

TOTAL COVID-19 CASES
WORLDWIDE

3.30 MN

TOTAL COVID-19 DEATHS
WORLDWIDE

232,806

TOTAL RECOVERIES
WORLDWIDE

958,131

HIGHEST TOTAL CASES
UNITED STATES

1,076,942

PER 100,000 PEOPLE
QATAR

498 CASES

HIGHEST DEATH TOLL
UNITED STATES

62,949

PER 100,000 PEOPLE
BELGIUM

66 DEATHS

WHO says
pandemic
not over,
but mulls gradual
restart of air travel



GENEVA: The World Health Organization wants to work with governments to gradually resume normal passenger travel, WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said, while stressing that the global coronavirus crisis is not over.

Tedros followed the advice of the WHO's coronavirus advisory committee of international medical experts, which asked the UN agency to develop travel strategies, and to analyse safety measures such as health screening, isolation and quarantines.

"This is a difficult issue because it is a question of confidence between [WHO] member states, it is a question of safe travel," acknowledged Didier Houssin, WHO heads the advisory body.

"But it is also a very important aspect for the activities in many countries which are relying very much on air travel," he added.

The pandemic of COVID-19 is clearly still a global health emergency and is of particular concern as it spreads more widely in countries with weak health systems, the WHO chief said on Friday. — Agencies

8
Ramadhan
Saturday
2/5/2020

Prayer times

	Muscat	Nizwa	Salalah
FAJR:	04:12	04:17	04:41
DHUHR:	12:09	12:13	12:26
ASR:	03:34	03:37	03:37
MAGHRIB:	06:40	06:44	06:49
ISHA:	07:56	07:59	08:00

Ramadhan
Mubarak
2020/1441 AH

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Oman reports 99 new COVID-19 cases

MUSCAT: Oman has announced 99 new COVID-19 cases on Friday, taking the total to 2,447 and 495 recoveries.

Today's patients include 41 Omanis and 48 expatriates. The total number of recoveries increased by 131 to 495 from 364 on Thursday.

On April 30, an Omani woman aged 33 died due to COVID-19, bringing the total number of deaths to 11. MoH calls upon all the people to follow social distancing and isolation procedures in case of infection.

The ministry also advised all citizens and residents to keep washing hands with water and soap, avoiding touching the face, nose, mouth, eyes and cover face while coughing and sneezing.

RAINS LIKELY TODAY

**STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, MAY 1**

The weather analysis has indicated that a trough of low pressure (Al Brakat Trough) will affect the Sultanate between May 2 and May 4, a statement from Oman Met said. It is expected that varied intensity of rainfall, occasionally thundershowers associated with fresh wind and hail over Governorate of Musandam extending gradually to governorates of Al Buraimi, Al Dhahirah, North Al Batinah, South Al Batinah, Muscat, Al Dakhiliyah, North Al Sharqiyah, and South Al Sharqiyah, with a chance of isolated rain over the mountains and coastal areas of the Governorate of Dhofar.

The weather event will be associated with moderate wind over governorates of Al Wusta and Dhofar which will cause rising of dust.



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Please Contact with our Team

Mohd Al Rashdi : Head Office	99841230	m.alrahdi86@yahoo.com
Ali Al Maashari : Head Office	99639264	wadialmeeh@yahoo.com
Bakhit Al Shihri : Salalah Office	92998577	bakhit.omandaily@gmail.com
Abdullah Al Abri : Nizwa Office	99429094	nizwaofc@omandaily.net.om
Musalam Al Saidi : Suhar Office	99429192	sohardaily@outlook.com

MASSRAT SHAIKH

This Ramadhan will be the most memorable one but for different reasons. We will not have many distractions of iftar parties and social events. Instead, this Ramadhan has brought us an opportunity to reflect on the simplicity, and that is its essence. We can make this Ramadhan more special by practising the art of mindfulness in these seven simple steps.

Mindfulness is a practice of connecting with ourselves, in a way that we pay attention to our present moment. It trains our mind to remain grounded and balanced in challenging situations. Although fasting is a spiritual exercise, it shares similar virtues of mindfulness. Practising mindfulness brings increased mental well-being, self-control and, an inner peace.

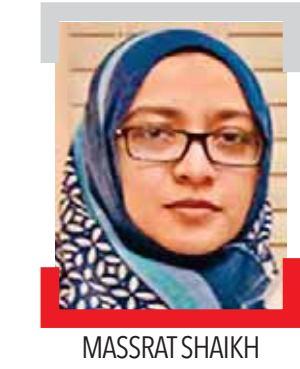
Mindfulness and Self-Regulation: When people fast from sunrise to sundown in Ramadhan, it is primarily teaching us self-regulation. Holy Quran says in chapter 2 verse 183 -“O you who believe fasting has been prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you, so that you may learn self-restraint”. Mindfulness shows that self-regulation helps us control impulses and helps us to cope with strong feelings and emotions. Fasting teaches self-restrain and anger management that is also an outcome of mindfulness. It is a teaching of Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, that says “when one of you is fasting, he should abstain from indecent acts and unnecessary talk, and if someone begins an obscene conversation or tries to pick an argument, he should simply say him: “I am fasting”. This narration shows that Ramadhan teaches us not only self-

Ramadhan, time to reconnect with one's self and others

restrain but also mindfulness in our conversations.

Mindfulness and Self Awareness: Ramadhan brings a reset and realignment in our lives and improved self-awareness. Mindfulness practice shows that self-awareness brings our focus on emotions, thoughts, and intentions and helps us become more compassionate and patient. Holy Quran says in chapter 13 verse 11 – God will not change the condition of people unless they change what is within themselves. This verse highlights self-awareness as a critical aspect that brings change. Awareness of one's thoughts, words and actions help an individual improve their relationships.

Mindfulness and Gratitude: Abstaining from food and drinks in Ramadhan, cultivate patience. Holy Quran says in chapter 11 verse 49 –“So be patient; indeed, the best outcome is for the righteous”. Practising patience is a quality of mindfulness to delay gratification and learn self-control. Ramadhan increases us in gratitude. It brings our attention to the blessings we have in our lives and to be more compassionate to those who have less and go hungry. Mindfulness research shows that cultivation of positive emotions such as gratitude increases joy, interest, and contentment. There is a link between practising gratitude and feeling happy. Gratitude takes the focus off the adverse reactions and cultivates positive emotions such as love, appreciation and stimulates the nervous system to rest and digest



MASSRAT SHAIKH

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stressful life events.

Mindfulness and kindness: Ramadhan is also known as the month of charity. By sharing what we have with others who are less fortunate than us, we become compassionate and kind. A narration of Prophet Muhammed, peace and blessings be upon him, says, “verily kindness is not found in anything but that it beautifies it, and it is not removed from anything but that it disgraces it”. Practising mindfulness shows that compassion and kindness

reduce stress and negative emotions such as anger, anxiety, and depression. It connects us to our inner-selves and creates a pool of positivity under challenging situations

Mindfulness and wandering mind: Ramadhan is a month of increased worship and prayers. Praying regularly helps to gain control over wandering minds and create an anchor for our everyday lives. Exercising mindfulness in prayers can make one more disciplined; improve

executive functions such as focus and attention. It can also have an impact on the neuroplasticity of the brain that enhances learning and memory.

