



HIS MAJESTY SENDS CABLE OF CONDOLENCES TO SAUDI KING

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of condolences to King Salman bin Abdulaziz al Saud of Saudi Arabia on the death of Prince Khalid bin Saud bin Abdulaziz al Saud. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere condolences and deep sympathy, praying to Allah the Almighty to rest the departed soul in peace and grant his family patience.

TOUGH MEASURES TO CHECK COVID-19 SPREAD

MUSCAT: The Supreme Committee tasked with tackling developments resulting from coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic held a meeting at the Interior Ministry on Tuesday under the Chairmanship of Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal al Busaidy, Minister of Interior.

In its review of procedures for protection against the spread of the disease, the Supreme Committee expressed deep concern over the spike in infections and death cases. The Committee also expressed strong dismay over the lack of compliance of many people with precautionary measures specified by the



THE SPREAD OF THIS DISEASE HAS PUT IMMENSE PRESSURE ON SERVICES RENDERED BY THE MEDICAL SECTOR, NOTABLY INTENSIVE CARE UNITS (ICUS)

SUPREME COMMITTEE

departments concerned to prevent infections and the spread of the disease in the society. It noted that such irresponsible behaviour contributed to the transfer of the contagion to relatives from non-chalant individuals and their colleagues at workplaces, eventually permeating the entire society.

The Committee reiterated emphasis on the extreme danger of COVID-19, non-availability of any vaccine for protection from the disease, non-existence of accurate treatment against the virus and the great probability of many complications and high risk it poses to health, often leading to death in all age-groups. **TURN TO P2**

NO NEED TO RUSH, ROP SERVICES AVAILABLE ACROSS WILAYATS

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH

MUSCAT: Not just the directorates, the Royal Oman Police (ROP) stations across the nation are providing services. The service seekers have time till July 15 to complete their pending works, so no need to rush, said an official from the ROP.

Speaking to the Observer, Maj Mudhar al Mazrui, Directorate of Development,

Royal Oman Police, said expatriates do not have to go to the immigration offices for renewal of their residential cards as the procedure can be completed by the public relations officer of the company or the sponsor.

Currently, people are going to centres for renewal of a driving licence, car registration,

renewal of passports and ID cards and documentation, etc.

“Some of the services are available online through our application and website. So we are inviting the public to use these facilities and avoid crowding, especially to renew their registration as well as their visa if they are expatriates with the help of Sanad offices in cooperation with the Ministry of Commerce and

Industry and the Ministry of Manpower. They can complete most of the papers at Sanad offices so they have to spend less time at the ROP service centres”, said Maj Al Mazrui.

Because the fingerprints are already stored in the system, the PRO of the organisations can finalise the documentation of residence cards for expatriates, noted Maj Al Mazrui. **TURN TO P2**

Majlis Ash'shura Office discusses economic panel recommendations

MUSCAT: The Office of Majlis Ash'shura on Tuesday discussed the report of the Economic and Financial Committee, which includes a study to regulate and encourage the industrial sector "The Manufacturing Industries as a Model".

The study includes a number of important recommendations on encouraging the industry sector along with a draft law proposal to regulating the sector.

This came in the 16th meeting of Majlis Ash'shura's Office for the 1st annual session of the 9th term (2023-2019).

The meeting was chaired by Khalid bin Hilal al Maawali, Chairman of Majlis Ash'shura, in the presence of members of the Office and Shaikh Ahmed bin Mohammed al Nadabi, Secretary-General of Majlis Ash'shura. Majlis



Ash'shura's Office reviewed the statement of the Council of Ministers on the ministerial annual reports for 2019 for a number of ministries, including the Ministries of Housing, Regional Municipalities and

Water Resources, Agriculture and Fisheries, Tourism, Health and Transport. The meeting also discussed a number of legislative and regulatory issues. It decided to include these issues in the agenda

of Majlis Ash'shura's next session. The meeting also discussed the proposal to develop a special vision for Majlis Ash'shura to keep pace with the new changes and with the trends of Oman Vision 2040. — **ONA**

TOUGH MEASURES TO CHECK COVID-19 SPREAD

FROM PAGE 1

The Committee would like to bring to the notice of all members of society that the spread of this disease has put immense pressure on services rendered by the medical sector, notably intensive care units (ICUs). This pressure has negatively impacted the services offered to COVID-19 patients, as well as patients suffering from other diseases.

To deter the spread of infection in the society (thereby causing more complications and more deaths) and to protect the medical staff and safeguard health services, the Committee decided to toughen penalties against those who breach the decisions to curb the spread of the pandemic, hoping that all will shoulder their responsibilities.

The Committee stressed that it will go ahead with strict handling of violators, in a variety of ways, with the prime aim of securing the health and safety of individuals and

society. The action may include publishing the names and photos of offenders in the media.

Also, based on the role of the Supreme Committee in alleviating economic impacts of COVID-19, and to reduce financial burden on tax-paying companies and establishments, the Committee took a set of procedures related to taxes imposed on those companies and establishments. The Tax Institution will announce the said procedures later, said the Supreme Committee.

May the Almighty Allah protect all against all evils and harms! — **ONA**

NO NEED TO RUSH, ROP SERVICES AVAILABLE ACROSS WILAYATS

FROM PAGE 1

The transfer of visit visa to family visa status is already under operation for the time being due to coronavirus, he said, adding, "There are no international flights so we understand the situation. Accordingly, we need to legalise

their stay. A Sanad office can complete most of the documentation and the rest can be done at the ROP centre".

He said the same procedure can be applied for children who have crossed their age limit – either renew it as a visit visa or convert into a family joining visa. "We know they do not have other options as the airports and borders are closed", he said.

When asked about the challenges faced by the Royal Oman Police since the opening up of the services, Maj Al Mazrui said, "We know the service centres have been closed for almost four months. We expected the crowds. There is no need to do all the documentation now. We know they are afraid of the fines, but the fine has been postponed until July 15. So there won't be any fine for delay or for not possessing any of the documentation.

"There are a lot of service centres and all people have to do is choose the right time and centre, if I am to give you an example of Muscat there are service centres, but we see a lot of people crowding at Maabela as well as Al Amerat service centres".

‘RECKLESSNESS TO BLAME’ FOR RISE IN COVID-19 CASES

ZAINAB
AL NASSRI

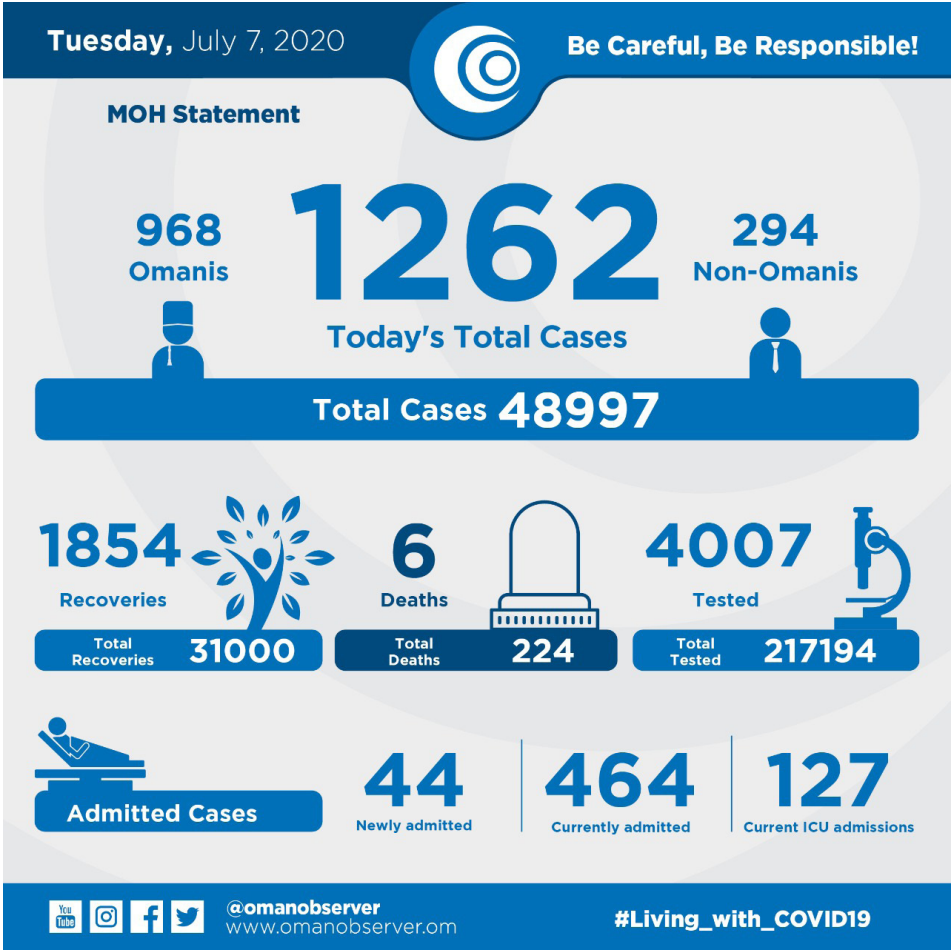
MUSCAT: The Ministry of Health (MoH) announced on Tuesday the death of six people due to COVID-19 in the past 24 hours, taking the death toll in the Sultanate to 224. With this, the death toll in the past four days has gone to 31.

