stay at home and take the necessary to keep yourself and others safe) and rather than get lost in the vicious cycle of negative thoughts about COVID-19, try saying this to yourself:

“My body is healthy and can overcome anything”

Take a few breaths and teach yourself to focus on the present. Anxiety or depression comes from the future or the past, but there is no fear, anxiety or depression in the present moment.

Focus on one thing you can see in front of you, taking in the details, the texture, the feel of the ground underneath your feet, the movement of the air in your face. Remind yourself, that while we may not be able to choose our thoughts, we are able to choose how we want to respond to them.

