

CBSE DROPS CLASSES 10 AND 12
EXAMS FOR OVERSEAS STUDENTS

The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) has decided to drop the Class 12 (Plus Two) examination, which was actually scheduled to be held on March 31, in the wake of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. In a circular sent to the representative schools and diplomatic missions abroad, it said that under the present circumstances, the Board will not be in a position to hold differential set of exams for overseas students who are in countries, some of which are in total lockdown. [SEE P3](#)

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GLOBAL M&A DWINDLES AS CORONAVIRUS BATTERS WORLD'S ECONOMIES



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THE SANDY BEACH CRABS OF MASIRAH ISLAND



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GRAHAM STEPS DOWN AS KHAMIS NAMED NEW CEO OF OMAN SAIL



STAY AT HOME FOR HEALTH'S SAKE

WAR ON VIRUS: MUSCAT WEARS A DESERTED LOOK, MUTTRAH UNDER LOCKDOWN

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
MUSCAT, APRIL 1

In line with the decisions taken by the Supreme Committee to curb the spread of COVID-19, Sultan's Armed Forces and Royal Oman Police have restricted traffic in the Wilayat of Muttrah on Wednesday.

Commenting on closures of Muttrah and roads in Ruwi, Major Mohammed al Hashmi, Director of Public Relations, Royal Oman Police (ROP), told Observer, "Most of the areas such as Muttrah, Ruwi, Wadi Kabir and parts of Darsait is shut down. There is no traffic movement in all these areas starting from today until further announcement."

"People can go to shops and hospitals but not for walking for the sake of it or jogging because in this situation we want people to stay at home. It is not allowed to go outside their home because we need to stop the spread of virus. What we recommend to all people is to stay at home. If it is necessary to go outside to shop they can, but just one person from a family. If there is a need for medical care they can go to the hospital too. They need

to be safe by wearing mask and gloves. They need to save themselves and help others by restricting movements and from going out of their residential area," he said.

Al Hashmi advised people to stay in their own wilayats and help the authorities in their efforts to control the virus."

Commenting on imposing fine for not adhering to the instructions, Major Al Hashmi said, "Actually we do not want to fine people. All people have been respecting the information that has been conveyed to them. So there is no fine when there is no movement. We just want people to stay home."

Other parts of the city such as Bausher, Ghala, Al Hail and Seeb have no restrictions of movement still people are advised to restrict themselves to their best level.

"But you have to remember there are checkpoints at each of the governorates. At each checkpoint there will be limited movement for citizens and residents. They cannot cross to other governorates unless there is a requirement," Major Al Hashmi said.

COVID-19
CASES
CROSS 200

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Health (MoH) announced the registration of 18 new coronavirus (COVID-19) in the Sultanate on Wednesday. This brings the total number of cases in the Sultanate to 210. One Omani patient died on Tuesday. The ministry said 34 patients have recovered from the infection. Region-wise, Muscat leads with 149 cases (12 recovered and a death) followed by Al Dhakilyah (20 cases, three recovered), South Batinah (11 cases, two recovered), Musandam (one case and one recovered), Al Dhahirah (2 cases), South Sharqiyah (1) and North Batinah (17).

SEE ALSO P3

LETTER FROM EMPLOYER
MUST FOR COMMUTE

Road users should ensure they carry the required documents such as their civil ID card, office identity card, and a letter from the employer with details of home and office and the reasons explaining why they need to commute. The military and security officers at control checkpoints will register the number plates of vehicles that make unjustifiable frequent trips and take action against their owners.

- EXCEPTIONS TO THIS DECISION IS ALLOWED IN THE FOLLOWING CASES:
1. Employees whose nature of work requires them to be present at the place of work.
 2. Ambulances and emergency vehicles
 3. Food and delivery vehicles
 4. People who want to buy essentials
 5. Vehicles carrying construction and commercial materials



Prince Charles,
71, out of
self-isolation
and in good
health



LONDON: British heir-to-the-throne Prince Charles, who had tested positive for coronavirus, is out of self-isolation after seven days and is in good health, his spokesman said on Monday.

Last week, his Clarence House office revealed that Charles, 71, had been tested after displaying mild symptoms of the virus and had been in self-isolation at his Birkhall home in Scotland where he had continued to work.

After consultation with his doctor, he is now out of self-isolation, Clarence House said. He will resume meetings and take exercise in accordance with government and medical guidelines.

However, his wife Camilla, who tested negative for coronavirus, will remain in self-isolation until the end of the week in case she too develops symptoms.

"As we are all learning, this is a strange, frustrating and often distressing experience

when the presence of family and friends is no longer possible and the normal structures of life are suddenly removed," he said.

The number of coronavirus deaths in Britain rose by 27% to 1,789 people, official figures on Tuesday showed, with one of the victims a 13-year-old boy with no apparent underlying health conditions.

"At such an unprecedented and anxious time in all our lives, my wife and I are thinking particularly of all those who have lost their loved ones in such very difficult and abnormal circumstances, and of those having to endure sickness, isolation and loneliness," Charles said from his home in Scotland.

The prince's mother, 93-year-old Queen Elizabeth, is currently with her husband Prince Philip, 98, at her Windsor Castle home, west of London. Buckingham Palace has said she too is in good health.

— Reuters



SAF, ROP restrict traffic between governorates

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, APRIL 1

The Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF) and Royal Oman Police (ROP) restricted the movement of citizens and residents by setting up checkpoints on the roads linking the entrances and exits of the Sultanate's governorates.

According to official sources, the measures were aimed at reducing the movement of people between governorates as part of the measures introduced to limit the spread of COVID-19 and ensure the safety and health of citizens and residents.

A shipping clearing agent with an office at Suhar port, said, "We have issued a letter to some of our staff required to travel between Muscat and Suhar. Others have been given the notice to stay at Suhar until appropriate solutions are in place."

The authorities stressed that all road users must carry the required documents such as Civil ID and business cards and other relevant documents while passing through various checkpoints.

Employees in the public and private sectors who by the nature of their work need to be in attendance to complete their work as determined by unit heads, ambulance, emergency, military and security, and cargo, food, and essential supplies vehicles are exempted from the restrictions. Also, vehicles used for the construction sector, petroleum products, materials, and equipment are also exempted from restrictions.

MUTTRAH FULLY CLOSED
With the restrictions coming into force, movement of both people and vehicles in the capital city came to a halt from the very wee hours on Wednesday.

The Wilayat of Muttrah has been isolated from other parts of the city. Except for people associated with emergency services like health and other

basic services, entry and exit of people were stopped at different places including Hamriya, Darsait, Wadi Kabeer, Muttrah and Al Bustan.

Long lines of vehicles were seen from the early hours at different checkpoints set up by the authorities in line with the decisions of the Supreme Committee tasked with the mechanism to combat COVID-19.

"I was stopped at Hamriya roundabout on my way to hospital where my mother is admitted. The officials asked for documents to prove my claim. As I did not have any proof I had to return home", said Sudeer, an expatriate.

"I was under the impression that restriction on the movement of people is applicable only between the governorates. But it is total ban", said Joice Jacob, who was stopped at Hamriya and sent back to his residence.

ACCOMMODATION FOR WORKERS

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry issued a number of guidelines on Monday, stating that each industrial area or free zone should provide accommodation to the workers on the factory premises.

For this purpose, "Administrative staff including accountants and others can work from home and convert the office space as accommodation for the workers".

The workers should stay on the premises till the end of the period of safety measures announced by the authorities and should remain within the factory and must not leave it, except in case of medical emergencies.

Each industrial area or free zone shall prepare a list showing the names of those authorized to work in each factory/facility, with the staff who will stay. Their contact numbers will be provided so that they can be contacted when needed.

The industrial complexes and free zones will remain closed to outsiders, and permits will be checked by the security staff.



Sultanate reports first COVID-19 death

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, APRIL 1

Oman became the latest country in the Gulf to report a COVID-19 related death late on Tuesday.

The Ministry of Health confirmed that the first person, a 72-year-old citizen, to die in the country of the novel coronavirus is from the capital, Muscat.

The Ministry of Health (MoH) on Wednesday also announced the registration of 18 new cases confirmed with COVID-19, bringing the total to 210, including one death.

The ministry said 34 cases have fully recovered.

“The Ministry of Health announces the first case of death for a 72-year-old citizen with coronavirus (COVID-19) in the Sultanate,” the statement said.

Region-wise, Muscat 149 cases with 12 recovered and a death, followed by Al Dhakhilyah (20 cases 3 recovered), South Batinah (11 cases, 2 recovered), Musandam (one case and one recovered), Al Dhahirah (2 cases), South Sharqiyah (1) and North Batinah (17).

In the GCC, Saudi Arabia has

reported 10 deaths from 1,563 cases, UAE six deaths from 684 cases, Bahrain four deaths from 567 cases and Qatar a death.

TACKLING SITUATION

Meanwhile, the Dr Yahya bin Badr al Maawali, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Social Development and the head of the relief and sheltering sector, has started to lay down mechanisms for dealing with the current situation.

It has been agreed that the medical response sector will be responsible for standardising the

medical and technical work as well as agree on a mechanism for field work, Al Maawali said.

The relief and sheltering sector has provided more than 23 hotels to serve as institutional quarantines in Muscat and the other governorates of the Sultanate.

There are 2,016 under institutional quarantine while Omani students returning to the country will be dealt with in accordance with the mechanisms determined by the medical response sector, he added.