Mindfulness of eating and addictions: Ramadhan gives us a chance to start excellent and healthy eating habits and refrain from addictions. Mindfulness of eating in Ramadhan can bring our attention to not just our eating habits but make us more aware of our environment. Fasting should teach us the value of appreciating food and being conscious of wasting it, as Holy Quran says in chapter 7 verse 31 –“ Eat and drink and do not waste nor be extravagant”. By practising mindful eating we increase our awareness to resources we use from the environment, it teaches us to reduce our intake of products that negatively impact our environment.

Mindfulness and relationships: Ramadhan is a time of keeping good relations with our family members. Living in closed quarters and sharing prayers and meals with our family members give us a chance to be more mindful of our relationships. Mindfulness can help us to reconnect with our loved ones with patience, gratitude, respect, humility, self-control and empathy.

I aspire everyone to be more mindful of their goals this Ramadhan, It is in these unprecedented times we need more than ever to make a shift in our consciousness. I hope that this Ramadhan we learn our lessons; that we transform our characters and purify our hearts. It is at this critical time that we learn to reset and reframe. We are truly blessed to have made it to this Ramadhan during a pandemic. May this Ramadhan leave us with content in our hearts and peace and serenity in our minds.

The author is an educational psychologist/ mindfulness educator. massrat@ahlameducation.com

Survival of the mentally fittest

DR PRITI SWARUP

Change is constant and inevitable. The ongoing global pandemic is believed to be once-in-a-lifetime chance to rebuild and strengthen our future. While the oil prices are all-time low, millions are losing their job, and industries are suffering; the researchers and scientists across the world are working tirelessly in finding the cure to the deadly disease.

So are the COVID-19 warriors, who are doing their best to take care of virus patients and at the same time ensure the containment of its spread. It may take months to return to normalcy. So, what makes the survival possible in such times? Physical health and social distancing are the keys. However, the prodigious rate at which the changes are taking place, it is imperative and even more essential to have a healthy and sane mind. Here is a list of 7 things we can follow to attain a sound mind amidst the global crisis:

1. NEGATIVE VS POSITIVE NEWS: We are into the fourth month of the pandemic. And courtesy social media and TV channels, we all already know enough about the virus and its details. However, one need not track deaths every day or the number of new cases in a day in a region. This unnecessarily creates more fear and panic in the minds. It's wiser to follow the number of cases recovering and going home every day. Also, following the effective steps taken by the governments and staying appreciative of the collective efforts, shall surely help.

2. READ, READ AND READ: At a time when many renowned organisations and universities have opened up their libraries to the general public and provided



DR PRITI SWARUP

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access to thousands of resources and books, it is prudent to pick up your favourite books and engage in enrichment that we couldn't do before.

3. JOIN AN ONLINE COURSE: Several universities and Internet platforms are providing a plethora of online courses in varied fields like management, data sciences, soft skills, relationships, social sciences, and like. It's wonderful to keep oneself engaged with such courses and come out as an enlightened individual by the end of lockdown!

4. STICK TO A ROUTINE: Complacency and procrastination are some of the worst side effects of the lockdown mode. But planning the day well in advance

eases out a lot of pressure and provides resilience.

5. EXERCISE: A sound body is the greatest asset and investment. Follow a regime even if it means walking around in the house for at least an hour of the day or skipping at a place. Switch on your favourite music during the home-based workouts. It surely releases those happy hormones and boosts immunity.

6. MEDITATION: When the mind is going through so much of chaos and clutter, practising meditation is the answer. There are a lot of apps that are providing mindfulness, peace, and meditation sessions for free these days. One just needs to enroll and find that one corner of the house to enjoy these sessions.

7. DO NOT GIVE UP HOPE: Always remember “this too shall pass”. If you feel low, look for an anchor to hold on to. Talk to close ones. Express and do not keep things inside.

Earth is in reboot mode. And so are we. The sun always sets to rise again, bright as ever. A problem always comes with a solution. The key is to have a positive mind and heart. The human race has the capability to withstand such pressures time & again and it has come out doing fairly well, every time.

As Darwin said, “It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent, but the one which is most adaptive to change”. Let us embrace this change with positivity and hope. And by the time this is over, there will be one more perspective added to the Darwinian theory-Survival of the Mentally Fittest, and we shall be the flagbearers of the same!

The author is a HRM expert and is currently pursuing PhD in Organization Change Management.Email: drpritiswarup@gmail.com



INVITATION TO ATTEND THE EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL MEETING & ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Board of Directors of A'Saffa Foods SAOG is pleased to invite the Shareholders of the Company to attend the Extra Ordinary General Meeting (EGM) and Annual General Meeting (AGM) of A'Saffa Foods SAOG to be held through electronic platform managed by Muscat Clearing & Depository SAOC at 4:00 PM on Thursday, May 10, 2020, and in case the quorum of the AGM is not complete, a second extraordinary general meeting and annual ordinary general will be held at 4:00 PM on Sunday May 17, 2020, to discuss the following Agenda:

First: the Extra-Ordinary General Meeting:

- To approve the amendments in the Memorandum and Articles of Association of the company as per the company commercial law by Royal Decree No. 18/2019.

Second: the Annual General Meeting:

- To consider and approve the report of the Board of Directors for the year ended 31st December 2019.
- To consider and approve the company's report on Corporate Governance for the year ended 31st December 2019.
- To consider the Auditors Report and approval of the Financial Position and Comprehensive Income for the year ended 31st December 2019.
- To consider and approve the recommendation of the Board of Directors to pay a cash dividend to the listed shareholders on AGM date (20 Baisas) per share for the year 2019.
- To approve the sitting fees of the Board and its Sub-Committees meetings paid to the Directors for the year ended 31st December 2019 and to determine the sitting fees for the year 2020.
- To consider and approve the Director's remuneration for RO 32,974 /- for the year 2019.
- To inform the Shareholders, the transactions entered into by the Company with related parties during the financial year ended December 31, 2019.
- To consider and approve the transactions that the Company will enter into with related parties during the financial year ending December 31, 2020.
- To inform the Shareholders, the amounts paid/committed for Corporate Social Responsibility programs during the financial year 2019.
- To approve an amount of R.O 50,000/- for Corporate Social Responsibility programs during the year 2020 to support the community.
- Election of the members of the Board of Directors of the company. Anyone who wishes to stand as candidate shall fill the form prepared for this purpose and submit it to the company at least five days prior to the Annual General Meeting until end of Monday May 4, 2020.
- To appoint the Auditors for the financial year ended December 31, 2020 and fix their remuneration.
- To approve to appraising the board of directors performance once during their term of the Board until March, 2023.

According to the company's articles of association and general assembly procedures, through electronic means issued by the authority, we would like to draw your attention to the following:

- Juristic person, exclusively, have the right to appoint a proxy to attend the general meeting and vote on their behalf through electronic means, provided that this natural person has an investor number with Muscat Clearing & Depository SAOC.
- Voting on any of the items on the agenda starting from three (3) days before the date of the general meeting until the end of voting on the item presented in the meeting day.

For further information, please call Ms. Amira El Atta on phone No.22360250 Ext.182.