The MoH also announced 1,262 new cases of COVID-19 in the country, including 968 Omanis and 294 residents, which brought the total number of positive cases to 48,997.

According to the MoH, a total of 4,007 people were tested in the last 24 hours, taking the total number of tests to 217,194.

The MoH also reported that 1,854 new patients recovered from COVID-19 during the past 24 hours, taking the total recoveries from the disease to 30,000.

A total of 44 people were admitted to the



hospital on Tuesday, taking the number of people in hospitals to 464, including 127 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 maintaining social distancing.

Dr Mohammed bin Saif al Hosni, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Health for Health Affairs and a Member of the Supreme Committee,

said that hospitals are teeming with patients who need healthcare, not to mention intensive care units.

He revealed during an interview on Oman TV that staying in the intensive care room is not easy as some may believe, but it is great suffering in terms of isolation and exposure to many devices and medications.

Dr Al Hosni added that during the past three weeks, 104 people died of COVID-19, and more than half of them are

Omanis. He asserted that during the past three weeks, the cases have doubled due to many reasons including lack of commitment, recklessness and the continuous holding of events.

“This also led to an escalation of the epidemiological curve, especially in the South and North Al Batinah governorates,” he added.

Al Hosni also revealed that the Royal Hospital's intensive care capacity has been increased to 100 beds. He stressed on the need to maintain physical distancing and adhere to the instructions, as “it is the only way to avoid infection with the virus”. Any respiratory symptoms, whether it is runny nose, coughing or dryness of the throat must be COVID-19 unless proven otherwise.

Ministry of Higher Education

ELECTRONIC TENDER

The Internal Tenders Committee of the Ministry of Higher Education announces 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
08/2020 Recall (1)	Rehabilitation IP Phone System for Sur College of Applied Sciences Project	Specialized in providing Same service and registered with the Tender Board with Grade: EXCELLENT, FIRST, SECOND, THIRD & FOURTH	25/= RO	26/07/2020	15/08/2020

The purchasing of the tender documents by E-Tendering system will starting on Tuesday 07/07/2020 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.

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

www.mohe.gov.om

Contact us by Whatsapp

OMAN DAILY

Observer

For Advertisements

Please Contact with our Team

Mohd Al Rashdi : Head Office

Ali Al Maashari : Head Office

Bakhit Al Shihri : Salalah Office

Abdullah Al Abri : Nizwa Office

Musalam Al Saidi : Suhar Office

99841230

99639264

92998577

99429094

99429192

m.alrahdi86@yahoo.com

wadialmeeh@yahoo.com

bakhit.omandaily@gmail.com

nizwaofc@omandaily.net.om

sohardaily@outlook.com

OMAN

Charters amid lockdown big relief for expats



KAUSHALENDRA SINGH

SALALAH: The charter flights from Salalah Airport to various Indian destinations are big relief for the stranded Indian expatriates. Owing to the continuing lockdown in Dhofar Governorate, it is difficult for them to travel to Muscat from where the frequency of both — charter and Government of India sponsored Vande Bharat — flights is more than Salalah.

Among the four latest charter flights available are one for Delhi on July 9, while other two are between July 14 and 18 for Hyderabad and between

July 15 and 17 for Kochi. All the charters are arranged by the Indian Social Club Salalah (ISC-Salalah). One more is likely for Madurai in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu on any date between July 17 and 20.

Manpreet Singh, Chairman of the Salalah unit of the Indian community club, said many Indians were repatriated both in Vande Bharat and charter flights earlier, but still there are many who want to go to their homeland for various reasons.

“The spread of COVID-19 and subsequent suspension of global flight operations put many in catch 22 situation. In some cases, husband is here and wife and children are there in

India, some have lost their jobs, many others had come on visit or tourist visas... there are also elderly and sick people who want to go, and we are doing the best possible with support from the Sultanate’s government and Indian Embassy,” he said.

The Salalah-Delhi charter is full with a capacity of 180 passengers. The dates for the rest would be fixed based on passenger’s choice of dates.

He requested all those who want to avail of the service, to register, pay the ticket money and book the seats.

Depending upon demand more flights would be arranged, he said.



OIA BOARD HOLDS MAIDEN MEET

MUSCAT: The Board of Directors of Oman Investment Authority (OIA) on Tuesday held its maiden meeting under the chairmanship of Sultan bin Salim al Habsi, Chairman of OIA’s Board.

The board discussed various issues related to OIA’s regulation and the restructuring of affiliated firms. It approved procedures for amendments in boards of directors of OIA’s affiliated companies, besides endorsing a set of decisions pertaining to OIA’s governance measures. The board also reviewed the financial status of the OIA and the performance of its investments within the Sultanate and abroad against the backdrop of global economic downturn caused by COVID-19 and ensuing repercussions. — **ONA**

ETIMAD PANEL DISCUSSES LABOUR MARKET

MUSCAT: The Main Committee of National Leadership Programme for Middle/Senior Management (Etimad) held a meeting at the Manpower Ministry on Tuesday.

The meeting was chaired by Hamad bin Khamis al Amri, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Manpower for Labour Affairs.

The meeting briefed the attendees on the programme and its various stages. The meeting touched on the graduating batch (250 in number) and the new batch (also 250 in number).

The meeting also explained the

methodology and future trends for developing the programme to keep abreast of developments in the labour market.

Etimad initiative is one of the outputs of the labour market and employment lab of the National Programme for Enhancing Economic Diversification (Tanfeedh). The Ministry of Manpower supervises the implementation of the programme in cooperation with the initiative’s team while the Implementation Support and Follow-up Unit (ISFU) supports the initiative and follows up its progress. — **ONA**

Admission of part-time students to tech colleges

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Manpower (MoM) will receive online applications from part-time students for admission to technical colleges for the first semester (September) of the academic year 2020/2021, until August 20.

The system has been tailor-made for employees working in the public and private sectors who wish to complete their university studies.

The system aims to provide flexible technical education opportunities that take into account the conditions of workers in the public and private sectors and their desire to benefit from scientific and technical knowledge, which will contribute to the success of the Omanisation process.

PACT TO FUND PLAY EQUIPMENT FOR THE DISABLED IN PARKS

MUSCAT: Oman LNG Development Foundation on Tuesday signed an agreement with the Ministry of Regional Municipalities and Water Resources to fund the provision of outdoor equipment for disabled children in 19 public parks across the Sultanate.

The nation-wide initiative builds on earlier success where Oman LNG Development Foundation has funded similar projects at Sahwa Parks and in Sur as part of its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) efforts.

The agreement was signed by Ahmed bin Abdullah al Shuhi, Minister of Regional Municipalities and Water Resources, and Dr Amor bin Nasser al Matani, Chief Executive Officer of Oman LNG Development Foundation.

The project comes to address the need to ease challenges and difficulties while providing a safe environment for children with disabilities. Such recreational projects also promote a healthy lifestyle in a safe environment for the community.

Characteristic of its many initiatives to promote social development in the country, Oman LNG Development



The agreement was signed by Ahmed bin Abdullah al Shuhi, Minister of Regional Municipalities and Water Resources, and Dr Amor bin Nasser al Matani, Chief Executive Officer of Oman LNG Development Foundation. – **ONA**

Foundation has funded various critical equipment for RO 2 million targeting the persons with disability over the years, with the aim to continue building partnerships with different government entities for the benefit of this segment of society.

Commenting on the signing, Dr

Amor al Matani said, “The accord inked today is in line with the company’s robust efforts to promote and upgrade social welfare programmes for different segments of society. This, in turn, encourages the building of a strong and vibrant society that values and cares for its people.” – **ONA**



STAY AWAY TODAY TO BE CLOSE TOMORROW

KABEER YOUSUF

MUSCAT: Staying away for maintaining social distancing in the crisis time of COVID-19 pandemic will reward you with longer stay with your near and dear ones. For this, a senior consultant advised people to “stay away from each other for a while so that they can stay close forever.”

“Staying away from each other is one of the credos of the COVID-19 that has not been followed by some people. That resulted in the escalation of cases in the country,” said Dr Faryal Ali Khamis, Senior Consultant and Head of Infection Diseases Section - Internal Medicine Department at the Royal Hospital.

The MoH has also found a lack of social distancing among some people resulted in the rapid surge in the number of cases in the country. Family get-togethers, gathering of youths with friends outside and even inside vehicles have contributed to the rise of cases.