Al Maawali added, “We have coordinated with the relevant

authorities to set up a database of volunteers with 500 volunteers, out of whom 320 are medical professionals and all of them are ready to work, in addition to scout volunteers who have been deployed in various quarantine centres across the Sultanate.”

The relief and sheltering sector is responsible for 2,000 youths currently under the institutional quarantine, Al Maawali said calling on those under institutional quarantine to follow the instructions and the requirements of institutional quarantine.

Reduce staff in workplace

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, APRIL 1

The Ministry of Manpower (MoM) on Wednesday instructed the private sector to allow their employees to work from home as much possible.

“As per the directives issued by the competent authorities to limit the impact of COVID-19, all the private sector companies should take necessary measures to reduce the number of employees to a minimum to keep essential work running unaffected,” the ministry said. MoM emphasised the importance of applying protective and precautionary measures to prevent the spread of the virus,” it added.

According to sources, “Many private sector companies have started issuing special letters seeking permissions for their employees’ entry through check-points where travel has been restricted by the authorities.”

The Supreme Committee on Covid-19 on Tuesday called for exemption of employees from attending workplace in government agencies, except for the staff whose nature requires their presence to complete the necessary work.”

It added that the rest of the employees start their work remotely as determined by the authority in which the employee works.

Any of the employees can be called to do any work that the public interest requires them to do in the workplace.

“Heads of government units should take the necessary measures to ensure that the core business is not affected by reducing the number of employees and take the precautionary and preventive measures necessary to prevent the spread of the disease,” it said.

GCC monetary institutions, central banks take steps to overcome crisis

MUSCAT: The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) on Wednesday participated in the 74th meeting of the GCC Committee of Governors of Monetary Institutions and Central Banks.

The CBO’s participation was headed by Tahir bin Salim al Amri, CBO Executive President.

During the meeting, monetary institutions and central banks assured the close following up of the impact of the outbreak of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) and its implications on the GCC economy in general and the financial and banking sectors in particular.

Al Amri noted that CBO is implementing a myriad of stimulatory and precautionary measures to mitigate the effects of this outbreak on the Omani banking

and financial sector.

He also affirmed CBO’s continuous commitment towards providing all means of necessary support to maintain the integrity and stability of the sector, stressing the importance of cooperation during this phase to ensure provision of uninterrupted banking services to clients until this exceptional situation is peacefully over.

The meeting discussed several issues pertaining to the supervision and regulation of the GCC banking sector, payment systems, financial technologies and cyber security in banks. Other topics addressed by the committee included the mutual dialogue between GCC monetary institutions and central banks and a number of key economic groups and institutions. — ONA



Disinfection campaign launched in Seeb



SEEB: The Directorate-General of Muscat Municipality has launched precautionary and preventive spraying campaign in the Wilayat of Seeb in an effort to combat the spread of COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic.

The campaign targets to disinfect internal roads, pavements, residential and commercial districts, car parks and public facilities as part of ongoing efforts to contain the spread of the coronavirus. — ONA

CBSE drops classes 10 and 12 exams for overseas students

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, APRIL 1

The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) has decided to drop the Class 12 (Plus Two) examination, which was actually scheduled to be held on March 31, in the wake of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.

In a circular sent to the representative schools and diplomatic missions abroad, it said that under the present circumstances, the Board will not be in a position to hold differential set of exams for overseas students who are in countries, some of which are in total lockdown.

“Also, in the present situation, it will be difficult to bring the answer books to India for evaluation purposes. Therefore, the Board has decided to not hold any more exams for the students of class 10 and 12 schools located outside India.”

The system of marking/assessment for the purpose of declaring results will be worked out by the Board shortly and intimated to these schools shortly.

There are several CBSE schools located in 25 countries across the

continents and exams are conducted simultaneously.

“It is a greatly thought-about move that alleviates the concerns of the parents as well as the students who were so perplexed as the Sociology exam was to be held on March 31,” a source at the Indian School Board of Directors (BOD) that has nearly 47,000 students in their registry, told the *Observer*.

The CBSE Board, as a precautionary measure, had postponed all the board examinations that were to be held between March 19 and 31 and was duly communicated to all the schools, said a press release issued by the Board.

Underlining the comments of the Board, Renee Johnson, parent of Andrew Johnson, a class 12 student of ISM (Indian School Muscat) said he heaved a sigh of relief over the uncertainty caused by the present coronavirus pandemic.

“This decision (of dropping the pending Board exam) is soothing news for hundreds of parents like me in the Sultanate as we were tensed over the conducting of the exam amid Covid-19 fears,” Johnson added.

OCCI looks into shop rent issue of outlets during COVID-19 restrictions

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, APRIL 1

The Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) has extended helping hand to the business community, shop owners and commercial outlets inside the shopping malls in the country by offering them to consider their grievances which came out of the current COVID-19 situation.

Many outlets had to down the shutters in the wake of the coronavirus outbreak.

Accordingly, the OCCI has invited developers, owners of real estate and commercial complexes to join hands and unify the efforts in looking into the rents of shops and other commercial entities which had to close down in accordance with the decision of the Supreme Committee, which is tasked

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with devising mechanisms to combat the spread of COVID-19.

“We have invited all the real estate owners, developers and commercial complexes to join hands and unify the efforts in looking into the rents of shops and other commercial entities which were closed in adherence with the Supreme Committee’s decisions,” a statement from the OCCI has said.

A group of businessmen, startup companies, small and medium

scale enterprises (SME’s) and other commercial entities had earlier met with the chairman of the OCCI and submitted a memorandum detailing their plight in the wake of the revised license fees.

“This decision to invite all building owners to consider waiving or reducing the rents when the businesses were actually not operational is a service for the public goodness in light of the current circumstances that the

Sultanate is going through,” it further said.

Meanwhile, the Chairman of the Chamber’s Board of Directors has called upon the importers and suppliers of food items and medical supplies who want to use the free warehouses provided by the government agencies for the private sector for free.

“We are aiming at promoting imports of food and medical supplies as much as possible in preparation of the continuing outbreak of COVID-19 situation and the closure of export from some countries,” the chairman has said in the statement.

This move is also expected to promote the frequency of imports and benefit from the free stores and direct liaising with government agencies.



DO NOT LET DOWN OUR FRONTLINE SOLDIERS IN COVID-19 FIGHT



SAMUEL KUTTY
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Social distancing, self-isolation, lockdown, quarantine... but the infection continues to pick up steam. As time ticks by, we are flooded with news of surging number of COVID-19 patients, deaths, economic distress or broken healthcare systems. The coronavirus pandemic has, in all sense, put human psyche in its thrall.

Public health authorities all over the world are on their toes and the central banks are announcing stimulus to calm financial markets, and armed forces are building makeshift hospitals.

While hospitals are full with patients and public places empty, people have been alienated from their kith and kin. Meeting them has become nearly impossible! Those who worked across the table till the outbreak of the contagion have been separated. And those who are not quarantined are now paranoid about contracting the virus and do their best to practice cleanliness.

No doubt, the time is not far away

when people will not greet each other!

In my isolation as part of working from home following advisory from the authorities, I could find time to revive and lease a new life to my old habit of reading. Like other columnists my search, too, centred on epidemics.

A Google search has led me to a number of books from the 1939 edition of Pale Horse, Pale Rider by Katherine Anne Porter to the Severance by Ling Ma published in 2018 which describes a fictional epidemic that taps into anxieties about both pandemics and nostalgia.

What happens to a society when an invisible pathogen spreads through a population, leaving thousands dead and millions quarantined; people confined to their homes; panic and hysteria grip society and much more?

The answer is found in The Plague by Albert Camus who vividly portrays a situation in the Algerian coastal town of Oran in the month of April, to a large extent, like the current account of the coronavirus.

The novel is set in 1940 but is

The Plague reminds us that we must not forget the sacrifices of the health workers who are battling the deadly pandemic. Doctors, nurses, paramedics, ambulance drivers have put themselves to greater risk of infection to save us. Like soldiers, they also have to face long working hours, stress, fatigue, occupational burnout, stigma, and physical and psychological violence.

loosely based on a cholera epidemic in 1849, after the French colonisation of Algeria. It begins inconspicuously,

with the appearance of a few rats, then works its way virulently through the human population.

Shops, schools, universities are shut, streets are empty. Hospitals struggle to cope with mounting number of patients soar in geometric progression. En masse, the city is quarantined.

Through his characters, Camus examines how people respond – and as part of a collective – to suffering and death. Whether it is a solitary experience or a show of social solidarity, nobody is indifferent.

Amid isolation and quarantine, a local doctor works around the clock to save the cholera victims. Camus writes poetically about this ‘angel of the plague’, who did not think of himself but worked relentlessly for the people.

The Plague reminds us that we must not forget the sacrifices of the health workers who are battling the deadly pandemic. Doctors, nurses, paramedics, ambulance drivers have put themselves to greater risk of infection to save us. Like soldiers, they also have to face long working

hours, stress, fatigue, occupational burnout, stigma, and physical and psychological violence.

The risk to them has been plain from the casualties. Italy has seen the deaths of at least 18 doctors and Spain reported viral infection of more than 3,900 healthcare workers.

During the Ebola outbreak six years ago, the World Health Organization estimated that health workers were between 21 and 32 times more likely to be infected with the virus than people in the general adult population. In West Africa, over 350 healthcare workers died during Ebola.