Eng. Ali Hilal Ali Al Kuwari
Chairman

PricewaterhouseCoopers
Auditors

Zaid Al-Malki&Nasser AlTabiab
Legal Advisor

P.O Box: 3436, PC: 112, Ruwi, Sultanate of Oman Tel:+968-22360250 Fax:+968-22360260
Email: contact@asaffa.com, Website: www.asaffa.com

If you want to start journaling, now is the time



MALGORZATA
PIECHOWICZ-PIETRUSZKA

WRITING DOWN
THREE THINGS A
DAY THAT I AM
GRATEFUL FOR
DOES NOT SEEM
TOO DEMANDING.
AT FIRST, IT HELPED
FOR FIVE MINUTES.
AFTER FOUR DAYS
IT HELPED FOR AN
HOUR. NOW, AFTER
ONLY A COUPLE OF
WEEKS I AM LIVING
IN THE STATE
OF CONSTANT
GRATITUDE, AS
IF SOME MAGIC
HAPPENED AND
SUDDENLY I
STARTED TO NOTICE
THINGS I USUALLY
TOOK FOR GRANTED



MALGORZATA
PIECHOWICZ-PIETRUSZKA

It is said and widely believed that journaling can serve as a therapeutic tool. It was Socrates who claimed that “The unexamined life is not worth living” and perhaps on some subconscious level his words resonated with me since very early in my childhood. In fact, the moment I learnt how to write, keeping a diary became a unicorn I have been chasing just until now.

A notebook, diary or a journal — obviously the notion of writing down one’s thoughts, emotions or simply the details of everyday life is not a novelty.

The oldest ‘journals’ ever found were written 4,500 years ago on papyrus and are called ‘The Diary of Merer’. However, my favourite ones are not as old, although I personally discovered them almost two decades ago. They come from the 2nd century AD and are Marcus Aurelius’s ‘Meditations’. These records of Stoic philosophy have so much in common with our contemporary life that although they are ancient no one can call them out-of-date.

Later, there came the period of my fascination with the British Royal Family, which I must confess has not entirely faded yet, and the diaries of Queen Victoria. It is almost

unbelievable that her journals, made public in 2012, run to 43,000 pages! She made her first entry when she was only 13 and the last one merely 10 days before her death in 1901. There is a lot to read about. To my delight, Queen Elizabeth II apparently writes too (thank you Netflix!) but it would be very impolite to say that I cannot wait for her to finish. My last but not least favourite ones are the journals of Elizabeth Gilbert, whose books I simply devour. With only a few glimpses of her Instagram account, where she shares some of her entries, I have completely fallen in love with the colourful, imaginative notebooks full of poetry and sketches.

Throughout the years I have made plenty of attempts to keep my own journal. All failed. Perhaps my life, when compared with those of the queens and emperors, seemed ‘a little’ pale and lacking grandiosity. Was there anything really worth writing about? It did not feel so... until very recently. I cannot say that the current ‘lockdown situation’ made me jot down all the exciting things I fill my day with, because there are none, but it certainly forced me to focus on being thankful more than ever. Having read about gratitude journals and how they improve one’s mood, I decided to start one. Writing down three things a day that I am grateful for does not seem too demanding. At first, it helped for five minutes. After four days it helped for an hour. Now, after only a couple of weeks I am living in the state of constant gratitude, as if some magic happened and suddenly I started to notice things I usually took for granted.

Call it the miracle of journaling or the unprecedented COVID-19 time, I do not really care. The fact is — it works! So, if you have ever dreamt of keeping a journal, get down to writing. Taking into consideration that the holy month of Ramadhan has only just started, the time for all kinds of spiritual endeavours seems to be ideal. Who knows, perhaps I might catch my unicorn at last. Will you?

Poor Kitzanians and Baji’s sheer cat luck

It all seemed like a slow-motion of a nightmare scene the minute I opened the carrier door for Baji to meet the rest of the Kitzanians, his short-term hosting family. Once he set his paw out, Baji turned into a killing machine attacking and hissing at the poor cats who had gathered curiously around him sniffing. What happened to the cat who was meowing and chirping happily in the car on our way here? Like the rest of the cats I was momentarily paralysed as: 1) I wasn’t expecting such a violent reaction from Baji, the veterinary clinic’s sweetheart 2) I wasn’t sure what to do as my other male cats were becoming hostile too.

Worse than all, Baji started running away and continuing his aggressive behaviour and I knew that I had to stop him. I hurled myself at him- scraping my knees in the course-picking him off the ground and

throwing him immediately into Kiki’s empty cage. Naturally, this didn’t stop him and he continued attacking from behind the mesh. I texted my vet at once begging him to hurry with the adoption ad. It was obvious that Baji couldn’t cope with other cats after a life time of being alone on the streets. The vet was kind enough to place the ad on the clinic’s FB page the very next day — along with a miserable photo of him — and the feedback was as I expected: people weren’t interested in adopting a brute-looking — three-legged-stub-tailed old cat.

The only reaction that the post got was a few hearts and sad face emojis (and someone asking if he’s the very same cat that she used to feed in Al Khuwair? Her’s was castrated and microchipped. Go figure!). Luckily — and before getting this disappointing response- I’d started an integration programme for Baji as I had



RASHA AL RAISI

THE CATS WERE
ENVOIOUS THAT HE
WAS HAVING HIS OWN
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REST OF THEM HAD
TO SPREAD AROUND
THE GARDEN AND
SHARE BLANKETS.
WHEN BEING OUTSIDE,
BAJI WOULD SIT
NEXT TO THE CAGE
AND DEFEND HIS
TERRITORY BY HISSING
AND SLAPPING
WHOEVER DARES TO
COME NEAR.

no hope of him being adopted. I decided to take him out around the garden for a few minutes every day under my supervision.

The first few days were the hardest as he kept attacking the cats and hissing whenever they came nearby us. By the time we reached the second week and around half an hour of daily freedom, Baji was becoming less aggressive. Outwardly, I’d leave him unsupervised but secretly check on him now and again.

At that time, he went out of the house twice to explore the neighbourhood and came back running afraid of the sound of car engines. The following month of January was rainy and Baji’s cage filled up with mud. He had to stay indoors in the guests’ bathroom for weeks till the cage dried up. Our helper- who fell for Baji’s charms like the vets’ — decided to revamp his den for him. He paved it with interlock, added some

grass door mats and a basket lined with a new blanket. Baji loved the new restorations and barely left the cage!

The cats were envious that he was having his own space while the rest of them had to spread around the garden and share blankets. When being outside, Baji would sit next to the cage and defend his territory by hissing and slapping whoever dares to come near. Now he follows a strict daily routine (and reminds us of it if necessary): he’s out at 9 am and back in again willingly at 5 pm (with a plate full of chicken or dry food). He’d devour his supper happily while the rest of the Kitzanians watch him grudgingly, waiting for theirs to be prepared. He’d retire to his basket and stay there till the morning. That’s sheer cat luck!

Rasha al Raisi is a certified skills trainer and the author of The World According to Bahja. rashabooks@yahoo.com

Ramadhan

The holy month in the eyes of non-Muslims

KABEER YOUSUF

For believers around the world, Ramadhan is a time of self-restraint from material pleasures, spiritual reflection, self-improvement and heightened devotion and worship throughout the holy month.