“This wrong behaviour led to 104 deaths in just three weeks,” she said, and added that the number of COVID-19 patients has increased from 25,000 to 47,000 in three weeks.

“Although we expected 1,500 patients daily, the number has increased beyond that due to irresponsible behaviour.”

Adapting to the 'new normal' of learning

KAUSHALENDRA SINGH

SALALAH: At a time when there is an effort to adjust with the 'new normal' amid the opening of offices and businesses, education is one sector where no one wants to take chance due to the volume of young people involved in it. It requires lots of planning to implement the pandemic code for an actual class to begin. Remote learning thus is the 'new normal' for the sector for the time being.

Communication experts are weighing the pros and cons of this 'new normal' while finding a way to adjust and let the process of learning settle at a pace that suits both – the receiver and the provider.

Dr Samskrati Gulvady, an expert in mass communication, calls the situation "a paradox of conveniences and challenges" and cites Canadian philosopher Marshall McLuhan, who says, "The new media are not bridges between man and nature – they are nature... The new media are not ways of relating us to the old world, they are the real world and they reshape what remains of the old world at will." McLuhan, according to her, must have foreseen the world when he said these words in the late 1960s.

The current scenario has redefined many things by bringing a wide range of opportunities and challenges. These experiments are widely seen in educational institutions.

In an interview with the Observer, she said, "The concept of 'distance learning' has now become 'remote learning' where a student engages in learning within the comforts of the house without the need to travel long distances. But they are missing the campus relationships because online classrooms

are seen to be more formal than the actual ones."

Academics who are used to traditional classroom teaching involving face-to-face communication can deliver content based on the response and interaction of the students in the class. In a virtual classroom, there is a reduction in social and contextual cues and tangible feedback. Important aspects of non-verbal communication like the tone of voice, facial expression, gestures, postures, and other body language components help enhance our actions and interactions.

There is an option of using 'emojis' in certain electronic platforms to respond nonverbally, but it cannot match the responses of a traditional classroom. In comparison to face-to-face learning, online learning brings forth significant deficiencies like lack of human connect, absence of opportunities of collaborative learning, teacher supervision, she says.

She calls for evolving methods for hands-on learning in specialised courses if this 'new normal' is here to stay for long.

Education, according to Dr Gulvady, definitely has unparalleled opportunities to monitor and improve its practices.

"We as academicians have new ways to communicate with our students. We monitor and intervene in student learning to increase the effectiveness of both teaching and learning. Similarly, students have new ways to find, retrieve, and share their learning products and opportunities.

However, all these advantages and opportunities come with cost-reduced privacy, security, and surveillance," she said.



The concept of 'distance learning' has now become 'remote learning' where a student engages in learning within the comforts of the house without the need to travel long distances. But they are missing the campus relationships.

DR SAMSKRATI GULVADY
MASS
COMMUNICATION
EXPERT

SQU ALLOCATES 26 SEATS FOR THE DISABLED

MUSCAT: Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) has allocated 26 seats for the disabled in the graduate-level programmes for the academic year 2021.

The SQU offers the handicapped a number of services for their academic and social rehabilitation so that they can participate in programmes and activities and keep pace with scholarly developments. — **ONA**

OMAN AIR SPECIAL FLIGHT TO KARACHI

MUSCAT: Oman Air will operate a special flight to Karachi in Pakistan on Thursday (July 9).

"For reservation or inquiries, please contact one of the following methods from Sunday to Thursday (from 8 am – 4 pm)," the airline said.

The budget airline, SalamAir, will also operate special flights to Pakistan. "Customers who wish to travel on these flights have to call at 24272222," the airline said.

Flights are scheduled for Multan (July 8), Islamabad (July 9), and Peshawar (July 10).

DIGITAL CULTURAL CONTENT REVIEWED

MUSCAT: The sub-committee of the Culture, Information and Tourism Committee of the State Council tasked to study "Oman's digital cultural content" on Monday held its fifth meeting for the first annual session of the seventh term.

The meeting, presided over by Eng Said bin Mohammed al Saqlawi, head of the committee, and attended by the committee members and General Secretariat employees, reviewed the final draft of the study in preparation for submitting it to the main committee for debate.

AUSTRALIA’S SECOND-BIGGEST CITY UNDER NEW VIRUS LOCKDOWN

MELBOURNE: Five million Melbourne residents were ordered back into lockdown after coronavirus cases surged in Australia's second-biggest city on Tuesday.

State Premier Daniel Andrews announced a six-week lockdown would begin on Wednesday, warning “we can't pretend” the coronavirus crisis is over.

It is the first such spike in Australia since the virus was believed suppressed countrywide in April, and a brutal reminder that risks remain even as life returns to normal.

After the south-eastern city detected 191 new cases in 24 hours, Andrews said there were now too many to trace properly.

“These are unsustainably high numbers,” he said.

“No-one wanted to be in this position. I know there will be enormous amounts of damage that will be done because of this. It will be very challenging.”

Residents will be restricted to their homes except for



Medical staff perform a coronavirus test on a resident of one of nine public housing estates locked down due a spike in infection numbers in Melbourne. — AFP

work, exercise, medical care or to buy essentials.

Most students will return to remote learning while restaurants and cafes will be limited to serving takeaway food.

Although the lockdown covers the Melbourne met-

ropolitan area, the entire state of Victoria will effectively be sealed off from the rest of the country from late on Tuesday, as state borders are closed.

Police and the military are patrolling dozens of border crossings and using drones

and other aircraft to check the vast frontier with other states where the coronavirus has been successfully contained.

Health officials last week effectively shut off some 300,000 Melbourne residents from the rest of the city until the end of July, but that has now been extended beyond those neighbourhoods.

Around 3,000 people were also locked down in their homes on Saturday in Australia's strictest coronavirus response to date after a cluster emerged in a high-rise public housing estate.

So far, 69 cases have been recorded across the nine densely populated towers and there are concerns the virus could spread widely, with one health official likening the crowded conditions inside to “vertical cruise ships”. Cruise ships emerged as early coronavirus hotspots, with passengers and crew often packed in small cabins and at high risk of infection. — AFP

IN BRIEF

UAE says it will test 2 million people as cases rise

DUBAI: The United Arab Emirates plans to test two million people, or about 20 per cent of the population, for the novel coronavirus over the next two months after the infection rate climbed again following the lifting of restrictions, a government spokesperson said.

The Emirates on June 24 removed a nationwide curfew in place since mid-March. It has gradually reopened commercial businesses and public venues and the emirate, or state, of Dubai is set reopen to foreign visitors on Tuesday.

“While it is worrying to see a slight increase in cases in the past few days, it is a reminder that we all should be responsible and committed to follow health practices,” government spokesperson Amna al Shamsi said late on Monday.

Beijing reports zero virus cases since new outbreak

BEIJING: Beijing on Tuesday reported zero new coronavirus cases for the first time since the emergence of a cluster in the Chinese capital in June that prompted fears of a domestic second wave.

A total of 335 people have been infected since a cluster emerged at the city's massive Xinfadi wholesale market in early June. Beijing's health commission said on Tuesday it detected only one asymptomatic case the previous day, which China does not include in its confirmed cases counts.

While Chinese authorities are still investigating the cause of the latest outbreak, the virus was detected on chopping boards used to handle imported salmon at Xinfadi market, prompting a ban on certain imports and increased scrutiny of foreign food suppliers.

Antibody study in Spain says herd immunity far off

WASHINGTON: A large-scale Spanish medical study published on Monday found that achieving nationwide “herd immunity” to the new coronavirus is far from the current reality and that social distancing measures remain the best approach to dealing with the pandemic.

Only 5 per cent of the over 61,000 participants developed antibodies that would be able to fight the disease, according to the research partly funded by Spain's Ministry of Health and published in the Lancet Journal.

The study also found that around one-third of participants who had contracted the virus remained asymptomatic, which the authors say has “important public health implications.” — Agencies

WORLD



Debris are seen at a residential area hit by torrential rain, in Ashikita, Kumamoto prefecture on Tuesday. — AFP

52 dead in Japan floods as more troops join rescue

TSUNAGI: Japan will deploy more troops to search for survivors of devastating floods and landslides that have killed at least 52 people in the southwest of the country, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe pledged on Tuesday.

Even as rescue operations continued, with 80,000 personnel already involved and more expected to join, authorities warned that more torrential rain was expected.

Japan's Meteorological Agency issued its second-highest emergency warning for heavy rain and landslides over vast swathes of the country's southwest and said "risks are rising" nationwide.

The heavy rain has caused rivers to burst their banks and sweep away bridges, while landslides have destroyed roads and buried houses, complicating access for rescuers battling to save lives.