After recovering from COVID-19, Prince Charles, the 71-year-old Prince of Wales, paid tribute to emergency services workers in a three-minute video and stressed the importance of living with hope. He said it was ‘essential’ that key workers including NHS staff were ‘treated with special consideration’ when finishing their shifts and trying to go shopping.

Let us boost the morale of these virus fighters and care for them.

When in doubt: Turn to nature

MALGORZATA PIECHOWICZ-PIETRUSZKA

In this uncertain time when nobody knows what the next day will bring it is so easy to lose our sense of stability and let fear and anxiety rule our behaviours. COVID-19, that the whole world is now trying to battle, has caused the unprecedented, at least during my generation's lifetime, situation. It has brought countries and individuals to a standstill. It seems that no matter if you are sick or healthy the virus makes taking a deep breath difficult, if not impossible.

All of us have different ways of dealing with a crisis. I know some who started to hoard food while panicking about a potential apocalypse. Others try to laugh it off as if denying facts would shield them from the reality.

My way is to turn to nature. As all mothers, our Mother Nature has the ability to bring us solace, comfort and take care of us by boosting our immune system when we most need it. There is plenty of scientific research, easily accessible, that proves the immense impact of nature on our physical and mental health. It seems that even a 20-minute walk in nature, be it a park, forest, beach or a garden, can significantly benefit out bodies and minds, reducing the stress levels and thus ameliorating the general state of our well-being.

For me it has always been the first place I turned to when facing a situation or a problem that at first seems unsolvable, and I was never failed. However, in the light of the new decisions made by the Omani government to tackle the spread of



the coronavirus, the access to natural places such as beaches, wadis and hiking trails is now banned.

Gatherings in any of these places is now strictly prohibited, so is there any way we can still benefit from what nature has to offer? According to the most recent science – yes. If you are lucky enough to have your

own garden, go outside and look at your plants. Simply observing the slow motion of the leaves, the busy lives of ants or listening to the buzzing bees has a calming effect that we all urgently need right now. Even watering and touching your house plants can have a soothing effect on your nerves, especially after reading

another story on the pandemia. It does not have to be anything grand as long as it has something to do with a living plant or a creature.

What is even better news for those who were not born with green fingers is that apparently watching a documentary on wilderness, where flora and fauna are the main

characters, activates the same areas in our brains as if nature in a real life would. This might be a good way of spending family time while practising social distancing or being in quarantine.

I strongly recommend this form of ‘therapy’ and if it sounds too dubious or unpersuasive – think twice: is there

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anything to lose? Our children can only learn interesting facts about our Planet Earth. In fact, we -adults can learn too. Why not rediscovering the beauty and uniqueness of our natural surroundings. It has been a long time since we marveled the sheer existence of Nature and us being a part of it.

Immersed and infatuated with technology we have become a new species of indoors creatures who lost touch with the most primeval of our needs – the need to connect with Mother Nature. Perhaps this is the time to reach out and soothe our racing minds, anxious souls and sick bodies. I am going to try.

Oman’s PDO asks contractors to deliver 30pc cost reductions

UNPRECEDENTED CRISIS: “Mutual survival and sustainability”, says Managing Director Raoul Restucci, warning that collapsing oil prices and the COVID-19 pandemic are posing major challenges for the industry

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, APRIL 1

Majority state-owned Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) has directed oilfield contractors to achieve savings of at least 30 per cent of their contract values – a move that is expected to spark a wave of job cuts and cause other upheavals in the labour-intensive oilfield services industry.

It comes against a backdrop of plummeting global oil prices compounded by the novel coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19), which has convulsed oil and equity markets across the world. On Wednesday, the Oman Crude Oil Futures Contract – the Sultanate’s crude benchmark – plunged to \$22.55 per barrel in trading on the Dubai Mercantile Exchange (DME), achieving new lows unseen in the past two decades.

In a letter addressed to a number of contractors, PDO Managing Director Raoul Restucci warned that cost reductions were indispensable to “our mutual survival and sustainability”.

“Maintaining operating and capital costs at present levels is simply not sustainable,” said Restucci in the letter, subject-lined ‘Near



Term Sustainability’. “We will need to concertedly re-address and challenge all operating, technical and development costs. As a key supplier to PDO, I count on your support to critically examine your contracts and associated supply chains. Please identify opportunities that will result in driving value/improved efficiency and cost reduction of at least 30 per cent without compromising safety and

technical integrity,” he noted.

The steep decline in oil prices, coupled with the crisis unleashed by the COVID-19 pandemic, threatens to pose major challenges for the Oil & Gas industry, said the official. “As you are well aware, the industry faces a dramatic and continuing fall in oil prices while COVID-19 challenges are escalating, impacting the safety of company and contractor employees

and their families, work execution, supply chains and broader economic fundamentals. This unprecedented operational and economic climate poses serious challenges for our industry and Oman,” he stressed.

Contractors and service providers have until April 5, 2020 to submit specific proposals for achieving the targeted 30 per cent reduction in their contract values.

Visits to Oman Post branches by appointment only



BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, APRIL 1

In light of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, Oman Post is taking steps to address a number of concerns. Starting from, Thursday, April 2, Oman Post is implementing stricter processes and procedures that limits customer walk-ins to all branches to appointments only until further notice. This step has been taken to eliminate customer interactions and support social/physical distancing. We realize the important role of postal services and will continue to be operational with only essential staff remaining on-site, while all other staff will work from home. Working hours across all branches are Sunday to Thursday from 9am to 3pm.

During this time, Oman Post will offer customers the following service options:

- 1. Appointments:** Customers will be able to visit one of our branches to collect or receive items by booking an appointment through the following link: <http://omanpost.om/booknow/>. Drop-off or pick-up procedures at branches will all adhere to social distancing procedures.
- 2. PO Box Services:** Mailbox contents and parcels can be delivered to customers’ physical addressees through the newly-launched door-to-door service, “Asyad Express”, by calling the dedicated customer service line on 24506999 to schedule delivery. This service is optional, and charges apply.
- 3. Matjar Service:** Online shopping delivery from the USA remain operational via www.matjar.om.

Traders urged to capitalise on Oman’s enhanced maritime links

GLOBAL LOGISTICS HUB:
Oman operates 200 direct weekly services to 86 commercial ports across more than 40 countries

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, APRIL 1

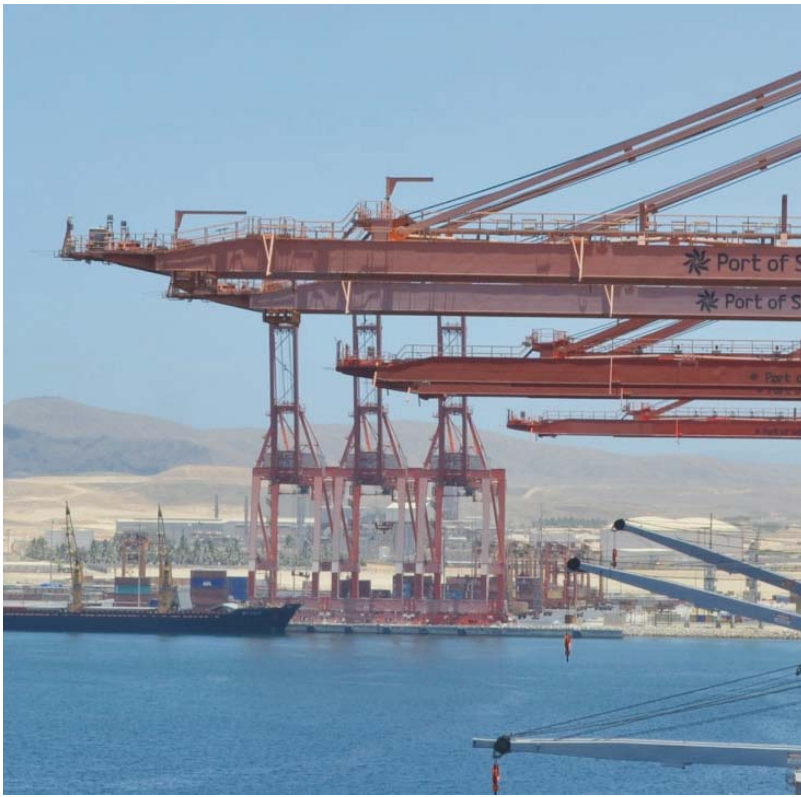
Oman runs 200 weekly maritime services to 86 commercial ports across more than 40 countries, according to Asyad, the Middle East’s comprehensive logistics provider. Supported by enhanced technological capabilities, world-class clearance procedures and strong safety measures, the services enable the direct import and export of a variety of goods,

commodities, vegetables, fruits and meat globally -- linking the Sultanate’s ports to other key Gulf, regional and international ports.

Bader al Na’abi, Global Markets & Business Development Director at Asyad, said: “We invite all traders and importers to take advantage of our direct services, which support an increasing number of merchants and importers in bringing goods to Oman. They avail of our ports’ excellent facilities and benefit from reduced shipping, handling and unloading charges.

“Oman has direct services to key international shipping routes that include 14 weekly services to nine ports in the US, three in the UK, three in the Netherlands, five in Germany, and further European ports in Italy, Spain, France, Turkey, Belgium, Malta, Romania, Ukraine, and Russia.

“Across Asia, Oman has a wide network of direct routes, including 29



weekly routes to eight commercial ports in China, 21 weekly routes to Indian ports, and services to ports in South Korea, Singapore, Japan, Malaysia, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Thailand.”