They put more effort to learn and live by the teachings of Islam and continue doing the same in the rest of the year.

For those who don't fast too, Ramadhan is a month of introspection that gives a unique feeling. Let's see what they have to share.



**Jessica Gonsalves,
Interior Designer**

Ramadhan is an opportunity to share our blessings with our community by nourishing ourselves and others with respect and acceptance while helping to build a more friendly, compassionate and loving humanity.



Yan and Sybille

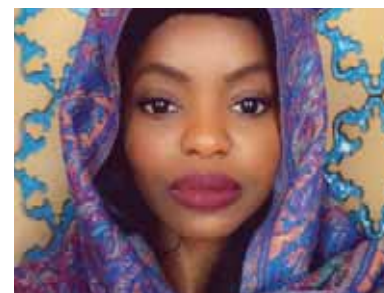
Ramadhan is a time rich in beautiful mental and active practices, refocusing on inner values and one's relationship with God and the world. This time serves to remind us of our blessings in comparison to those who are less fortunate, raising awareness about what is essential in life, rich and poor becoming equal in the light of hunger and thirst.

For us, fasting is a very humbling practice, it requires us to build self-control and patience. Therefore, it is a powerful opportunity to meet oneself on the way, whilst removing whichever inner hurdles may be encountered. In community lies the opportunity to support one another in this by showing kindness and humility, celebrating the act of togetherness.



Cindy and Kevin

When our brothers and sisters in Islam observe Ramadhan, they are remembering their faith and that they are drawing closer to God. They take the time to cleanse their bodies by fasting. They take the time to cleanse their minds by fellowship with their families, also by interacting with the wider world in a very deliberate way that expresses Allah's love. For us, it is a chance to also reflect, as we see our brothers and sisters do. Reflect on the message that we on this world are not single, isolated beings, but part of a larger whole.



N K Crichlow

For me, the holy month of Ramadhan is a time for increased self-reflection, spiritual growth, and acts of kindness. I think that regardless of one's religious beliefs and practices, any invitation to become a better individual and member of society should be welcomed. May peace persist on the Earth



Paul and Natasha

For us, Ramadhan is the most sacred month in Islam. It is a time of spiritual discipline — deep contemplation of one's relationship with Allah, increased generosity to others, especially the less fortunate and intensely studying the Holy Quran. It is also a time for family and loved ones, praying together, having iftar together and observing this pillar of Islam together. It is a time when self is denied and a relationship with Allah is intensified.

As a non-Muslim I respect and admire the dedication and devotion of Ramadhan. Especially this year, with this pandemic we value more than ever relationships with God and loved ones, and aid those in need.



**Gerald Chevasson, General
Manager, W Muscat**

Having lived in the Middle East for the past 20 years, Ramadhan is one of my favourite months of the year. It brings with it compassion, self-reflection and peace. It is as if life is purposely put on pause, for us to remember and appreciate all the little things we take for granted. This year our W Muscat Corporate Social Responsibility initiative is very dear to me. It gave our talent the opportunity to sponsor meals for the real heroes, our healthcare workers, that reside in Muscat. Not only am I extremely proud of my team and all they have done for the community, but their actions give me hope for a promising tomorrow. I encourage you to look around and support one another in these changing times.



**Nick and Isabel, Planning
Engineer and Secondary
Schoolteacher**

How wonderful for so many to join in faith and fast for an entire month. It inspires awe from those of us who have never experienced real hunger or thirst. Ramadhan is a time to reflect, to practise gratitude, to join family, and to embrace all regardless of socioeconomic standing as one. We feel great respect and admiration for our friends and colleagues fasting during this time, particularly my young students. We are inspired and feel privileged to experience Ramadhan here in Oman.

FATWA

Shaikh Ahmed bin Hamad al Khalili
His eminence grand mufti of Oman

Question

Is it premissible to use perfumes during the holy month?

Answer

Yes, if she stays at home and does not meet foreigners.





A man shows a Cuban Flag standing on the balcony of his house in Havana on Friday. The Cuban government suspended the celebration of the largest annual march in the island, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, urging citizens to stay home. — AFP

Balcony protests and e-rallies as epidemic curtails May Day demos

PARIS: Workers of the world scaled back their traditional May Day demos on Friday with coronavirus lockdowns forcing many to rally online instead, while a determined few hit the streets in face masks.

There were arrests in the Philippines and Turkey as dozens broke mandatory home confinement to hold public pickets, but most gatherings on this unusual Labour Day went without incident.

The traditional festival of the workers' movement usually attracts millions of people to loud and boisterous marches, and occasional violent confrontations with police.

But with strict social distancing rules in most countries to halt the spread of the virus, many union leaders opted to delay public gatherings or move events online.

May Day carries extra significance this year after the COVID-19 outbreak sent the global economy into a historic tailspin, put unprecedented numbers of people out of work, and cast some of the world's lower paid workers — nurses, garbage collectors, shop tellers and delivery drivers — in the role of modern-day heroes.

"It is thanks to the labour we celebrate on this day that the nation perseveres"

said President Emmanuel Macron of France, where workers will celebrate the popular holiday by banging pots and singing on their balconies and taking part in online demonstrations.

"It is thanks to the work, the dedication, of our caregivers, civil protection personnel, the armed forces... that we save so many lives every day," Macron said in a message to the nation, also thanking farmers, civil servants, and other workers who have made it possible for "life to continue in spite of everything."

'BELLA CIAO'

In Turkey, some two dozen protesters including

a senior union leader were arrested for taking part in a small march by mask-wearing workers in Istanbul in violation of lockdown measures, an AFP photographer witnessed.

Hundreds of Greek workers also took part in a rally outside parliament under the banner of the Communist-affiliated PAME union, with a small band playing "Bella Ciao".

Red stickers on the ground ensured that picketers remained at a safe distance from each other, many wearing red scarves over their faces or masks bearing messages of solidarity with health workers.

— AFP

India extends lockdown till May 17, to ease curbs in lower-risk zones

NEW DELHI/MUMBAI: India said on Friday it would extend its nationwide coronavirus lockdown for another two weeks after May 4, but would allow "considerable relaxations" in lower-risk districts marked as green and orange zones.

Some activities will remain prohibited till May 17 throughout the country, regardless of the zone, the ministry of home affairs said in a statement.

Those include travel by air, rail and metro and interstate movement of people by road; and schools and colleges, hotels, restaurants, shopping malls, cinema halls and places of worship will remain closed.

There will be no restriction on movement of goods between states and on the manufacturing and distribution of essential items, the ministry said.

Authorities are trying to chart a path out of the world's biggest lockdown, which they credit with preventing an exponential surge in infections and which Prime Minister Narendra Modi imposed on March 25.

Authorities have mapped the country into red, orange and green zones, depending on the severity of the outbreak. Health Secretary Preeti Sudan detailed the plan in a letter to regional officials.