At least 52 deaths have been confirmed in the rains that began on Saturday across the worst-hit island of Kyushu, local officials said. But

JAPAN'S METEOROLOGICAL AGENCY ISSUED ITS SECOND-HIGHEST EMERGENCY WARNING FOR HEAVY RAIN AND LANDSLIDES OVER VAST SWATHES OF THE COUNTRY'S SOUTHWEST AND SAID "RISKS ARE RISING" NATIONWIDE.

with around a dozen people still missing, there were fears the toll would rise further.

Government spokesman Yoshihide Suga warned that rain was forecast to continue over the next two days.

"Even a small amount of rainfall could cause a disaster. I would like people to be on full alert against landslides and floods", he said.

In the hardest-hit region of Kumamoto, on the southwest tip of Japan, disaster management official Yutaro Hamasaki said: "We are racing against time".

"We have not set any deadline or time to end the operation, but we really need to speed up our search as time is running out. We won't give up til the end", Hamasaki said.

Abe said he would double the number of troops deployed in rescue and relief operations to 20,000, as rescuers try to reach people trapped in homes and schools.

— AFP

IN BRIEF

Case of HIV patient in remission raises hope

LONDON: A first case of an HIV-positive man who went into long-term remission after being treated for less than a year with an intensified multi-drug cocktail of Aids medicines added to hopes on Tuesday of a possible future cure for the disease. The 34-year-old Brazilian, who was diagnosed with HIV in 2012, was treated with a base of antiretroviral therapy or ART, which was boosted with additional antiretrovirals, plus a drug called nicotinamide, a form of vitamin B3. The intensified treatment was halted after 48 weeks, doctors said on Tuesday, and 57 weeks later his HIV DNA in cells and his HIV antibody test remain negative..

Italian cabinet approves 'mother of all reforms'

ROME:The Italian government approved a package of measures on Tuesday aimed at cutting the complicated red tape that has long been blamed for crimping growth in the euro zone's third-largest economy. The "simplification decree", approved after weeks of fraught political negotiation, has been touted by Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte as "the mother of all reforms" to help relaunch an economy brought to its knees by the coronavirus. It was approved in a preliminary version at a late night cabinet meeting, leaving some final details still to be hammered out. The legislation, which runs to 174 pages in a draft seen by Reuters, covers a raft of sectors such as public tenders, digitalisation, rules for corporate capital increases and the criminal responsibility of public officials.

North Korea says it won't sit down with US

SEOUL: North Korea has no intention to sit down with the United States and urged South Korea to "stop meddling", a senior diplomat said on Tuesday, just as a US envoy was due to visit Seoul in an effort to renew stalled nuclear talks with Pyongyang. Kwon Jong Gun, Director General for US affairs at Pyongyang's foreign ministry, accused South Korea of misinterpreting an earlier North Korean statement dismissing an "untimely rumour" about another summit between North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and US President Donald Trump.

— Agencies

ANALYSIS

LET’S OBEY THE LAW



Samuel Kutty

samkuttyobserver@gmail.com

While preventive measures are the strategy adopted by the authorities worldwide to contain the spread of the coronavirus pandemic, for its success, active participation of the general public is required.

Unfortunately, despite having a strong and advanced health care system in our country, the number of COVID-19 cases is shooting up just because of the ‘unacceptable and careless behaviour’ of some people who are not following the measures and guidelines. This is taking the situation from bad to worse forcing our health minister to lambast it as ‘deplorable’.

Although there has not been any vaccine or approved treatment so far, operationally, the preventive measures can be used as a shield to protect ourselves from falling victims to the virus that has spread its tentacles to all the corners. We blissfully ignore the fact that the ability to contain the spread and mitigate its impact relies heavily on the ability of the civil society by strictly adhering to the measures in place.

While we were euphoric during the initial days of the outbreak of the pandemic that the number of cases was very less in our country compared to the member states in the GCC or other countries, our lethargic and apathetic approach has led to the current spike. On an average, the country is now registering more than 1,000 cases daily. To combat COVID-19, what is more important is the prevention of its spread. Some countries have been successful in combating the virus through aggressive testing and containment measures. In the Sultanate, we are not short of facilities but our carelessness is weakening the fight.

COVID-19 has given us an opportunity to refresh our life and lifestyle. The social restrictions in place for the last months will find results only if we all play our part. Let us stay apart but stand together to face the pandemic, observe hand hygiene, wear face masks and go for self quarantine if we have flu or COVID-19 symptoms. Obey the steps taken by the government.

Finally, we should not ignore that fact that “deliberate offense causing the infection is considered an equivalent of murder”.



Yemeni children watch as an excavator digs graves for COVID-19 victims at a specified place in the city of Taez, Yemen. — AFP

Yemen’s starving children, grim legacy of six years of war

ABDEL KARIM AL MARANI WITH SHATHA YAISH

Masirah Saqer could barely open her eyes, as she struggled to swallow the milk her grandmother attempted to feed her with a syringe.

Nearby the cries of other malnourished children reverberated around the pink-walled hospital ward, a vivid reminder of the human cost of Yemen’s devastating conflict, which drags into a seventh year on Tuesday.

Masirah, just short of three months old, was undergoing treatment at Al Sabyine hospital’s infant malnutrition department in the capital Sanaa.

Swaddled in a pink and white comforter, her tiny frame and slender limbs were dwarfed by the full-sized bed on which her grandmother sat as she tried to feed her.

The war in Yemen, the Arabian

peninsula’s poorest country, has mutated into what the United Nations calls the world’s worst humanitarian crisis.

After years of protests and political crises that escalated into violent clashes, the conflict took a decisive turn on July 8, 2014.

The rebels from the north pulled off a decisive victory in the battle for the city of Amran north of Sanaa, comprehensively defeating government troops.

The major battlefield win opened the way for the rebels to march on the capital and take it with ease — but not without a dire human cost, with millions eventually pushed to the brink of starvation. Masirah was one of the many thousands of infants affected by the conflict. Weighing just 2.4 kilograms, she suffered from acute malnutrition, her grandmother said.

“We needed a medical checkup, milk, and food. If the medicines are available in the hospital, they give them to us, if not we have to buy them outside,” she said.

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

OMAN DAILY Observer

ESTABLISHED 15 NOVEMBER 1981

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF: Abdullah bin Salim al Shueili

ADVERTISING

AL OMANEYA ADVERTISING & PUBLIC RELATIONS, P.O. Box 3303, P.C. 112, Ruwi, Sultanate of Oman Tel: SWITCHBOARD: 24649444 DIRECT: 24649430/24649437/24649401 Fax: 24649434

HEAD OFFICE

Tel: 24649444, 24649450, 24649451, 24604563, 24699437 Fax: 24699434

SALALAH OFFICE

Tel: 23292633 Fax: 23293909

NIZWA OFFICE

Tel: 25411099 P.O. Box 955, P.C. 611

DISTRIBUTION AGENT

AL OMANEYA for Distribution & Marketing, P.O. Box 974, P.C. 100, Muscat, Sultanate of Oman Tel: 24649351/24649360 Fax: 24649379

Instant Banking Services

Mobile Payments System

Transfer money to anyone, anytime instantly through BankDhofar MobilePayments System.

Welcome to the most hassle-free way to transfer money from your account to any other account instantly, with BankDhofar Mobile Payments System.

Instantly transfer Cash to any other wallet in the Sultanate.
Quick pay and transfer to merchants.

For more information: https://www.bankdhofar.com/en-GB/COVID_19_Preventive_Measures.aspx

بنك ظفار
BankDhofar

the best bank for you 2479 1111 www.bankdhofar.com

KHAZAEN SIGNS DEAL FOR OMAN’S FIRST BIODIESEL PLANT

BUSINESS REPORTER

MUSCAT: Khazaen Economic City has signed up with Wakud, an Omani technological initiative, to set up a facility for recycling waste cooking oil into biofuels.

A lease agreement was signed between Khazaen represented by its CEO Khalid al Balushi and Wakud represented by its Chairman, Talal Hasan.

This innovative and environmentally sustainable project is supported by the Implementation Support and Follow-up Unit (ISFU) as well as ‘EJAAD’, an initiative founded by Ministry of Oil and Gas, The Research Council and Petroleum Development Oman to promote technology-based solutions to address fundamental challenges and emerging opportunities in the industry.

The project will be implemented as a joint venture in partnership with Green Fuels, a UK based biofuels company. Green Fuels is a pioneer in renewable fuels found-



STATE OF THE ART:
WAKUD, WITH SUPPORT FROM ISFU AND EJAAD, WILL INVEST IN SUSTAINABLE PROJECT THAT RECYCLES WASTE COOKING OIL INTO BIOFUELS.

ed in 2003 and has supplied biofuel equipment with aggregate capacity equating to \$500bn in fuel sales to customers in more than 80 countries.

Commenting on the signing of this agreement, Khalid al Balushi, said: “We are pleased to sign lease agreement for this unique and innovative project that will contribute positively towards the growth of our local economy.