Al Na’abi added that direct shipping routes operating from Omani ports serve several ports in Africa, the Mediterranean and the Red Sea including: Port Said and Damietta in Egypt, ports in Djibouti, Kenya, Tanzania, Madagascar and Sudan in addition to Morocco and Beirut. The direct shipping lines schedule also includes 60 services to GCC ports.

In line with the Omani government’s strategy of building a global logistics hub in the Sultanate, Asyad continues to establish new alliances with international shipping companies to harness the full potential of Oman’s ports and provide trusted global shipping solutions.

Customer experience has been positive with a number of importers,

such as Transworld Shipping and Vega Shipping, complementing existing direct line services provided by Oman, which offer their companies imports from India and Saudi Arabia with faster and better services.

Using Oman’s vast network of direct routes saves time. Voltmap Energy SAOG of India, who import 80 per cent of their raw materials via Sohar Port, make a 50 per cent time saving through direct routing compared to an indirect routing time of 7-10 days.

Omani ports continue to provide importers with highly efficient customs clearance. Importers benefit from concessions on handling, shipping and unloading fees and extended free storage periods for goods destined for local markets. Furthering their commitment to their customers, alongside the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, ASYAD recently launched a call center for all customer inquiries and requests.

Xerox abandons \$35 billion hostile bid for HP

NEW YORK: US printer maker Xerox Holdings Corp walked away from its \$35 billion hostile cash-and-stock bid for HP Inc, after the coronavirus outbreak weighed on its campaign to take over the PC and printing equipment manufacturer.

Xerox’s decision came after it said earlier this month it would postpone meetings with HP shareholders to focus on coping with the coronavirus pandemic.

It represents a victory for HP CEO Enrique Lores, who faced a takeover battle as soon as he took over the reins of the Palo Alto, California-based company in November, and a defeat for Xerox CEO John Visentin, a former Hewlett-Packard and IBM Corp executive with ties to the private equity industry who took over as Xerox CEO in 2018.

It is also a blow for billionaire investor Carl Icahn, who owns big stakes in both companies and had pushed for their merger. Xerox was set to challenge HP’s board at the latter’s annual meeting of shareholders in May, but will now abandon this effort as well as its tender offer for HP’s shares, the company said in a statement.

“While it is disappointing to take this step, we are prioritizing the health, safety and well-being of our employees, customers, partners and other stakeholders, and our broader response to the pandemic, over and above all other considerations,” Xerox said. — Reuters



Chinese buyers snap up US oil purchases at widest discounts ever

SINGAPORE: China has increased US crude purchases with some buyers snapping up cargoes at the widest discounts ever as sellers seek to offload excess supplies in Asia, six trade sources said on Wednesday.

China started processing in March applications from its companies to waive import tariffs on US energy goods as part of the Sino-US Phase 1 trade deal and they have since bought liquefied natural gas (LNG) and liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) from the United States.

The world’s largest crude importer is boosting US energy imports at a time when the world is swamped with excess supply after the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and Russia failed to extend production cuts and as measures to curb the spread of the coronavirus



Pump jacks operate in front of a drilling rig in an oil field in Midland, Texas US. — Reuters

undermined demand.

Cheap US energy supplies will help China lower its import costs, but the deep discounts will add further pressure on US producers to shut in production after US crude futures CLc1 slumped to

their lowest since 2002.

US Mars Sour crude has been sold to Chinese buyers at discounts between \$7 and \$9 a barrel to September ICE Brent futures for July arrival while the discounts for West Texas Intermediate crude (WTI) in Midland were between \$6 and \$7 a barrel, the sources said.

BP and Equinor may have sold some of these cargoes, they said, while the buyers were not immediately known. BP declined to comment while Equinor could not be immediately reached for comment outside office hours.

“Only the Chinese are buying and the rest of the world are selling,” a Singapore-based trader said, leading to some “very aggressive offers” for US crude into that market even though the oil’s benchmark is already at the lowest in 18 years.

In early March, independent refinery Panjin Haoye Chemical Co bought Mars crude from PetroChina in one of the first signs of Chinese refiners resuming US crude purchases. Mars and WTI were then offered at spot premiums to benchmarks. — Reuters



Ensuring uninterrupted flow of supplies key to fighting pandemic

UNIMPEDED FLOW: The GPCA is calling for the reduction of trade barriers including high tariffs currently in place that pose as a significant hurdle to the supply of raw materials used for the manufacture of medical and hygiene equipment

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, APRIL 1

The Gulf Petrochemicals and Chemicals Association (GPCA), the voice of the chemical industry in the Arabian Gulf, has urged global governments and international legislators to work closely together to ensure the uninterrupted supply of raw materials used for the manufacture of medical and hygiene equipment that are absolutely crucial to fighting the COVID-19 pandemic.

Despite facing significant supply chain disruptions, the GCC chemical industry has stepped up efforts to safeguard the supply of raw materials for the manufacture of products used to enable the hygiene, testing and treatment of patients affected by the virus alongside personal protective equipment for medical staff, as well as ensuring the continued manufacturing of essential food packaging material. However, trade tariffs imposed prior to the start of the crisis and in the wake of growing global protectionism since mid-2018, combined with border closures in some countries are proving it difficult for chemical raw materials to reach production plants across the world where finished products are made.

GPCA and its members are calling for the reduction of tariffs and the removal of trade barriers and all bureaucratic hurdles currently in place that pose as a significant challenge to the steady supply of chemical and petrochemical products used for the manufacture of specialized equipment and



everyday products amid heightened global demand.

The call comes days after world leaders pledged in a statement issued during a G20 Extraordinary Virtual Leaders' Summit "to ensure the flow of vital medical supplies, critical agricultural products" and "resolve

disruptions to the global supply chains". The statement went on to reiterate the G20's commitment to a free, fair and stable trade and investment environment, and to keep markets open.

All GCC countries have consented to the World Trade Organization (WTO)'s

Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) that aims to simplify, modernize and harmonize import and export procedures and processes. As the rapid spread of the COVID-19 pandemic amplifies the need for international cooperation and the removal of trade barriers, GPCA and its members are urging regulators to speed up the full implementation of the TFA during this crucial time.

Dr Abdulwahab al Sadoun, Secretary General, GPCA, commented, "In the current crisis, the role of the chemical industry in ensuring the steady and reliable supply of vital raw materials and products has never been more pronounced. As medical facilities in the region are starting to feel the strain from the pandemic, businesses are continuing to manufacture, in difficult circumstances, the various tools, safety equipment and personal protective equipment such as sterile gloves, masks, hand sanitizers and protective clothing urgently needed to protect the health and safety of people and medical personnel."

"At the same time, we depend on FMCG companies to continue to ensure the supply of items such as cleaning products as well as packaged food and beverages. The GCC chemicals industry is safeguarding the supply of raw materials to these sectors and reducing or even removing related bureaucratic hurdles will help secure their timely supply. Eliminating tariffs on these essential products will also reduce the costs on medical facilities and GCC consumers who are already under financial strain."

Worker crunch hits world's top medical glove maker as demand spikes



A worker inspects a glove at the factory of Top Glove in Kelang, outside Kuala Lumpur. – Reuters

KUALA LUMPUR: The world's biggest maker of medical gloves is grappling with a serious shortage of workers as it tries to meet a huge surge in demand as countries such as the United States run out of personal protective gear due to the coronavirus outbreak.

Malaysia's Top Glove Corp Bhd, which makes one out of every five gloves in the world, needs to urgently recruit up to 700 more workers as orders in the past few weeks have doubled, the company told Reuters on Wednesday.

It has already said it would not be able to meet all of the increased demand, and its struggle to recruit workers could make the task of quickly adding production lines even more difficult.

The hiring drive has been hampered by Malaysia's month-long curbs on travel as well difficulties in flying in workers from countries such as Nepal, the company's main source of labor.

A relatively industrialized nation of 32 million, Malaysia heavily relies on labor from South Asian countries.

"We were already experiencing a shortage of workers in the beginning of the year, which has now become more serious following the implementation of Malaysia's movement control order," executive chairman Lim Wee Chai said.

"At the moment, due to the surge in demand, we require unskilled workers, especially to speed up the packing function and quality assurance function, so that the ready output can be shipped out quickly to our customers." – Reuters



BY KARL JACKSON

POINT of VIEW

New accounting standards – only IFRS 17 remains

The past four years posed significant challenges for accounting and finance professionals as they had to come to terms with the requirements of a trio of major new accounting standards (IFRS 9, 15 and 16). With the stated objective to promote international consistency and thus comparability, the universal applicability of International Financial Reporting Standards means they must be complied with by all companies, in all sectors and regardless of their size.

Looking back at the eventual impacts on financial statements of companies operating in Oman, we see that they were relatively minor. The real challenge came from simply understanding what the three standards were requiring, as the language used is generic and legalistic in nature. To understand the requirements, companies had to seek assistance from external consultants and refer to industry publications that attempted to demystify the standards.

Taking each in turn, we see that IFRS 9 has placed a burden on many companies that hold unquoted equity investments, as these need to be recorded at fair values. Whilst there are numerous textbook methods to determine such fair values, in practise and in light of the current Oman economy, the reliability of such fair values is questionable. IFRS 9 also necessitated companies to build models to predict expected (no longer just incurred) losses from bad debts. Again, in the current economic environment where debtor payments periods have ballooned, developing such forward-looking models from historic data from the good times of



the past is not an easy task. The Banks now have the added task of factoring the implications of the coronavirus into their models.