The biggest and most economically-important cities, including New Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Chennai and Ahmedabad, would all be classed as red zones, infection hotspots, and kept under strict lockdown. To qualify as a green zone, eligible for quicker lifting of restrictions, an area would have had to report no new infections for three weeks. The classifications would be "dynamic" and updated at least weekly as conditions change, Sudan wrote. — Reuters



A health worker checks the temperature of stranded migrant workers before they board special busses to return to their hometowns during a government-imposed nationwide lockdown as a preventive measure against the COVID-19 coronavirus, near Surat, some 290 km south of Ahmedabad, on Friday. — AFP

Joe Biden says alleged assault 'never happened'

WASHINGTON: US presidential candidate Joe Biden on Friday emphatically denied sexually assaulting a former aide, saying the incident she says occurred 27 years ago "never happened."

The former vice president thus broke a month of silence on the most potentially damaging claims he has confronted since launching his White House bid a year ago. Republicans have weaponised them in an effort to damage his prospects against President Donald Trump in November's election.

"They aren't true. This never happened," Biden said in a statement re-



garding the accusations made by Tara Reade, a former staffer in his US Senate office.

The campaign of the presumptive Democratic presidential nominee had forcefully denied the allegations, but Biden himself had yet to address them publicly until now.

Biden, 77, said Reade's then-supervisor and former senior staffers in his office "have said, unequivocally, that she never came to them and complained or raised issues."

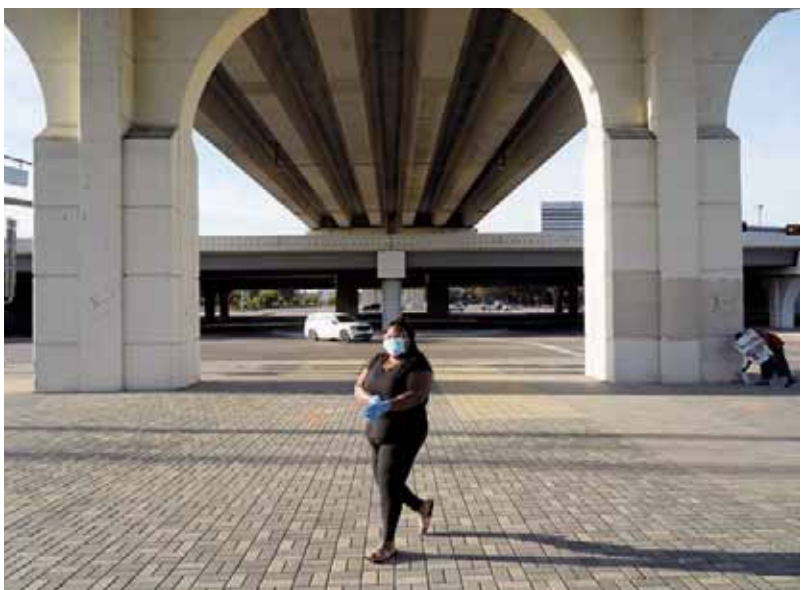
Reade said on a podcast in March that then-senator Biden sexually assaulted her in a Capitol Hill corridor in 1993, when she was 29. — AFP

Texas, Ohio join array of US states reopening their economies

NEW YORK: Texas and Ohio pushed ahead on Friday with a phased relaxation of restrictions that US states put in place weeks ago to curb the coronavirus pandemic, as Georgia took another step towards a full restart by allowing all businesses to reopen.

With White House guidelines for reopening having expired on Thursday, half of all US states were forging ahead with a patchwork of strategies to allow businesses, from restaurants and retailers to construction and manufacturing, to emerge from a month of dormancy.

In Texas, one of the most populous US states, all retail stores, restaurants, movie theatres and malls could resume activity on Friday while limiting capacity to 25 per cent of their listed occu-



Dominick Walton, who is homeless herself, walks back to her car after handing out food bags to homeless people amid the coronavirus disease outbreak in Houston, Texas. — Reuters

pancy, on orders of Governor Greg Abbott.

Ohio will start by allowing non-essential surgeries on Friday and then move to open construction and

manufacturing on Monday, and retail shops and many consumer services on May 12, Governor Mike DeWine said earlier this week.

States are feeling enor-

mous pressure to reopen businesses and restore social life, despite a lack of wide-scale virus testing and other safeguards urged by health experts, as the outbreak appears to have waned across many parts of the country.

No companies are required to reopen and it was unclear how many business owners and their employees would return to work, and how many patrons would venture back into stores and restaurants.

US Labor Department data released on Thursday showed some 30 million Americans had sought unemployment benefits since March 21. The jobless toll amounts to more than 18.4 per cent of the US working-age population, a level not seen since the Great Depression of the 1930s. — Reuters

Though daring, they are humans too

Every time we go out for reporting on the coronavirus pandemic, our family and friends start worrying about us. Initially I myself was afraid. More than anything else the fear was triggered off with the mind jumping from one imagination to another.

Then a statement by a friend of mine struck me, “Doctors and nurses do not get nervous. It is their duty and they have seen a lot.”

This is what inspired me too to carry on.

Yes, maybe doctors and nurses are used to experiencing varying degrees of emergencies. The only difference if they are breaking down now globally could be seeing the crises helplessly not knowing exactly what would save the patient.

And then there is another aspect to COVID-19 – it is contagious. A doctor or a nurse cannot maintain a distance of 2 metres with a patient at all times. They are after all treating the patient.

Whether they are at Sablat Muttrah swab testing the public with potential symptoms and talking to the individuals, or the doctors and nurses I met at Al Nahda Hospital, they might seem to be performing their duties as a typical day would have been prior to COVID-19. But that is not the reality. They have to look at each person as a potential COVID-19 patient and look at the best solution that can be provided for the patient.

It is a new virus and doctors have to constantly update themselves on what is going

on around the world and at the same time conduct their own studies and analysis.

All this when we are worried to enter a supermarket thinking who could have touched what? We jump at the sight of anyone remotely coming close to our parameters. We have become so conscious and aware of our physical distance and this is what that could continue to achieve in flattening the curve.

We have to flatten the curve and we have to be responsible because even doctors and nurses are humans. Their spirit might be of superheroes but physically and mentally they are also vulnerable whether they like it or not. While they face the virus to combat it in each patient we must think of their protection.

First of all we can protect

them by staying at home and being safe ourselves. It might sound like a cliché but it is the fact. However, the fact is not everybody is capable of living in conditions that can provide them the option of social distancing. Came across a note online from a person, who lives in a camp, that said their rooms are small and the camp has people who have symptoms who might or might not be COVID positive. The note requested, “Will the authorities come and conduct tests here? We have lot of fear as we go to sleep each day.”

The words of that note continue to haunt me as they appear in the back of my mind. As I try to focus on anything else those printed lines appear. It is an S.O.S note not in a

bottle but an online message where we all are today.

The doctors and nurses and health workers must be going through this very fear too in their quiet moments maybe worrying for themselves, their colleagues and family members.

In the Muscat governorate and throughout the country at the checkpoints between the governorates, Royal Oman Police and Army officers continue their duty as they fast during the holy month being vigilant to combat COVID-19 and for the protection of society. It is their duty but a difficult one.

Let us do our part – let’s stay home and let us pray at home and include them in our prayers. And let us explore how more we can assist them.



LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
lakshmiobserver@gmail.com



Maya Khadra (C) and Rakan Ghossein (3rd-R) pose for a picture, with close relatives, during their wedding at the Monastery of Saint Anthony in the village of Shemlan south of Beirut on April 25. – AFP

Virus scuppers Lebanon dream weddings

LAYAL ABOU RAHAL

For months Maya and Rakan had looked forward to their dream wedding in the Vatican — but the coronavirus pandemic forced them to settle for a tiny church ceremony in Lebanon.

Spring usually marks the opening of the Lebanese wedding season. But this year the novel coronavirus has dashed plans and hit the Mediterranean country’s thriving events industry hard.

Maya Khadra, 26, had hoped for a magical day when she finally tied the knot with her fiancé — not, she said, just a dozen guests in “an empty church”.

But on Sunday in the village of Shemlan south of Beirut, they exchanged vows

before a few close family members as rain gushed down outside.

“Corona(virus) changed everything, including our wedding,” the green-eyed bride said.

“They called us from the Vatican and told us they had cancelled all weddings for nine months, so we had two choices: postpone, or get married anyway,” she said.

They opted for the second. “You don’t know when corona(virus) will end, and postponing is a waste of time,” the young journalist said.

On Sunday, she wore an elegant white dress and a flower in her hair as she wed 28-year-old gym owner Rakan Ghossein.

The groom said they decided on a “shorter

wedding” to keep guests safe.

At the reception hall, the bride’s sister fielded a stream of video calls from well-wishers unable to attend.

Khadra said the hardest part was celebrating her big day without her friends.

“They were more excited than we were,” she said, her eyes welling up.

FIREWORKS, DRONES

Lebanon has been on lockdown since mid-March to rein in the COVID-19 respiratory illness, which has infected 721 and killed 24 people in the Mediterranean country, according to official figures.

The airport and restaurants have closed, and mass gatherings are forbidden. — AFP

UK universities hit by virus outbreak fallout

MARTINE PAUWELS

With

conferences cancelled and revenues hit because of a lack of rent from student accommodation, Britain’s universities are reeling from the global coronavirus pandemic.

Schools have already lost millions of pounds thanks to enforced closures under lockdown, and things could get worse still.

“British universities are under very severe strain from the crisis,” Nick Hillman, director of the Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI) think tank, said.

The national lockdown that forced universities to shut in late March has cost £790 million (\$990 million), according to representative body universities UK (UKK).

And the next academic year could be even worse if international students, who pay higher tuition fees, stay away or are hit by movement restrictions.

“The potential impact is extreme,” said UKK, which has asked the government for £2 billion in aid.

Without it, they warned that some institutions risked having to cut back sharply or risk closing together. — AFP

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HEAD OFFICE

Tel: 24649444, 24649450,
24649451, 24604563, 24699437
Fax: 24699643

SALALAH OFFICE

Tel: 23292633
Fax: 23293909

NIZWA OFFICE

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

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

DISTRIBUTION AGENT

AL OMANEYA for Distribution & Marketing, P.O. Box 974,
P.C. 100, Muscat, Sultanate of Oman

Tel: 24649351/24649360

Fax: 24649379

Website: omanobserver.om

e-mail: editor@omanobserver.om

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Virus spread: Trump threatens new tariffs on China

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump said his hard-fought trade deal with China was now of secondary importance to the coronavirus pandemic and he threatened new tariffs on Beijing, as his administration crafted retaliatory measures over the outbreak.

Trump's sharpened rhetoric against China reflected his growing frustration with Beijing over the pandemic, which has cost tens of thousands of lives in the United States alone, sparked an economic contraction and threatened his chances of re-election in November.

Two US officials, speaking



US President Donald Trump speaks about the coronavirus response during a meeting with New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy in the Oval Office at the White House in Washington, US. – Reuters

on condition of anonymity, said a range of options against China were under discussion, but cautioned that efforts were in the early



Containers are loaded onto a ship, as the global outbreak of the coronavirus disease continues, in the Port of Los Angeles, California, US. – Reuters

stages. Recommendations level of Trump's top national president, one official told have not yet reached the security team or the Reuters.

“There is a discussion as to how hard to hit China and how to calibrate it properly,” one of the sources said as Washington walks a tightrope in its ties with Beijing while it imports personal protection equipment (PPE) from there and is wary of harming a sensitive trade deal.

Trump made clear, however, that his concerns about China's role in the origin and spread of the coronavirus were taking priority for now over his efforts to build on an initial trade agreement with Beijing that long dominated his dealings with the world's second-largest economy.

— Reuters

Oman crude climbs to \$28.80 per barrel

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, APRIL 24

DME Oman, the Sultanate's benchmark crude, climbed to \$28.80 a barrel in trading on the Dubai Mercantile Exchange (DME) on Friday, gaining more than \$2 per barrel as Oman joined fellow producers within the Opec+ alliance (a grouping of 24 oil producing nations, including Russia) in a landmark global effort to curb output and thereby rein in international oil prices in free fall.

Friday's price of the Oman Crude Oil Futures Contract, for delivery in July 2020, returns the benchmark to trends seen nearly a month ago. The rebound in the last three days, up from a record low of \$16.82 per barrel on April 28, has been remarkable and bodes well for a further uptick in prices as an international effort to end the current glut in supply, amid unprecedented demand destruction, gets under way.

As a signatory to



the historic agreement clinched by the Opec+ alliance, Oman is cutting 23 per cent of its crude output during May and June 2020 (using October 2018 average levels as the baseline). This equates to 201,000 barrels per day.

Sharing this output cut on a pro rata basis are all of Oman's leading producers, led by majority state-owned Petroleum Development Oman (PDO), which

trims production to 453,000 bpd, Occidental Petroleum (156,000 bpd), Daleel Petroleum (39,000 bpd), CC Energy Development and (30,000 bpd). Three other producers — Oman Oil Company Exploration & Production (OOCEP) — part of OQ, Musandam Oil & Gas Company (MOGC), and Hydrocarbon Finders (HCF) — are pitching in with modest cutbacks as well.



Invitation to attend the Extra-ordinary General Meeting (EGM) and the Annual General Meeting (AGM)

The Board of Directors of the Alizz Islamic Bank S.A.O.G ("The Bank") has the pleasure to invite all the Shareholders to attend the Extra-ordinary General Meeting (EGM) and the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the bank, scheduled to be held at 2.00 PM on Thursday, 14th May 2020 through the electronic platform for holding General Meetings, which you can log in through the website of Muscat Clearing and Depository Company (www.mcd.gov.om); and in the event that quorum was not achieved for the Extraordinary General Meeting ("EGM") and/or the Annual General Meeting ("AGM"), the second Extraordinary General Meeting ("EGM") and/or the second Annual General Meeting ("AGM"), shall be held at 2.00 PM on Sunday, 17th May 2020 through the same electronic platform to discuss the following agenda items:

Extraordinary General Meeting ("EGM"):

- To consider and approve amending the Bank's articles of association in accordance with the requirements of the Commercial Companies' Law promulgated by the Royal Decree No. 2019/18 (as per exhibit)
- To consider and approve amending the EGM resolution passed on 29th March 2018 (as per enclosure)

Annual General Meeting ("AGM"):