Wakud will set up a state-of-the-art bio-diesel plant. The aim behind the establishment of this plant is to optimise the utilisation of untapped potential resources and contribute towards Oman's economic diversification.”

Talal Hasan, Chairman, Wakud, said, “We are excited to announce our partnership with Khazaen to build our state-of-the-art bio-diesel facility with-

in Oman’s most ambitious development project. We will soon start construction work, and it is expected that the plant will be operational in the second quarter of 2021.”

Maher al Habsi, CEO of Wakud said, “We intend to collaborate with all interested parties and stakeholders to create a biofuel hub in Oman centered around our bio-diesel project with Green Fuels in Khazaen”.

The bio-diesel plant is one of the key strategic projects that were supported by the Implementation and Follow-up Support Unit (ISFU). The project has been selected based on specific criteria that included having a strategic partner, enhancing the added value, achieving sustainability in economic diversification, and promoting the culture of innovation and sustainability in the Sultanate. The company aims to be a regional leader in biofuels to create positive impact in the region and to enhance the biofuels ecosystem in the country.

AER OMAN NAMES NEW BOARD MEMBERS

MUSCAT: The Authority for Electricity Regulation (AER) Oman has announced the appointment of Aysha al Mawali as the new Chairperson of the Authority.

A banker by profession, Aysha has over 37 years of experience in finance, accounting, strategic plan-



ning and project management.

Meanwhile, Eng Ali Said al Haddabi has been appointed as a Member of the Authority.

Al Haddabi has over 29 years of experience in electricity generation, transmission and distribution businesses.

CANADIAN FIRM PLANS \$1.5 BN LOW SULPHUR FUEL OIL PROJECT IN OMAN

CONRAD PRABHU

MUSCAT: A Canadian investment firm says it is moving ahead with plans for the establishment of a Low Sulphur Fuel Oil (LSFO) refinery in the Sultanate to cater to the growing needs of ships transitioning to low-emission fuels for maritime transportation.

Ottawa-based Canada Business Holdings Inc (CBH), described as a specialist in the delivery of large projects based on the Private-Private-Partnership (PPP) model, announced earlier this week that it will proceed with the phased development of a 300,000 barrels per day (bpd) capacity refinery with an investment of around \$1.5 billion.

A statement issued by the company on its website did not specify the exact location of the project, but it noted that the plant is proposed to come up within an industrial free zone in the Sultanate overlooking the Arabian Sea.

"CBH Inc are delighted to cooperate with the Government of Oman to invest in the LSFO refinery. Oman is one of the best located on the world map for such investment. We have great confidence that our decision is a strategically sound one," the company said in a statement.

"The people of Oman are highly educated, young, and hard working. The country is resourceful and safe. Oman also enjoys high political and economic stability for almost fifty years," it further noted.

Under regulations that



GREEN FUEL:

PROPOSED 300,000-BPD CAPACITY REFINERY TO MEET GROWING GLOBAL DEMAND FOR CLEANER-BURNING MARINE BUNKER FUEL.

came into force from January 1, 2020, maritime vessels are mandated by the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) to switch to low sulphur fuel oil (LSFO) which has a sulphur content of less than 0.5 per cent) in place of high-sulphur fuel oil (where the sulphur content is as high as 3.5 per cent).

Compliance requires vessel owners to either embrace LSFO for vessel propulsion or invest in scrubbers to clean the exhaust gas before it is

vented into the air. Given the relatively high cost of equipping ships with scrubbers, many vessel owners have shown a preference for LSFO, thereby boosting demand for this relatively clean bunker fuel.

"The refining process is based on a unique Canadian technology with proven results in turning poor quality fuel into cleaner and higher grades," the firm noted. "The project satisfies the strict investment criterion of CBH based on

focused investment strategy, with safe, secure, and high returns.

Such refinery is a niche investment that considers the challenges facing the oil and gas industry and focus mainly on market demand. Such demand is led by international law and the viability of the global logistics business."

"The total investment is \$1.5 billion. The expected Return of Investment (ROI) is 22 per cent per annum. The structured investment is based on a global fund based in London, UK and open to interested investors.

This week's revelation follows an announcement by CBH last December that it had "secured a petroleum refining license for a 300,000 bpd low sulphur bunkering fuel oil plant in the Middle East."

The project will be established on a public private partnership (PPP) programme designed by Canada Business Holdings and partners, it stated.

BUSINESS



Business opportunities in the post-COVID era


STEFANO VIRGILLI

stefano@virgilli.com

As the COVID-19 emergency seems to finally ease, we are left with a global economic crisis of unprecedented magnitude. However not all evil comes to harm. A lot of new opportunities are being created daily for existing and new startups that are able to catch up with the technological wave of innovation that the pandemic spread has forced us to embark on.

For instance, the supermarket panic-buy created peaks of sales ranging between 30 per cent and 60 per cent when governments around the world announced the first lockdown measures.

However, such spikes in sales rarely lasted for more than just a few days. In fact they counterbalanced often with drops in sales up to 80 per cent in the following period.

On the other hand, online sales have experienced organic and stable growth during this transition.

The overall growth in web traffic averages at 150 per cent globally. In other words that has never been a better time to start an online business.

In Oman, we are used to warm and friendly human interactions, hence imagining cold and dry business being conducted outside such culture might sound strange and unusual at first. But as we move towards a society that might as well experience such unexpected business interruption occurring routinely, some have

already started thinking of business in the post-COVID era.

The core difference between a SME that the Omani government has advocated passionately, and the Startup scene that the investment world is projecting onto millennials, is that SMEs tend to embrace a culture of "bootstrapping" while Startups take oxygen from investment capital.

Given the uncertainty of the global economy for this year, yet a positive projection for the years to come, new entrepreneurs in Oman can choose to either look for clients (bootstrapping an SME) or looking for investors (funding an SME).

Many investors were burned in the stock markets recently, so they took out money from their stock portfolio and they are looking for down-to-earth businesses to invest into. Hence launching a startup now could be well

timed.

On the other hand, as many SME were forced to close due to the pandemic lockdown, new businesses can look at the future with a positive mindset, as the economy is hot ill, it was just paused for a while, and now it is ready to bloom again.

Sectors like travel and hospitality, which were among the most damaged during COVID-19 have still a great opportunity to grow over the next few years. It just required the human capital and the will to make it happen despite the negative trend of the past few months.

In Oman, we are used to warm and friendly human interactions, hence imagining cold and dry business being conducted outside such culture might sound strange and unusual at first.

Phaze Ventures signs pact with OQ

MUSCAT: Phaze Ventures, an Oman-based venture capital firm, and OQ, Oman's global integrated energy services company, have signed a Memorandum of Understanding which will see the organisations work closely together to develop, deploy and invest in disruptive energy technologies from across the globe.

The agreement incorporates several areas of collaboration in support of the two organisations' core missions and brings together Phaze Ventures technology and investment ecosystem with OQ's global operating platform and industry leading expertise. The agreement will see the two companies work together in a number of areas including talent development and technology incubation and piloting.

Abdullah al Shaksy (**pictured**), CEO and Co-founder at Phaze Ventures, says: "We are on a mission to provide disruptive technology companies with the early-stage investments and strategic support they need to transform traditional industries such as the global energy and logistics sectors."

"This agreement marks an important step on that journey. Strategic partnerships with forward thinking global players such as OQ allows us to provide innovators with the unique opportunity to develop and deploy their offering and, ultimately, supercharge their growth."

The agreement follows Phaze Ventures' partnership with Petroleum Development Oman in 2018 and the launch of the regions first energy focused startup accelerator program, further solidifying their position as a key player in the future of the regions' transition.

Established in 2018, Phaze Ventures is an early-stage venture capital firm founded to fund disruptive technology companies and accelerate their missions to transform traditional industries.



SOHAR PORT AND FREEZONE LAUNCHES TASHEEL

MUSCAT: In line with the directives of the Omani government, Sohar Port and Freezone continues to digitalise its services in order to offer its tenants with high-quality services as well as ease of doing business.

In this regard, an easy-to-use online permit management platform, 'Tasheel' was officially launched on July 7 by Dr Mohammed bin Nasser al Zaabi, Chairman of the Board, during a digital video conference. Through this system, tenants and service providers can conveniently apply for relevant Port and Freezone permits.

Highlighting the impor-



tance of Tasheel, Mark Geilenkirchen, CEO of Sohar Port, said, "Taken from the Arabic word for 'Simplified', Tasheel has been set-up to provide our tenants with ease of doing business and making their permit application process as convenient as possible.

We felt it important to streamline the process and ensure that everyone is aware of the main assets at Sohar Port and Freezone. The canals, oil, and gas that flow through the pipe-

lines at the port are crucial to the work environment and having a permit system in place enables us to maintain order and ensure the safety and security of all people and Sohar assets."