With IFRS 15, companies were required to apply new rules to the timing of recognition of revenue. As IFRS 15 was essentially an amalgamation of various existing standards, the impact on most Oman companies was relatively light. Some industry segments, such as telecoms, had to make adjustments where they deliver more than one product to customers but within a single combined price.

Finally, IFRS 16 mandated companies to capitalise many rental costs on their balance sheets as right-to-use assets and offsetting lease liabilities. Such rental amounts were previously disclosed in notes towards the rear of the financial statements. Most Oman companies were affected as they lease land from the government and rent properties and motor vehicles. Whilst accounting for leases

is nothing new, although it did require the accountants to revisit their old textbooks, the biggest challenge came in deciding which rental agreements qualify. For example, one-year leases are exempt unless they have extension options that are likely to be invoked then they do qualify. This applied particularly to property leases, which in Oman are typically for rolling one-year periods.

The only remaining new accounting standard is IFRS 17, relating to Insurance Contracts. Luckily for the accounting community at large, this can be ignored as it applies only to companies selling insurance products. This time around it will only be the accountants working within the insurance industry that need to take note and be prepared. The implementation of IFRS 17 is being overseen by the CMA who regulates all Insurers. They introduced a three-phase approach. After completing a high-level gap analysis in 2019, Insurers are now gearing up for the

final two phases, which required a much more thorough gap analysis and design of an implementation plan, followed by the hard work of implementation itself. However, on 16 March this year (lost amongst the news about the coronavirus) the International Accounting Standards Board decided that matters such as Brexit had taken priority and resources and that the Insurers were not ready, so they have once again delayed the implementation by one more year until 1 January 2023. In Oman, the Insurers are now waiting for a revised implementation timetable from the CMA.

Like the prior trio of new standards, IFRS 17 attempts to be all-inclusive and thus uses complex and legalist language that needs to be interpreted and applied to the operations of the Insurer.

However, on March 16, 2020 (lost amongst the news about the coronavirus) the International Accounting Standards Board decided

that matters such as Brexit had taken priority and resources and that the Insurers were not ready, so they have once again delayed the implementation by one more year until January 1, 2023.

For example, for each insurance product offered, the Insurers need to choose between the building block, premium allocation or variable fee approach, and following which the contractual service margin, risk adjustment, discount rate and expected future cashflows need to be ascertained or computed. For products with lifespans exceeding 12 months this will require significant input from actuaries. For other products, the Standard permits simplified approaches, which will be good news for the Oman Insurers as the majority of their products (i.e. motor and medical) fall into this category.

Like all recent new accounting standards, there will be additional burdens of increased disclosures with disaggregation of cohorts within products. Both the complex computations and additional disclosures will require Insurers to relook at their systems to ensure they can provide the level and quality of data demanded for the various tasks.

The accounting and finance professionals in the insurance industry have started to undertake training and improving their knowledge, so that they can meaningfully contribute to the implementation efforts and can manage the external consultants to deliver a solution that is fit-for-purpose for their specific company.

Karl Jackson
Partner – Audit & Assurance
Crowe Oman

Looking back at the eventual impacts on financial statements of companies operating in Oman, we see that they were relatively minor. The real challenge came from simply understanding what the three standards were requiring, as the language used is generic and legalistic in nature.

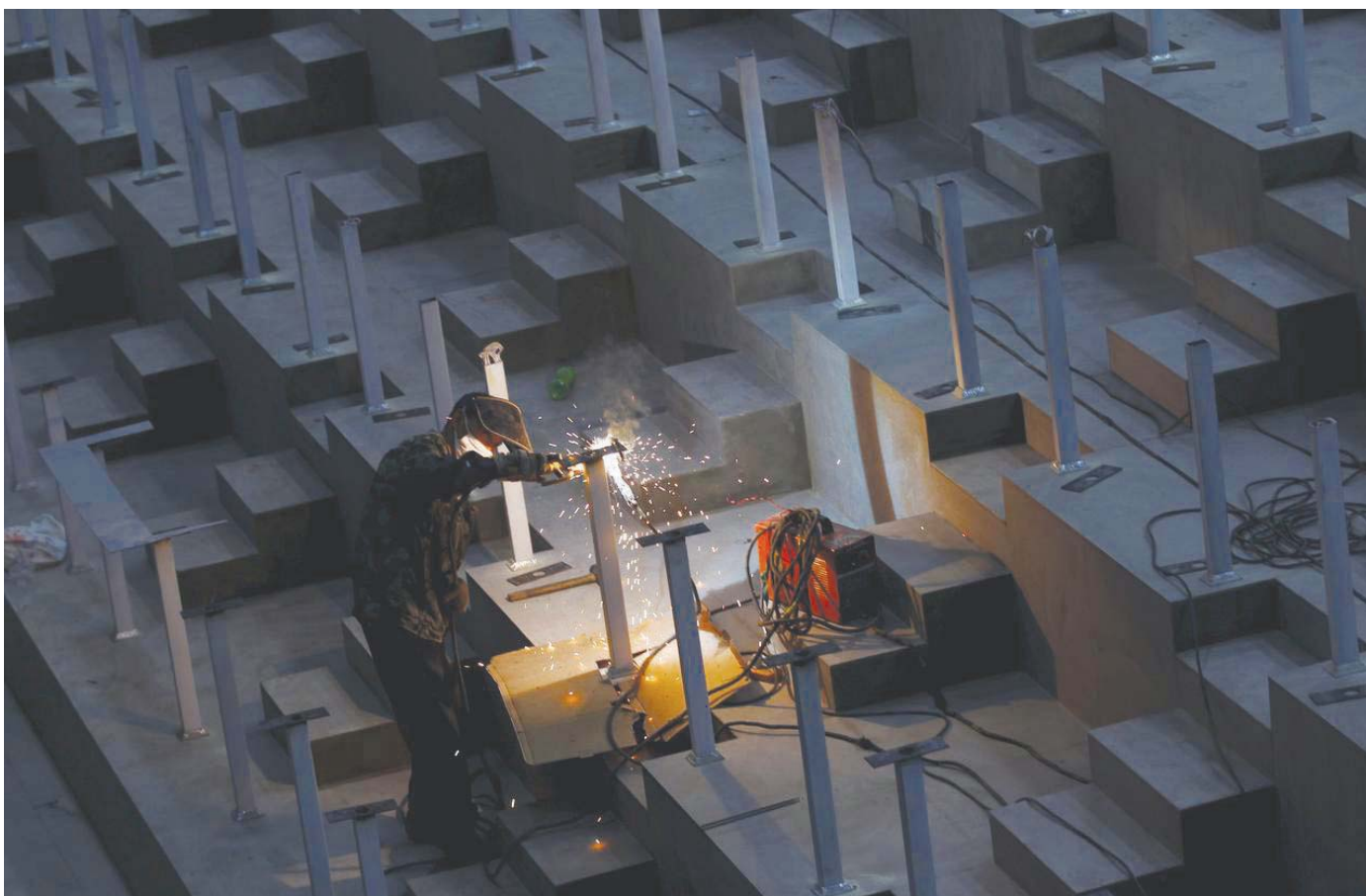
Asia's factory activity plunges as coronavirus shock deepens

TOKYO: Factory activity contracted sharply across most of Asia in March as the coronavirus pandemic paralyzed economic activity across the globe, with sharp falls in export power-houses Japan and South Korea overshadowing a modest improvement in China. Manufacturing gauges also tumbled in Indonesia, Vietnam and the Philippines, Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) surveys showed on Wednesday, underscoring the widening damage brought by the pandemic that has infected more than 700,000 people, upended supply chains and led to city lockdowns worldwide. China's factory activity improved slightly more than expected in March after plunging a month earlier, a private business survey showed, but growth was marginal, highlighting the intense pressure facing businesses as domestic and export demand slumps.

While factories in China gradually restarted operations after lengthy shutdowns and a fall in virus cases allowed the country to start relaxing travel restrictions, activity in South Korea shrank at its fastest pace in 11 years as many of its trading partners imposed dramatic measures to curb the virus' spread.

"If you look at the Korean numbers, they're fairly bad ... They're likely to get worse still because Korea will be dependent on parts from Europe and the United States," said Rob Carnell, Asia-Pacific chief economist at ING in Singapore.

"(Policymakers) have to accept the inevitable that there is a massive global pandemic here, there is an outbreak in



A worker welds at a market under construction in Kunming, Yunnan province, China. — Reuters

almost every country globally and certainly in our region, which is getting to levels that if they don't take very dramatic action, it's going to get much worse," he said.

Japan's factory activity contracted at the fastest pace in about a decade in March,

adding to views that the world's third-largest economy is likely already in recession. A separate "tankan" survey by the Bank of Japan showed on Wednesday that business sentiment soured to a seven-year low in the three months to March, as the outbreak hit

sectors from hotels to carmakers.

"The tankan clearly shows a sharp deterioration in business sentiment and confirms the economy is already in recession," said Yasunari Ueno, chief market economist at Mizuho Securities.

Oil majors slash 2020 spending by 20pc after prices slump

LONDON: The world's biggest oil and gas companies are cutting spending this year following a collapse in oil prices driven by a slump in demand because of the coronavirus crisis and a price war between top exporters Saudi Arabia and Russia.

Cuts already announced by eight major oil companies, including Saudi Aramco and Royal Dutch Shell, come to a combined \$28 billion, or a drop of 20 per cent from their initial spending plans of \$142 billion.