- To consider and approve the report of the Board of Directors about the Bank's activities and its financial position for the financial year ended 31st December 2019
- To consider and approve the Bank's Corporate Governance Report for the financial year ended 31st December 2019
- To consider and approve the Auditors Report on the Bank audited financial statements for the financial year ended 31st December 2019
- To notify the Shareholders regarding the Sharia Supervisory Board report for the financial year ended 31st December 2019
- To approve the sitting fees being availed by the members of the Board of Directors and members of the Board's sub-committees for the previous financial year and to fix the sitting fees for the next financial year (as per the enclosure No. 1/a & 1/b)
- To notify the Shareholders regarding the related parties transactions during the financial year ended 31st December 2019 (as per the enclosure No. 2)
- To notify the Shareholders regarding the donations paid to support community during the financial year ended 31st December 2019 (as per the enclosure No. 3)
- To consider and approve the allocation of RO 25,000/- as community support during the financial year ending 31st December 2020
- To notify the shareholders with the donations paid during this year as a contribution to the efforts made to combat the corona virus (covid-19) for an amount of RO 50,000 (as per enclosure No. 4)
- To appoint the external auditors and the external sharia auditors for the financial year ending 31st December 2020 and approve their remuneration

As per the Bank's Articles of Association, the regulations of the convening of the AGMs through electronic platforms, issued by the Capital Market Authority (CMA), we would like to draw your kind attention to the following:

- Only juristic persons may appoint a natural person as his proxy to attend the EGM & AGM and vote on their behalf through the electronic systems, provided that such natural person should have an investor/folio number at Muscat Clearing and Depository Company.
- Voting on the agenda items offered for voting starts before a period of not more than 3 days and until the end of the voting process on the Meeting's day. If the investor's balance of shares increased or decreased, his/her voting will be cancelled and they should vote again on the AGM's date.

For any queries, please contact Mrs. Maas Amiranthi on 24775272 or Mr. Fadelallah Suliman on 95098087 or email (Fadelallah.ali@alizzislamic.com)

Saleh Nasser Al Araimi
Chairman

Deloitte
External Auditors

Fadelallah Suliman
Legal Advisor & Company Secretary

Tesla cuts price for China-made Model 3 cars by 10 pc



Tesla China-made Model 3 vehicles are seen during a delivery event at its factory in Shanghai, China. — Reuters

BEIJING: US electric vehicle maker Tesla Inc said on Friday it has cut the starting price for China-made Model 3 sedans by 10 per cent to qualify for subsidies in the world's biggest auto market.

Tesla, which started delivering cars from its \$2 billion Shanghai car plant in December, said in a statement it has cut the starting price for its Standard Range Plus Model 3 sedans to 271,550 yuan (\$38,463.17), after receiving 20,250 yuan per car as EV subsidies. — Reuters

Australia's Origin to buy 20pc stake in UK's Octopus



The logo of Australian energy company Origin is pictured in Melbourne, Australia. — Reuters

MELBOURNE: Australia's top power and gas retailer, Origin Energy, agreed to buy a 20 per cent stake in UK retailer Octopus Energy for A\$507 million (\$328.18 million), with an exclusive license to use its technology in Australia, the companies said on Friday.

Origin said the partnership with the fast-growing UK firm and use of its Kraken platform would radically improve Origin's customer service, cut its costs sharply and give it international growth opportunities. — Reuters

Boeing raises \$25 bn in blowout debt sale



A worker wears a mask at the Boeing Renton Factory, where 737 MAX airliners are manufactured in Renton, Washington, US. — Reuters

WASHINGTON: Boeing Co raised \$25 billion in a bond offering on Thursday, a blowout result for the planemaker, which it said helped the company avoid taking government aid during the coronavirus-induced travel downturn.

Boeing's capital raise, first reported by Reuters earlier this week, is the sixth-largest investment-grade bond offering of all time and the biggest year-to-date, according to Refinitiv data. The Federal Reserve's intervention in the credit market has boosted prospects for troubled borrowers such as Boeing. — Reuters

Millions of Americans continue to seek unemployment benefits

WASHINGTON: Millions more Americans filed claims for unemployment benefits last week, suggesting that layoffs were spreading to industries that were not initially directly impacted by business closures and disruptions related to the novel coronavirus.

Other data on Thursday showed a record collapse in consumer spending in March as the economy reels from nationwide lockdowns to slow the spread of COVID-19, the respiratory illness caused by the virus. The reports came on the heels of news on Wednesday that the economy suffered its sharpest contraction since the Great Recession in the first quarter, ending the longest expansion in the United States' history.

The deluge of grim economic numbers deprive President Donald Trump of a success story to campaign around as he seeks re-election in November, and could ramp up criticism of the White House's initial slow response to the pandemic.

"The economy continues to print numbers that scare the living daylight out of



People who lost their jobs wait in line to file for unemployment at an Arkansas Workforce Center in Fort Smith, Arkansas, US. — Reuters

everyone in the world," said Chris Rupkey, chief economist at MUFJ in New York.

Initial claims for state unemployment benefits totaled a seasonally adjusted 3.839 million for the week ended April 25, the Labor Department said. While that was down from 4.442 million in the prior week and marked the fourth straight weekly drop in applications, the numbers are still at levels

The economy continues to print numbers that scare the living daylight out of everyone in the world

unimaginable just months ago. Economists polled by Reuters had expected 3.50 million claims in the latest

week.

Applications for jobless benefits hit a record 6.867 million in the week ended March 28. Last week's filings lifted the number of people who sought unemployment benefits to 30.3 million since March 21, equivalent to nearly one out of every five workers losing their job in just over a month. At least 10 million people who have filed claims are still to get benefits. — Reuters

South Korea's exports suffer worst slump in 11 years

SEOUL: The coronavirus crisis sent South Korean exports plunging in April at their sharpest pace since the global financial crisis, signalling a bleak outlook for international trade as the pandemic paralyses the world economy and shatters demand.

Exports dived 24.3 per cent year-on-year in April, trade ministry data showed on Friday, the worst contraction since May 2009 but slightly slower than a 25.4 per cent fall tipped in a Reuters survey. It slid 0.7 per cent in the previous month.

The average exports per working day, excluding the calendar effect, however, tumbled 17.4 per cent, far worse than a 6.9 per cent fall seen in March.

South Korea, Asia's fourth-largest economy, is considered a bellwether for world trade and is the first among major exporting economies to release data on shipments.



A truck drives between shipping containers at a container terminal at Incheon port in Incheon, South Korea. — Reuters

The grim numbers underline the sweeping impact of the pandemic and points to a rough period for international trade as factories struggle amid collapsing global demand. On Thursday, factory surveys for China, the world's biggest exporter,

showed plummeting export orders.

"May will be extremely difficult for South Korea's exports. We could potentially see the dip in shipments bottoming out in May should the US and Europe begin to normalise their economies," said Park Sang-hyun, Chief

Economist at Hi Investment & Securities.

"I cautiously expect exports to fall at a slower rate from June, especially on more stimulus from China and as oil prices recover, which should help boost Korea's petrochemical products." — Reuters

AIFF condoles Chuni Goswami's death

NEW DELHI: The All India Football Federation (AIFF) has condoled the death of former India captain Subimal Goswami, who was fondly referred to as Chuni Goswami by his vast legion of fans. Goswami breathed his last in Kolkata on Thursday. He was 82.