Sohar Port and Freezone Management will provide the necessary credentials for tenants and service providers when they apply.

Tasheel has been set up as a simple and transparent permit application system that also allows for communications and applications, all in one platform. It includes filling out information to apply for Plot Work, Common Area and Special Transport permits. This is the first phase

of the application and it will see several more features and flexibility options rolled out in the future.

Omar bin Mahmood al Mahrizi, CEO Sohar Freezone and Deputy CEO Sohar Port said: "Sohar Port and Freezone is on the fast track to becoming a key logistics hub in the region, as well as on a global scale.

Our ability to offer simplified online systems, alongside our One-Stop-Service and several attractive benefits, is vital to increase the inflow of visitors to our Port and Freezone. This way, we can contribute to the diversification efforts of the local economy while creating job opportunities."

Asalah customers enjoy unique benefits

MUSCAT: In line with its vision 'To serve you better, everyday' and commitment to a customer-centric service culture, Bank Muscat continues to launch many new and innovative products and services for the benefit of its customers.

It must be noted that Bank Muscat Premier Banking with its excellent understanding of client needs and preferences, has been setting benchmarks for relationship-based personal banking in Oman. Asalah Priority Banking, in particular, is all about providing a highly-personalised banking experience. Exceptional privileges include a dedicated call centre that works 24/7, a strong network of 32 Asalah Centres and the largest team of 62 dedicated relationship managers (RMs).

Abdulnasser al Raisi (pictured), DGM - Premier Banking, Bank Muscat, said: "Asalah offers an excellent Priority Banking experience which is relation-



ship-based. We constantly listen to the feedback from our customers and try to implement them in line with our customer-centric vision of serving you better every day. This year, we plan to open five new Asalah Centres for our valued customers at Al Mahaj in Al Amerat, Al Saada in Salalah, Musandam, Samail and Jalan Bani Bu Ali. These new centres will enable us to further improve the ease of banking for our customers across all governorates."

Asalah promises a host of benefits that are unmatched elsewhere in Oman's banking industry. Exclusive banking benefits for the rapidly-growing customer segment include dedicated Relationship Managers based across the Sultanate, the largest number of Priority Banking Centres, express service and processing of transactions and a dedicated 24x7 Asalah Call Centre (24779999).



Apollo Hospitals launches COVID-19 guide

MUSCAT: The guide book on COVID-19, '#BREAKCORONA' —an initiative from Apollo Hospitals Muscat — was launched by Dr Mazin al Khabouri, DG for Private Health Establishments, Ministry of Health in the presence of V T Saileswaran, Managing Director of Apollo Hospitals Muscat, Dr Badr al Jabri, Director of Medical Licensing Department of Private Health Establishments, Ministry of Health, Dr Munira al Hashmi, Director of Quality Assurance and Patient Safety of Private Health Establishments, Dr Waleed al Zedjali, Chairman OMA and Medical Director of Apollo Hospitals, Muscat, and K P Shobha, General Manager of Apollo Hospitals Muscat.

V T Saileswaran, Managing Director of Apollo Hospital Muscat, remarked: "We have prepared this guide book with inputs from our specialist and as per the WHO protocols. This will help us to be more precautious in our daily life while keeping ourselves, our families and colleagues safe from COVID-19. We have seen an exemplary model of managing COVID-19 in the Sultanate of Oman, an effort which has set a benchmark for many countries."

BUSINESS

EURO ZONE ECONOMY TO CRASH 8.7 PER CENT IN 2020

BRUSSELS: The euro zone economy will plunge 8.7 per cent in 2020 due to the coronavirus crisis, the European Commission said on Tuesday in more pessimistic forecasts that do not see a complete rebound next year.

The new forecasts see the euro zone economy bouncing back by 6.1 per cent in 2021, still leaving the region worse off than before the countries were forced to implement lockdowns in an attempt to contain the spread of COVID-19.

"The economic impact of the lockdown is more severe than we initially expected," said Commission Vice President Valdis Dombrovskis in a statement accompanying the release of the updated forecasts.



People are seen passing Louis Vuitton's store in Paris. — Reuters

FRANCE, THE EURO ZONE'S SECOND-LARGEST ECONOMY, IS EXPECTED TO CONTRACT BY 10.6 PER CENT THIS YEAR AND GROW BY 7.6 PER CENT IN 2021.

"Looking forward to this year and next, we can expect a rebound but we will need to be vigilant about the dif-

fering pace of the recovery," he added.

Germany, the EU's biggest economy, is expected to see a 6.3

per cent contraction this year and 5.3 per cent growth in 2021.

The economies of France, Italy and Spain will each contract by more than 10 per cent, and then partially recover.

France, the euro zone's second-largest economy, is expected to contract by 10.6 per cent this

year and grow by 7.6 per cent in 2021.

Italy, which should suffer a 11.2-per cent drop this year, is only forecast to rebound by 6.1 per cent in 2021.

Spain's economy is seen as contracting by 10.9 per cent before bouncing back by 7.1 per cent.

"The policy response across Europe has helped to cushion the blow for our citizens, yet this remains a story of increasing divergence, inequality and insecurity," said the EU's economy commissioner, Paolo Gentiloni.

"This is why it is so important to reach a swift agreement on the recovery plan proposed by the Commission — to inject both new confidence and new financing into our economies at this critical time," he added. — AFP

UK READIES £3.0 BN RECOVERY PLAN TO GREEN UP ECONOMY

LONDON: British finance minister Rishi Sunak will Wednesday unveil a mini-budget to help kickstart the UK economy following devastation wreaked by coronavirus fallout, featuring green investment worth £3.0 billion (\$3.7 billion).

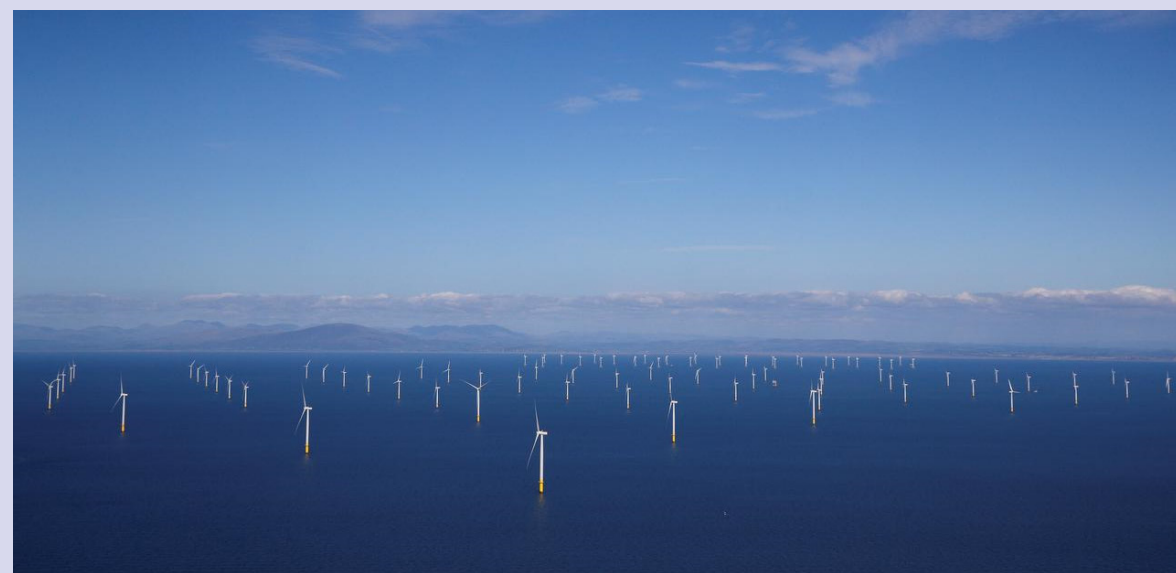
Chancellor of the Exchequer Sunak hopes the plan will help to support more than 100,000 green jobs, including across the construction

sector.

He will offer £2.0 billion in grants for households to insulate homes and make them more energy efficient, the Treasury said in a statement Tuesday.

Sunak will also provide £1.0 billion in green grants for public sector buildings, including hospitals, schools and social housing.

In England, the government aims to pay for at least two thirds of home-



General view of the Walney Extension offshore wind farm operated by Orsted off the coast of Blackpool, Britain. — Reuters

owner costs on green upgrades.

"As Britain recovers from the outbreak, it's vital we do everything in our power to support and protect livelihoods across the nation," Sunak said in the statement.

"Our green homes grant

will not only cut families' bills by making their homes more energy efficient, it will also kick start our economy by creating thousands of green jobs — and supporting those skilled tradespeople who are ready to work."

— Reuters

IPL WILL ONLY BE STAGED ABROAD AS LAST RESORT: BCCI

NEW DELHI: India's cricket board will only consider staging the Indian Premier League (IPL) abroad as a last resort if there is no other way to salvage the lucrative limited-overs tournament this year, a top BCCI official said.