BP cut its 2020 spending plan by 25 per cent and will reduce output from its US shale oil and gas business, it said on Wednesday.

Exxon Mobil Corp said it would cut capital expenditure but has not given specific figures as yet.

Brazilian oil company Petrobras said it was dialling back short-term production, delaying a dividend payment and trimming its 2020 investment plan, among other measures aimed at reducing costs in the face of the coronavirus pandemic.

Oil prices have slumped 65 per cent since January to around \$25 a barrel.

Investors say if the current crisis is prolonged, the spending cuts announced by major oil companies may not be enough to let them maintain dividends without adding to their already elevated levels of debt.

The combined debt of Chevron, Total, BP, Exxon Mobil and Royal Dutch Shell stood at \$231 billion at the end of in 2019, just shy of the \$235 billion hit in 2016 when oil prices also tumbled below \$30 a barrel.

— Reuters

KKR shelve \$2 bn sale of Goodpack



SINGAPORE: KKR & Co has shelved a plan to sell Singapore-based Goodpack, which provides shipping containers and logistics services, after the coronavirus outbreak hit valuations, sources with knowledge of the matter said on Wednesday.

The private equity group had received bids from a few consortiums after tapping more than a dozen potential buyers late last year, the sources said, adding that a deal could have valued Goodpack at about \$2 billion.

"Till about six weeks ago, bidders were interested and a deal looked likely but there's a lot of uncertainty in the current environment," said one of the sources.

The sources declined to be identified as the shelving of the deal has not been made public. KKR declined to comment.

A successful deal would have ranked as one of the largest private-equity backed sales in Asia excluding Japan and Australia for the past few years, according to data from Refinitiv.

KKR acquired Goodpack for about \$1.4 billion (\$985 million) in 2014 and delisted it from Singapore Exchange. Goodpack then changed senior management, expanded into new markets such as food and chemicals and set up offices in Europe and the United States.

Goodpack's network is embedded in the supply chain of many multinational companies and its business is expected to weather any short-term downturn, the source said.

It also caters to global customers in the rubber and automotive sectors with operations across 80 countries and about 5,000 delivery and collection points. — Reuters

UK top banks scrap dividends on coronavirus fears

LONDON: Britain's top banks have axed dividend payments after pressure from the regulator, saving their capital as a buffer against expected losses from the economic fallout from the coronavirus.

Barclays, HSBC, Lloyds Banking Group, Royal Bank of Scotland, Standard Chartered and the British arm of Spain's Santander all halted payouts in a co-ordinated industry response to a request from the Prudential Regulatory Authority (PRA).

The lenders had been due to pay out over 8 billion pounds (\$9.93 billion) between them in 2019 dividends, with HSBC the biggest payer at \$4.2



People queue at Barclays Bank in St Albans, as the spread of the COVID-19 continues, in St Albans, Britain. — Reuters

billion.

The PRA also asked banks and insurers not to pay senior staff bonuses this year, although none of the banks opted to provide details on how they would comply with

this second request.

The British lenders also held off announcing changes to their executive pay policies.

Shares in domestic-focused lenders Lloyds and Barclays shed more than 5

per cent each in early trading, while HSBC and Standard Chartered saw their stocks fall 7.7 per cent and 6 per cent respectively by 0708 GMT.

Hong Kong shares of HSBC fell as much as 9.9 per cent to their lowest since March 2009, while StanChart dropped 7.4 per cent in the morning trade on Wednesday.

The broader Hong Kong market index was down 0.4 per cent.

The PRA said banks entered the pandemic, which has put Britain into lockdown, with strong capital positions, enough to withstand a severe UK and global recession.

Banks pay out dividends

as a means of rewarding shareholders and disposing of excess profits, but they have the option to retain the earnings instead to preserve their capital levels.

While suspending investor distributions was described as prudent by the lenders, analysts at Jefferies said the move had "structurally bearish ramifications" for the sector, including raising the cost of equity.

"...It is not beyond the wit of man that some banks might need rights issues and all of this uncertainty in our view ultimately weakens prospective investment propositions."

Global M&A dwindles as coronavirus batters world's economies

LONDON/NEW YORK: Global mergers and acquisitions activity plunged 28 per cent in the first quarter to its lowest level since 2016 as the devastating economic effects of the coronavirus pandemic took hold in March, compounding a slow start to the year for dealmakers. Deal activity in the United States dropped by half to \$252 billion in the first three months from a year ago, driving global volumes down to \$698 billion from \$964 billion in the first quarter of 2019, according to Refinitiv data. Asia volumes dropped 17 per cent year-on-year to \$142.9 billion. Europe saw its deal volume more than double to \$232 billion thanks to a handful of mega-deals clinched just weeks before the virus started battering the continent's economies.

With large swathes of the globe shut down, the M&A pipeline remains patchy and likely to be dominated by rescue deals, restructurings and nationalizations as governments and central banks try to shore the economy up. "This crisis is unique,



Test tube with fake blood labelled with the COVID-19 is placed on dollar banknotes in this illustration. — Reuters

It is something that our generation has never witnessed before," said Luigi de Vecchi, chairman of EMEA

banking capital markets advisory at Citigroup. "When stock markets tumble 30 per cent you need to hope

to renegotiate a deal if you have the contractual ability to do so. However, if you haven't reached an agreement you are likely to delay the signing until you have better visibility," he said. Russia used its National Wealth Fund (NWF) to finance this quarter's biggest deal - the \$39 billion purchase of the country's largest lender Sberbank. Other big deals included insurance broker Aon's \$30 billion all-stock takeover of rival Willis Towers Watson and the \$18 billion private equity-led buyout of ThyssenKrupp's elevators business.

"We have seen the number of deals announced globally drop 43 per cent year-over-year in the last two weeks," said Bank of America's global M&A head Patrick Ramsey, adding the downward trend was expected to continue into the second quarter.

"Once we get to the back-end of this, we will see a meaningful snap-back in activity. The degree of that snap-back will depend on the economic outlook and equity market recovery," Ramsey said. — Reuters

Carrefour teams up with Uber Eats for lockdown deliveries

PARIS: French supermarket retailer Carrefour and Uber Eats announced a new delivery service on Wednesday, aimed at helping Parisians buy essential goods and food during the nationwide lockdown triggered by the coronavirus crisis.

The service, which will start on April 6, will allow users to choose a Carrefour convenience store on the Uber Eats app or website, or dial by phone from 11am to 11pm to order the products of their choice, including everyday grocery shopping as well as hygiene and cleaning products.

Customers will also be able to get deliveries at home within 30 minutes on average by a delivery person using the Uber Eats application and complying with health and safety guidelines laid out by the French government.

The service will start with around fifteen Carrefour stores in Paris and the Paris region and will then be rolled out nationwide. Uber Eats will remove the delivery fees on all Carrefour orders during the month of April.

The Carrefour/Uber Eats service is the latest alliance formed by food companies and takeaway firms to help people get essential foods during the lockdowns imposed in many cities around the world to tackle the coronavirus crisis.

— Reuters

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NEW Flats For Rent at Darsait near to Ministry of Sports Affairs, Mumtaz area The flats include: 1 Living Room, 2 Bedroom, Kitchen, 3 Toilets, Every room with split A/C, High quality finishing. Rent per flat is RO 320/- Interested persons, please contact. ☎00968-92225523.

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FLATS in Al Wadi Al Kabir near to the Al Kuwaiti Mosque. ☎99425958.

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CLASSIFIED SECTION

RUWI

95919344/ 24649594/ 9984 1230/ 99639264/ Behind Royal Oman Police, Adjacent to Dhofar Building, Ruwi.

ONE bedroom flat at Darsait near Medical RO 170/-. Two BHK Al Khuwair RO 300/-. Athaiba behind Zubair RO 300/-. (24790449, Fax: 24790559.

.....

1BHK & 2 BHK flats for rent at Ruwi and Al Khoudh. ☎93994402, 93994403, 24834644.

.....

Acc Available

FURNISHED flats for rent in Muscat Grand Mall ☎99445771, 93204595 93203481.

.....

For Sale/Rent

COLD store in Al Seeb for lease or sale. Contact ☎94272979, 96252664.

.....

(NEW 3 STOREY VILLAS for sale/ rents WADI KABIR/ AL KHUWAIR), (Shops/offices for rent/ Al Khuwair) (Flats for rent/Wadi Kabir). ☎96596348.

.....

NEW apartment for rent, one room, 2 toilets, kitchen and dinning. Location, Al Khoudh Market, Red Taj building, 7th floor. Per month rent RO 190/-. ☎92838118.

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TWO new apartment for rent in Al Qurum near Mina al Fahal. ☎94664635, 95850345.

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Situation Vacant

JOB vacancies for staff nurse Al Yamama Medical Center and Al Amal Al-Bassam Polyclinic. ☎98504226/94094262.

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MODERN Explorer Company LLC request job of **Accountant**. Indian nationality. He holds an Omani driver's licence. Send CV by e-mail: info@ees-oman.com ☎91240404

.....

HIGH Pressure Trading LLC, Hydroflow, looking for **Accounts Clerk** and **PRO** with one or two years experience in Suhar. Kindly send your CV with expected salary at: alzulfi@eim.ae

.....

MODERN Explorer Company LLC request jobs of **Conditioning Technicians**. ☎91240404. E mail: info@ees-oman.com

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URGENTLY required **Electrician with electrical licence (DCRP)**. Omani or expatriate (3 years experience). Contact ☎99337587, 99043127, 99348493.