The annual tournament was originally scheduled to begin on March 29 but was postponed indefinitely due to COVID-19. India's death toll from the pandemic surpassed 20,000 on Tuesday.

Sri Lanka and the United Arab Emirates have offered to host the league but BCCI treasurer Arun Singh Dhumal said the board was optimistic about staging it on home soil.

"We've to consider India



BCCI Chairman Sourav Ganguly

first and then think of overseas," Dhumal said. "They have sent these proposals in case we want to organise it there. "We will discuss it in the next IPL governing council

meeting where we will take a call." The 2009 edition of the franchise-based league, which coincided with India's elections, was held in South Africa and the

UAE hosted the early matches of the tournament five years later for the same reason.

The BCCI, facing a \$535 million loss of revenue if it cannot stage the IPL this year, would be keen to slot it into the Twenty20 World Cup's October-November window if that event was unable to go ahead in Australia due to the pandemic.

The uncertainty around the World Cup, the BCCI has said, has created a scheduling headache for cricket boards trying to recoup some of the losses caused by the pandemic.

"Everybody is under the pressure because of the uncertainty," Dhumal added.

— Reuters

OVA holds webinar for coaches, referees

ADIL AL BALUSHI

MUSCAT: The Oman Volleyball Association (OVA) launched a series of webinars recently which aims for the development of the national personnel including coaches, referees, players and administration staff. The OVA has been using the modern technology channels to continue its activities during this period affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The first online virtual course was titled 'The sports training science in volleyball' presented by Dr Shihab al Deen al Riyami. The second webinar was on the training principles and rules in beach volleyball.

Dr Shihab delivered different ideas and lessons in his webinar, participated by domestic coaches and some members of the OVA. He



summarised the training principles in volleyball including overload, variety, specificity, modulation, multilateral development, active preparation, diminishing return, individuality and reversibility. He defined the volleyball periodisation as the planned manipulation of training variables including load, sets and repetitions in order to maximise training adaptations and to prevent the onset of overtraining syndrome. He explained further on the '6P' concept, 'Proper

Prior Planning Prevents Poor Performance'. He referred to the volleyball periodisation cycle which includes the physical preparation, technical preparation, tactical preparation and mental and psychological preparation. He pointed out that the strength of the periodisation specified as general strength for foundation of the programme is aimed at the whole muscular system while special strength targets the motor patterns of muscle groups essential to sporting activities.

The next type, 'speed strength' is the ability to develop force rapidly and at high velocities. The lecturer advised all the participants in the virtual course that they have to focus on the continuous athlete evaluation, selecting competitions or series of peak performances, determining the right cycling and defining the right daily, weekly and monthly cycling periods.

Mohammed Hamida, international lecturer and technical expert at Qatar Olympic Committee, presented the second webinar on the training principles of beach volleyball. The Algerian presenter explained 14 training principles including active load, progression principle, alternation between loading and rest, continuity or preserving the acquired knowledge and variety of exercises.

SPORTS



SPIELBERG, Austria: Charles Leclerc may have scored a surprise podium finish for Ferrari in Sunday's Austrian Grand Prix, but team-mate Sebastian Vettel faces a struggle with his concentration, according to former team chief Ross Brawn.

And team boss Mattia Binotto warned, the scarlet scuderia and their fans cannot expect the upgrades package planned for the third race at Budapest to deliver a 'silver bullet' solution to their problems.

Brawn, who guided Michael Schumacher to five drivers' titles at Ferrari, is now Formula One's motorsport managing director and on Monday suggested that four-time champion Vettel is understandably distracted after being told this is his last year with the team.

In comments issued on Monday, Brawn said: "It was a difficult start to Sebastian's final season with the team - everything must be swirling around in his head after finding out that Ferrari don't want his services next season.

"Sometimes, the things that put a driver off are quite subtle. Sebastian has appeared surprised and shocked by what has hap-

LECLERC
PODIUM
'CANNOT
MASK'
FERRARI
ISSUES

pened and that must be a distraction. Understandably so."

Vettel qualified only 11th and then clashed with McLaren's Carlos Sainz, the man who succeeds him at Maranello next year, before grabbing a point by finishing 10th.

"It was a disappointing race for me, even if we knew beforehand it would be tough," said Vettel. "I struggled for the entire race after the first two laps, just as I had done in qualifying. The balance and speed I had on Friday slipped away and I was really struggling to keep the car on track - it was a relief that I only spun once."

Binotto said; "I think that we need to improve our car. There are some mis-correlations with the design, especially the aero, and that is a development we have started again.

"It won't be a final solution. There is no silver bullet.

"If I look at qualifying, compared to the pole, we are missing a second - that's three-tenths in cornering, but then there is still seven-tenths on the straights.

"And I think that one will be very much difficult for us because engines are frozen for the season."

— AFP



COACH SETIEN TO STAY DESPITE LOSING TITLE BID: BARCA CHIEF

‘WE HAVE OBLIGATION TO RE-SIGN MESSI’

BARCELONA: Barcelona president Josep Maria Bartomeu responded to a storm of speculation by saying on Tuesday that the club had “an obligation to re-sign” Lionel Messi, calling him “the best player in history”. “Normally we do not explain the discussions with players but it is evident that we have the obligation to re-sign him”, Bartomeu told Catalan radio station Racl. “He is the best player in history. He has many years of football left.” Bartomeu also said Barca coach Quique Setien would keep his job despite a run of unconvincing form since La Liga’s restart that has

seen the reigning champions lose top spot to Real Madrid. The president said he was happy with the direction of the club and maintained he had been right to replace Ernesto Valverde in January. Bartomeu also said Barcelona are trying to have the second leg of the Champions League second leg against Napoli played at the Camp Nou instead of at a neutral venue. Last week, another radio station, Cadena Ser, reported that Messi had broken off negotiations on extending his contract, which runs until 2021, and was



thinking of leaving Barcelona. The report said Messi was frustrated with the club’s failure to build a winning squad and was tired of leaks from the club which paint him in a bad light. He was also reportedly upset at reports that the players had got Valverde fired. But Bartomeu said: “I see a relaxed Leo... He has said many times that he wants to finish (his career) at Barca.” **‘MESSI TO RETIRE AT BARCA’** Bartomeu, who must stand down in 2021, insisted that he sees Messi “retiring at Barca under another pres-

ident because he will sign for another spell.” Bartomeu said he spoke to his captain on Saturday. “I talk to the players very often. Not only with Leo, but also with the group, especially with the captains. Besides, lately we have a lot of topics to talk about,” said Bartomeu. Before beating Villarreal 4-1 on Sunday, Barcelona had drawn three of their previous four matches and slipped four points behind Real in the title race, putting Setien under pressure. “Setien will continue, of course,” said Bartomeu. “I am quite happy with the development we are showing in the games despite the draws”. — AFP

SPORTS

MANE BOOSTS RED'S RECORD HUNT

SPURS BEAT EVERTON;
CITY STUMBLE AT
SOUTHAMPTON

LONDON: Sadio Mane helped Liverpool keep alive their bid to set a new Premier League points record as the champions beat Aston Villa 2-0 to restore a 23-point lead over Manchester City, who were beaten at Southampton on Sunday.

On Monday, an own goal by Michael Keane proved the difference as Tottenham Hotspur beat visitors Everton 1-0 in a dour clash to move up to eighth in the standings and hand manager Jose Mourinho a 200th Premier League win.

Defeat would have dropped Spurs below the visitors into the bottom half of the table but they won fairly comfortably to stretch their unbeaten league run versus Everton to 15 games.

Midfielder Giovani Lo Celso thought he had scored his first Premier

League goal for Tottenham in the 23rd minute but his shot on the turn took a decisive deflection off Keane to leave keeper Jordan Pickford with no chance.

Spurs keeper Hugo Lloris was hardly tested although he was involved in the night's flashpoint, having a furious row with teammate Son Heung-Min as the players walked off at

halftime. Tottenham have 48 points from 33 games, one behind Arsenal and nine adrift of fourth-placed Chelsea. Everton's first defeat since the resumption of the season left them 11th. At Anfield, Mane broke struggling Villa's stubborn resistance by smashing Naby Keita's pass in off the underside of the crossbar from close range for his 20th goal of

the season before substitute Curtis Jones rounded off a big weekend for the 19-year-old after signing a new five-year contract on Saturday.

Victory moved Liverpool onto 89 points and they need four wins from their remaining five games to surpass City's record 100-point total from 2017-18.

"We are where we are because we win difficult games", Klopp said.

"It was not a brilliant performance but it was a good performance that got us three points". Villa remain in the relegation zone, one point from safety as they battle to avoid an immediate return to the Championship.

City, by contrast, saw another dominant display go unrewarded as Che Adams's spectacular first goal for Southampton claimed a 1-0 win for the Saints. — **AFP**

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE RESULTS	
On Monday	
Tottenham 1 (Michael Keane 23 og) Everton 0	
On Sunday:	
Burnley 1 (Tarkowski 43) Sheffield United 1 (Egan 80)	
Newcastle 2 (Almiron 17, Shelvey 67) West Ham 2 (Antonio 4, Soucek 65)	
Liverpool 2 (Mane 71, Jones 89) Aston Villa 0	
Southampton 1 (Adams 16) Manchester City 0	
On Saturday	
Leicester 3 (Iheanacho 49, Vardy 77, 90) Crystal Palace 0	
Manchester United 5 (Greenwood 29, 54, Rashford 35-pen, Martial 45, Fernandes 59) Bournemouth 2 (Stanislas 16, King 49-pen)	

FEATURES

DONKEYS: STALWARTS OF THE SULTANATE SCENE

Donkeys have always been a beast of burden, and yet are rarely molly-coddled, mostly adjusting to marginal subsistence zones, such as deserts and barren mountainous regions. Donkeys certainly exhibit a well-known stubbornness; however, this probably has its roots in their self-preservation and survival instincts in their largely inhospitable environments... **page 20**

FIND US ONLINE



omanobserver

WE ARE ALSO
ON TELEGRAM

OMAN OBSERVER
NEWS

WHAT'S INSIDE

Why Canadian sparrows
have changed their tune



P21

A vanishing way of life in
Danube Delta's natural
paradise



P22



Donkeys: Stalwarts of the Sultanate Scene

MAZOUN AL GHAILANI

We look around us as we travel around Oman, and see the diversity of the wildlife, and whether we are Omani or expatriates, visitors or tourists, we marvel at the turtles, dolphins and whales of the sea, and the camels, sheep and goats of the hinterland.

We know something of these before we come usually, and friends and tourist guides will soon ‘dramatize,’ or ‘romanticize’ their stories for us, by linking the odyssey of the turtle to its 35 year later return from a 30,000km journey to give birth on the same beach, or the fact that their gender at birth is determined by the temperature. Simply amazing! The adventure too surrounding camels, as we, the expats, all think ‘Lawrence of Arabia,’ Peter O’Toole, and Omar Sharif, and our guides relate the travels of Ibn Battuta, Aladdin and Scheherazade, all tales of wonder.

But other animals too in Oman, surely have their stories, and when I look at them, I wonder what story they have. Do you think the humble donkeys, the *Equus Africanus Asinus*, the Jacks (males) and Jennies (females) lingering under an acacia tree near the road reminisce about their ancestor’s biblical stories? Or do you think they are cynical about the speeding motorists, chuckling as they get zapped by the nearest speed cameras, or shaking their heads in disbelief

as they see unrestrained children in passing vehicles? Hmmmm.

Donkeys have always been a beast of burden, and yet are rarely molly-coddled, mostly adjusting to marginal subsistence zones, such as deserts and barren mountainous regions, and the fact that they rarely run away, and have been man’s servant for more than 5000 years is a testament, I feel, to their integrity of character. Donkeys certainly exhibit a well-known stubbornness; however, this probably has its roots in their self-preservation and survival instincts in their largely inhospitable environments.

I love donkeys for their apparent pragmatism, not their resignation to their lives, such as they are, but a level of contentment based on the fact that they are strong, but not athletic, they mature early in life, yet breed deliberately, and carry loads far disproportionate to their size. Maybe they recognize that they will never have the aristocratic appearance of a thoroughbred horse, their speed, or ‘dignity.’ However, they do have the capacity to ‘get things done.’

As I encounter, or drive past a donkey, I always acknowledge them, smile, not laughing, because I don’t want to be seen as laughing at them. In fact I admire them, and their qualities of strength, their nimbleness of foot, their reliability, their loyalty, and their ability to look you in the eye, make me wish there were more humans with those qualities. Do you agree?

FEATURES

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



nsquare_photography_ • Follow

Muttrah





riyadh_alhinai • Follow

Fanja, Masqat, Oman





marwanalasi • Follow





MEMBERS OF A Canadian sparrow species famous for their jaunty signature song are changing their tune, a curious example of a “viral phenomenon” in the animal kingdom, a study showed Thursday.

Bird enthusiasts first recorded the white-throated sparrow's original song, with its distinctive triplet hook, in the 1950s.

Canadians even invented lyrics to accompany the ditty: “Oh my sweet, Ca-na-da, Ca-na-da, Ca-na-da.”

But starting from the late 20th century, biologists began noticing that members of the species in western Canada were innovating.

Instead of a triplet, the new song ended in a doublet and a new syncopation pattern. The new ending sounded like “Ca-na, Ca-na, Ca-na.”

Over the course of the next two decades, this new cadence became a big hit, moving eastward and conquering Alberta, then Ontario. It began entering Quebec last year.

It's now the dominant version across more than 2,000 miles (3,000 kilometers) of territory, in an extremely rare example of the total replacement of historic bird dialect by another.

Scientist Ken Otter at the

University of Northern British Columbia, and his colleague Scott Ramsay from Wilfrid Laurier University, described

the dizzying pace of this transformation in the journal Current Biology.

“What we're seeing is like

somebody moving from Quebec to Paris, and all the people around them saying, ‘Wow, that's a cool accent’ and start adopting a Quebec accent,” Otter told AFP.

Their work was based on 1,785 recordings between 2000 and 2019, the majority made by them but with contributions from citizen-scientists, who posted the files on specialist sites like xeno-canto.org.

In the western province of Alberta, about half of the recorded songs ended with the triplet in 2004; ten years later, all the males had adopted the doublet.

In 2015, half of western Canada had converted to the doublet version, and by last year, the new song had been well established on the western tip of eastern Quebec province.

At this rate, the historic triplet version may soon exist only in tape recordings.

The males of the species sing to mark their territory, and their songs all share a common structure. Usually, if a variation appears, it remains regional and doesn't make headway in neighboring territories.

The study represents the first time scientists have been able to show this kind spread at huge geographic scale, said Otter. — AFP

FEATURES

A vanishing way of life in Danube Delta's natural paradise

AS THE "LAST ROWER" left in one of the villages dotting Romania's Danube Delta, Iosif Acsente is all too aware of how the traditions and vistas of the region are slowly disappearing -- an issue brought into sharper relief by the coronavirus pandemic.

Acsente has been plying the Delta with his wooden boat for more than four decades now from his home village of Sfantu Gheorghe.

"I know the Danube so well that if you throw me out of a helicopter I'd know where I was", says Acsente proudly.

But living in a natural labyrinth, accessible only by boat, has its drawbacks.

Even though the region has been largely spared the ravages of the coronavirus pandemic, residents worry that they may end up beyond the reach of necessary medical care.

"There is a good chance that it will be too late when the rescue boat arrives", says Acsente.

It is only the latest challenge the modern world has thrown up for the Delta's fragile equilibrium.

Included on Unesco's World Heritage list, this natural paradise spread across 5,800 square kilometres hosts over 300 species of bird and 45 freshwater fish species.

In normal times that makes it a magnet for birdwatchers and other tourists, with locals throwing open the doors of their traditional thatched houses for visitors every summer.

But this year that vital source of income looks likely to shrink drastically in the wake of the pandemic.

The deputy mayor of Sfantu Gheorghe, Aurel Bondarencu, hopes that Romanians might make up some of the shortfall by holidaying in the Delta instead of heading abroad but that would only offer temporary

relief from the region's problems.

Even "normal" tourism wasn't without its problems in the time before the virus.

Fisherman Marius, 51, relies on tourists eager to discover the canals and ponds in order to make a living.

He guides them between the swamps pointing out sights such as yellow water lilies and colonies of pelicans.

But as he slows his boat to avoid disturbing a shag drying its wings in the sun, even he admits the fall in visitor numbers has "given nature some respite".

The streets may still be unpaved, covered with fine sand and framed by flower-filled gardens.

But these days the roar of motor boats drowns out the gentle rippling of oars through the water.

Marius frets that the dilapidated cars which have replaced the horse-drawn carts of old "destroy Sfantu Gheorghe just as the boats equipped with powerful engines ravage the delta".

Meanwhile, purpose-built houses have joined the landscape alongside the traditional homestays.

Marius says the increasing noise and pollution in the Delta are not good for the millions of migratory birds which return from Africa each spring to nest in the islets.

As for fish, the other mainstay of the inhabitants' livelihoods, that too is becoming increasingly scarce.

Perhaps it's little wonder then that Sfantu Gheorghe is emptying out.

The village has lost around 1,500 people since the transition away from communism in the early 1990s and now numbers just some 500 souls.

Both Bondarencu's and Acsente's children have emigrated, joining millions of their compatriots seeking better lives in the West.— AFP