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LOOKING for **Saleswoman** to work in printing press. Contact: ☎92673716.

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WE are looking for **Sales Executive**, candidates have minimum bachelor degree qualification and relevant experience can send CVs to Email: accounts@alsaroojss.com

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Announcement

ANNOUNCEMENT OF APPOINTMENT OF DISTRIBUTORES

THE Arab Convertible Industries Company LLC, which specialises in the manufacture of household and industrial detergents of all kinds and based in the manufacture of the Sultanate of Oman (Barka), announces its desire to conclude product distribution contacts in each of the governorates of the Sultanate (Muscat, Al Batinah North and South, Al Sharqiyah North and South, Al Wusta, Al Dakhiliyah, Salalah) and outside the Sultanate as well. For those wishing to enter the competition, please call the following numbers during working hours: (00968 - 99380182 or 00968 - 99322446). And send a brief summary of the company's business activities to the email: altabarak14@gmail.com

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URGENTLY required **Beautician**. Visa will be provided. Contact ☎94939252.

.....

REQUIRED **Counter Sales Staff** for building and carpentry material shop with two to three years experience at Wadi Kabir, contact ☎97914594.

.....

SIT WANTED

INDIAN male, MEP civil engineer graduate from Muscat and Master in sustainable architecore with 2 years experience, seek immediate placement, Oman D/L and employment visa available up to 2022 . Contact ☎92529664.

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INDIAN male, MEP engineer highly experienced in Oman, seeks immediate suitable placement. Contact ☎92056639.

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9 YEARS Oman experienced light duty driver looking for a job. MD Shafi ☎78058700

.....

INDIAN, MBA in Finance, completed schooling in Muscat, looking for accounts related jobs. Contact ☎97054007

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Services

AL SUMRI AC maintenance. We are ready to repair and install all types of Air-Conditioner within Muscat Governorate. ☎94301888.

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Announcement

ANNOUNCEMENT OF CAPITAL REDUCTION

In accordance with the provisions of Article 150 of the Commercial Companies Law. The company (**Gabal Bat International LLC**), which is registered with the Commercial Registration No **1356212**, hereby announces that it is going to reduce its capital from RO **100,000.000** to RO **10,000.000**. Whoever has any objection to the foregoing shall present the reasons for such objection to the Secretariat of Commercial Registry at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry within 30 days from the date hereof.

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Situation Wanted

LADY Indian English teacher with over 25 year experience, currently seeks full time position in colleges or training institutions. Responsibilities in English language teaching or soft skills trainer with preference for aviation sector. Possess valid Omani driving license. Contact GSM ☎92541510

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INDIAN female with Oman experience — Admin/Accounts, seeks job ☎91719246.

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CIVIL engineer/QS engineer, 11 years in UAE, freelance & Oman driving licence available, looking for full-time or part-time job☎97299165.

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SALES/Marketing/ retail executive BMS in Marketing. 6 years experience. Contact ☎93920174. Rehankadri91@hotmail.com

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SUDANESE, 3 years experience in KSA, firefighting and fire alarm field, Nebosh (IGC) holder, driving licence: ☎79318246

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CIVIL diploma, 2+ years experience, Oman-DL, NOC available, seeking job. ☎99488438, e-mail: abdulrahman9035239249@gmail.com

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SINGLE, 27-year-old Tunisian national, Oman experience+driving license, looking for a job in admin, customer service, marketing, stock receiving/ management and any other related field. ☎96286678

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INDIAN, 33, male, already have 2.5 years of experience in Oman. In the field of Oil and Gas, maintenance, service of instrument air compressor and rotary equipment and have 6 years of automobile sales in India. Looking for suitable position. Currently on visit visa for 30 days. Contact ☎78207968, 92762001. E-mail: somuk1486@gmail.com

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INDIAN male 30 with NEBOSH Igc 7 years GCC experience on visit looking for suitable position. Call ☎+96878262237.

.....

MECHANICAL engineer. 21, Indian male currently in Oman looking to work at any engineering field. Contact ☎96511338. Email: rkdhanush11@gmail.com

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INDIAN male 25, MBA with 2.6 years of experience, having valid Omani driving licence, available for immediate joining for suitable post. Contact ☎0096895960211. E-mail: dedwin130@gmail.com

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ACCOUNTANT male Seeking good position. Experience more than 10 years with 4 years experience of Oman. Now on visit visa. ☎96090127

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SEEKING suitable placement. Qualified travel, aviation, hospitality personnel experienced in customer care and sales seeking placement. Immediate availability. Contact: ☎90485199, 79588741

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FINANCE Manager/ CFO. Indian Chartered Accountant and Cost Accountant with 25 years of experience in Trade Finance, MIS, Budget, Planning, Strategy, Projects, Procurement, Admin, seeks suitable placement. Contact: ☎99884291/99741875 Email: vipul70@gmail.com

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INDIAN male, Civil Engineer, 35 years in Oman with consultants and ministries, seek suitable position. Employment visa upto Sept 2021. Can work on present visa. Contact ☎99315714.

.....

MECHANICAL engineer specialized in quality inspection with cswip 3.1 & ASNT LEVEL II certifications looking for an opening in oil & gas industry. Currently in Muscat,kindly contact in ☎96206400 or (arunedathil@gmail.com)

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A YOUNG, Indian national, experienced in men's apparel sales, is looking for a suitable placement Contact: ☎78052285

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INDIAN male MBA graduate with over 12 year experience in sales, business development, marketing, accounts management and presales. Presently on visit visa in Muscat seeks suitable openings. Willing to join immediately. GSM ☎97733081 Email: sadiqbashawjs@gmail.com

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Situation Wanted

PAKISTANI male driver, 8 years experience in Oman, knows Arabic, seeks job. ☎96551602.

.....

MECHANICAL Engineer, 38-year-old Tunisian with 12-year Experience in administration, marketing, sales and customer service, looking for a job in these or other fields. ☎95643359.

.....

INDIAN male civil engineer graduate from Muscat and Master in sustainable architecture from Europe with 2 years experience seeks suitable position. Oman D/L and NOC available. ☎99315714.

.....

SRI LANKAN Male (24), HNDE-QS/Civil Engineer With AutoCad-MEP qualified, +2 years experienced, looking for a suitable placement. GSM:☎92187572, Email: sifathhasan1995@gmail.com

.....

DRIVER have 8 years experience need a job. Contact ☎94954431/91788569.

.....

INDIAN male, 23, B Com, with 2 years experience in Accounts and Finance on a family visit, available for immediate joining. Suitable post of accountant, looking for a job. E-mail: aaronfernandes033@gmail.com. Contact ☎79869563.

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I NEED a driver job, urgent, with NOC paper. My name: Masum Billah. ☎96894991705.

.....

INDIAN male 26, BBM & MBA with UAE 2 years experience presently on visit visa in Oman seeks suitable opening willing to join immediately contact ☎78119897 Email: mohammedraiyan25@gmail.com

.....

PART-TIME accounting up to finalisation with free software. Contact ☎91720465.

.....

INDIAN, male, Age 26, B.Tech Mechanical Engineer, with 1+year Experience of India as site Engineer, HVAC, Autocad, fire fighting Equipment Maintenance and Technical works, seeking suitable job. Contact ☎91921038, E-mail: muqtarkhan80@gmail.com

.....

INDIAN male, BE+ MBA, 15 years experience in electrical products in projects and retail segment at senior position with valid D/L and NOC, seeks placement. Contact ☎95954779

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ARCHITECT, 9 years experience in maintenance projects, finishing, interior design and project management. ☎94481780.

.....

SEEKING a job. Bangladeshi, 5 years experience in driving. ☎95291202

.....

A MECHANICAL engineer with 1 year experience as operations manager looking for a job. Available in Muscat till 5th October on visit visa. ☎96041682. Email: abdulhamid13P@gmail.com

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INDIAN male, MBA in marketing, 21 years experience in India as trainer customer service, sales and retail service available on visit visa. Contact ☎95355193

.....

INDIAN, female (22), ACCA finalist looking for a suitable position. Contact: ☎+96896448041 Email id: ashlindavis28@gmail.com

.....

A FEMALE driver from home to work place— from Amerat to work place in Qurayat — Mizara' 5 days a week. ☎94005648.

.....

ACCA-UK passed Pakistani in Muscat on visit visa, needs suitable jobs. Qualified as Financial Accountant with about 4 years' experience. Please ☎91449085, E: mailmrmasoodshah911@gmail.com

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LOOKING for light driving job, 8 years experience in Oman. MD.Shafi ☎95272937.

.....

MECHANICAL Engineer, 21, Indian Male, Currently in Oman Looking to work on any Engineering field. Contact ☎91217663, Email: adolmisba@gmail.com

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THE SANDY BEACH CRABS OF MASIRAH ISLAND

Masirah Island is renowned for its fishing, and a great many tourists have enjoyed catching trevally, snapper and tuna, utilising the knowledge and experience of the local fishermen.

However, for others, it's enough to enjoy the sea, sun and sand as a recipe for rejuvenation, with the solitude of a number of wild beaches around the island tempting for sunbathers, if not always for swimming, as signs frequently warn of currents, undertows and danger in many tempting bays and beaches.

Biyad Beach is one such, where the sands are almost pristine, and the seas everything from crashing surf, at the northern end, to gently washing, light rollers further south. However, for nature lovers, the mega-monster crustaceans of Biyad Beach are really something.

These yellow/orange Sand Crabs, probably even more accurately named Ghost Crabs were probably originally named for their colour, which is similar to that of the sand, or the fact that they can be ghost-like, and difficult to see, naturally camouflaged on the sand. Here is a weird and amazing fact: Despite there being no sandy beaches in the Antarctic, scientists Sven Thatje and Veronica Fuentes discovered the larvae of the crabs in Antarctica waters in 2003.

They are as quick as lightning, out of their holes in the flat sand of the

beach, or the sandy tide walls, just above the tide line, as they dash in their hundreds towards the sea where they lurk, watching for what will happen next. Interestingly, the 'burrows' above the tideline can be over a metre long. But their natural habitat is what is known as the 'swash zone,' where waves break, wash over the sand, and then fall back into the sea. It is commonly identified as the area between the surf zone and the back beach.

After a while they got used to us, and we did so to them, as we shared the beach in a harmonious fashion. Even though we were in their feeding zone, where the sedimentary food supply they live on is at its most plentiful. And they 'eat' by filtering sediment through their antennae. Best of all, I just love those sticky-up eyes on stalks, between those, their colour; their activity, and child-like inquisitiveness. They are a fun creature, and they remind me, with their manner and movement of the John Cleese, Fawlty Tower character, the long suffering Basil Fawlty.

But making a move out of the Sergeant Bob chairs drew another madcap scuttle for the perceived safety of the seas. Unlike most crabs, they don't bite, scratch, or pinch and are completely harmless, but try catching them! I didn't even try, as I had seen how fast they were. They are fun to watch, but we thought we shouldn't upset them needlessly so with a last look, we said goodbye to our very attentive, yet very fragile friends, to their beach, their food, and their fun.

Text : Ray Petersen
Photos : Lena Petersen



DATES IN SUMMER 2022 BEING SOUGHT FOR 2021 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS



NEW YORK: Athletics’ world championships have been postponed until the summer of 2022 and the global governing body is seeking new dates for the event in Eugene, Oregon that was originally scheduled for 2021.

“100 per cent Oregon will be held summer 2022,” a World Athletics spokesman said on Monday.

World Athletics had earlier said in a statement: “We are now working with the organisers of the world athletics championships in Oregon on new dates in 2022 for our world athletics championships.”

The championships had been scheduled for August 6-15, 2021.

World Athletics said it also was in discussions with the Commonwealth

Games Federation and the European Championships.

The European Championships are currently scheduled for August 26-30 in Paris.

The next Commonwealth Games are set for July 27-August 7 2022 in Birmingham, England.

World Athletics announced its plans for rescheduling the world

championships after the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and Japanese officials said the new dates for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics will be July 23-August 8, 2021.

The Games had been postponed for a year because of the coronavirus pandemic that has killed thousands of people around the world.

“This gives our athletes the time

they need to get back into training and competition,” World Athletics said of the new Olympics dates. “Everyone needs to be flexible and compromise.”

The governing body added, “We would like to thank our Oregon 21 Organising Committee, their stakeholders and our partners for their collaboration and willingness to

explore all options.”

Oregon organisers were not immediately available for comment.

They had said last week: “(We) can reassure World Athletics that we will work with them to ensure that Oregon can still host the World Athletics Championships on alternative dates should that prove necessary.” — **Reuters**

Ex-Asian champions Western Sydney ‘lay off’ squad, staff



SYDNEY: Former Asian football champions Western Sydney Wanderers have joined other A-League clubs by temporarily laying off their squad and staff, reports said on Wednesday, as the coronavirus shutdown takes a heavy toll on sport.

The Wanderers, who won the AFC Champions League in 2014, follow the

lead of fellow top-flight clubs Perth Glory and Central Coast Mariners, with Brisbane Roar expected to follow suit, Australian media said.

Fairfax and News Corp newspapers both said the Wanderers had put their entire squad and staff on unpaid leave until April 22, when the A-League is to examine when or if the season can

continue.

The 11-team A-League was one of the last football competitions still standing worldwide until it was finally suspended last week as Australia tightened its measures against the coronavirus.

On Friday, Football Federation Australia sent home 70 per cent of its

staff as it wrestles with the sudden loss of income.

And on Saturday, Australia’s footballers’ union threatened legal action against Perth Glory after their players’ pay was stopped.

The Wanderers and the A-League were not immediately available to comment. — **AFP**

Patrick McEnroe feeling fine after mild case of coronavirus



Team World captain John McEnroe and vice-captain Patrick McEnroe during the official welcome of the Laver Cup teams in Geneva, Switzerland on September 18, 2019. — **Reuters**

NEW YORK: Retired tennis player Patrick McEnroe has recovered from a mild case of coronavirus, he announced on social media on Tuesday.

McEnroe, younger brother of seven-time Grand Slam champion John, said he had been tested after experiencing “some minor symptoms” about 10 or 11 days ago.

“My tests just came back positive,” the 53-year-old said on Twitter.

“That’s the bad news. The

good news is I feel fine. My symptoms have passed. I feel 100 per cent.

“I’m an example of someone that has been able to fight through it and I’m doing absolutely fine.”

McEnroe, 53, lives in the metropolitan New York City area, one of the hardest hit cities for the virus in the United States.

He reached a career high ranking of 28 before retiring in 1998, and was later a US Davis Cup captain. He is currently a tennis analyst for ESPN. — **Reuters**

sport



GRAHAM STEPS DOWN AS KHAMIS NAMED NEW CEO OF OMAN SAIL

MUSCAT: After eleven years of exceptional service and leadership, David Graham will be stepping down from his role as CEO of Oman Sail on April 1, 2020.

Dr Khamis Al Jabri has been appointed as the new CEO of the company. Dr Khamis al Jabri brings with him a wealth of experience to the role of Oman Sail CEO. He has assumed various leadership and management roles with the latest being Director-General of Operations and Plans within the Royal Navy of Oman.

Dr Khamis al Jabri is a graduate of the Britannia Royal Naval College, Dartmouth UK. Commodore

Khamis has a MA in Defence Studies from King's College, University of London, a PhD in Strategic Studies, from the University of Exeter, UK, and a MA in Strategic Security Studies from the National Defense University - College of International Security Affairs, USA.

Oman Sail was established in 2008 with the blessing of the late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos to rekindle Oman's maritime heritage, promote the nation around the world through sailing, and provide long-term learning opportunities for the youth of Oman.

Oman Sail has achieved worldwide respect, particularly within the



New Oman Sail CEO Dr Khamis al Jabri.

international sailing community. Oman Sail's many achievements during Graham's tenure include hosting a stage of the 2016 edition of the America's Cup World Series, five Extreme Sailing Series championships, many world championships, and, perhaps most importantly, the establishment of four sailing schools which have taught more than 20,000 Omani children to sail. Through the schools, sailing has become recognised as part of the curriculum in Omani schools, with children as young as eight being provided the opportunity to develop their skills on the water.

Graham said: "Handing the helm over to an energetic, fellow seaman who is Omani and has an illustrious career behind him, is the perfect end to my chapter as CEO of Oman Sail.



Former CEO David Graham receives an award from World Sailing President Kim Anderson.

There is a highly Omanised, very capable, top team within the company which has driven the organisation to be a well-respected global brand within the sailing and sports and adventure tourism industries.

I wish to thank Her Excellency Maitha al Mahrouqi and the Oman Sail Board of Directors for their unwavering support over the last 11 years and wish Dr Khamis al Jabri every success in leading Oman Sail to new heights."

Oman Sail has consistently been an innovator and leader in sailing in the region over the last decade. The region's first female sailing programme was established in 2011 to empower Omani women and create equal opportunities in the sport of sailing, and SailFree was

launched in conjunction with Oman's Paralympic Committee and BP in late 2019 to create opportunities for and develop para-sailors.

It is innovations such as these which led to Oman Sail being singled out for World Sailing's Development Award last year.

Away from the water, Oman Sail is pioneering in creating extremely successful sports sponsorship opportunities in the country and developing sports tourism by delivering world class events. The events include the Al Mouj Muscat Marathon, which in January this year saw a record 10,000 people from 102 countries take part, and Oman by UTMB, an event that is part of the prestigious Ultra-Trail World Tour and also had a major economic impact for Oman. The use of sport to promote tourism in Oman resulted in Oman Sail receiving a number of accolades, including the World Tourism Award in 2012. Oman Sail was to contribute to Oman's economy and the development of the Omani people. Oman Sail is 92 per cent Omanised, with all four sailing schools 100 per cent managed by Omanis.

Maitha al Mahrouqi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Tourism and Oman Sail chairwoman, said: "I would like to

thank David for his dedicated leadership to build Oman Sail and make it the success we see today. I would also like to welcome Dr Khamis Al Jabri and wish him and Oman Sail further future success.

"Oman Sail has accomplished incredible achievements under David's leadership. Oman's maritime heritage has been revitalised and protected and there are now clear learning pathways for our children, with thousands across the country introduced to a new sport and healthier lifestyle. We have diversified income streams through sponsorship and subsidiary businesses, and we have won many awards and accolades along the way.

"It has been a pleasure to work alongside David and I wish him all the very best for the future."

Dr Khamis al Jabri said: "Firstly, I would like to congratulate my predecessor, David, for his wonderful work and effort over the last decade.

"Oman Sail is an impressive institution and is leading the way in sailing and promoting an active and healthy lifestyle to the nation's youth. I am very much looking forward to taking on this important role as its CEO and working with the team to drive Oman Sail to its next level of successes."