Goswami's biggest achievement was captaining India to the 1962 Asian Games Gold medal when India scripted a historic 2-1 victory against South Korea (Korea Republic) in the final to land India their second gold medal in Asian Games history.

Goswami made his International debut against Burma (now Myanmar) in the Asian Games in Tokyo in 1958. He even scored on debut as India rallied to win 3-2 on the day. He went on to represent India in 36 official International matches, captaining in 16 of them, and netting 13 goals.

Besides two editions of the Asian Games, Goswami was also part of India's Olympic squad in the Rome Olympics in 1960. He also captained India to the final of the AFC Asian Cup in Tel Aviv in 1964 and was part of India's campaign in the pre-Olympic qualification in 1959 (in Kabul), 1960 (in



Kolkata and Jakarta), 1963 (in Colombo as captain), and in 1964 in (Tehran and Calcutta).

He also played in the Merdeka Cup in Kuala Lumpur in 1961, and 1964 (as captain).

Goswami won the Arjuna Award in 1963 and was awarded the prestigious Padma Shri Award in 1983.

AIFF President Praful Patel in his message said: "It's sad to hear that Chuni-da, one of India's greatest footballers, is no more. His contribution to Indian Football will never be forgotten. I share the grief".

The versatile sportsman that he was, he also represented Bengal in the Ranji Trophy and even captained Bengal in 1968-69 season. He also played for East Zone in the Duleep Trophy.

His first-class career as a cricketer ended after 46 matches and he scored 1,592 runs, including a century.

Mitchell Marsh gets Australia contract, Khawaja axed

SYDNEY: All-rounder Mitchell Marsh returned to Cricket Australia's list of 20 nationally contracted players on Thursday, but there was no room for his brother Shaun or struggling batsman Usman Khawaja.

The older Marsh sibling and Khawaja were among six players axed from a group that selectors loaded with limited-overs talent to reflect Australia's upcoming schedule, particularly the Twenty20 World Cup scheduled for October-November.

"With many of the squad crossing into all three formats it gives us the benefit of being able to add in specialists depending on the opposition and the conditions," chief selector Trevor Hohns said in a statement.

"The depth of this squad and the success of the past 12 months gives us that solid base."

Others dropped from the list — which forms the core of Australia's international squads — were Peter Handscomb, Marcus Stoinis, Nathan Coulter-Nile and Marcus Harris.

"As is always the case there are unlucky omissions but, however, because you are not on the list does not mean you cannot be selected to represent Australia," Hohns said.

Mitchell Marsh endured his own period in the wilderness when he was not offered a contract last year but Hohns said his form showed "he has a lot of international cricket ahead of him as a batting all-rounder".



Prolific middle-order batsman Marnus Labuschagne was, as expected, among the new faces, along with Joe Burns, Ashton Agar, Kane Richardson and Matthew Wade.

"Marnus's rise has been meteoric and well documented," Hohns said.

"Joe has been a good Test match player, Ashton Agar's form in T20 internationals has been exceptional, while Kane Richardson has been outstanding in the T20 and one-day games."

Uncertainty hangs over the cricket calendar and the Twenty20 World Cup because of the coronavirus pandemic.

Australia's tour to England for three one-dayers and three Twenty20 matches in July is in jeopardy after the England and Wales Cricket Board delayed the start of their season until at least July 1. — AFP

AUSTRALIA CONTRACTED PLAYERS:

Ashton Agar, Joe Burns, Alex Carey, Pat Cummins, Aaron Finch, Josh Hazlewood, Travis Head, Marnus Labuschagne, Nathan Lyon, Mitchell Marsh, Glenn Maxwell, Tim Paine, James Pattinson, Jhye Richardson, Kane Richardson, Steven Smith, Mitchell Starc, Matthew Wade, David Warner, Adam Zampa.

Oman junior players stay fit with training sessions

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, MAY 1

Oman's junior players are undergoing remote training sessions under direct supervision of the technical staff of the Youth Training Centres run by the Ministry of Sports Affairs. The 2019-20 season of the centres was seriously affected by the COVID-19 pandemic with March and April mainly scheduled for the training. However, the centres are using modern technology platforms to hold training sessions.

The remote training programme is led by coaches at the Youth Training Centres. Each player are being monitored by the coaches and technical staff at the centres.

Khalid Bati al Yaqoobi, member of handball team at Al Dhahirah Governorate youth training cen-

tre, implemented different technical tactics in a video shared on the social media account of the training centres. Many other sessions were also shared on the social media channels as part of encouragement for players to do their best during the home quarantine training period.

In the first quarter of this year, the Youth Training Centres programme had organised a workshop to identify the curriculum to be followed by the coaches during the season. Also, the workshop studied the rules and regulations for sports events. The curriculums featured the best practices of technical exercise for the junior players to develop their skills at individual and group sports.

The training centres featured volleyball, handball, swimming,



basketball, athletics and hockey. It aims to prepare the player for a full five-year comprehensive plan that enables them to learn the skills required to join the national teams. The top candidates in each centers will receive support and training at the Sultan Qaboos Academy.

The sports associations had benefited from this youth training programme as many graduates joined various national teams.

In 2019, 80 trainees had received the certificate of transferring them to the related association to join the junior national

teams after they completed their training period which lasted for five years at the centres.

Last year, several top players registered some impressive achievements.

Oman's talented sprinter Ali bin Anwar al Balushi had claimed bronze medal at the Asian Junior Athletics Championship in Hong Kong. Also, he is the holder of the bronze medal in 200 metre sprint at the World Gymnasium Schools Championship which was held in Morocco in May.

Swimming team members had registered top results at the Dubai tournament while volleyball team finished third in the GCC tournament. Sprinter Mohammed al Suleimani had represented the Sultanate at the World U-17 Athletics Championship in Kenya.

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PARIS: Paris St Germain have been awarded their seventh Ligue 1 title in eight years after the season was ended amid the COVID-19 crisis, the French League (LFP) said on Thursday.

PSG had a comfortable 12-point lead over second-placed Olympique de Marseille when the season was suspended with 10 games left as part of French government's measures to contain the spread of the novel coronavirus last month.

With some clubs having played 27 games and others 28, the LFP drew the standings according to a performance index - the number of points per game weighed by head-to-head record.

PSG therefore ended the season on 2.52 points with OM on 2 and third-placed Stade Rennais on 1.79. According to the standings, Marseille qualify for the Champions League group stage with Rennes going through a qualification play-off.

The LFP also crowned Lorient as Ligue 2 champions in a conference call after the standings were frozen after all teams had played 28 matches.

"We have decided there

PSG CROWNED LIGUE 1 CHAMPS

PSG HAVE A 12-POINT LEAD OVER SECOND-PLACED OLYMPIQUE DE MARSEILLE



would be two promotions and two relegations," Didier Quillot, the chief executive of the French League, told a news conference. It means Amiens and Toulouse will be relegated and

Lorient and Lens will be promoted.

Lorient had 54 points after losing four of their last five games with Lens on 53, leaving third-placed AC Ajaccio (52) and fourth-placed Troyes

(51) in Ligue 2.

"There might be appeals but our decisions are solid," Quillot added.

"We understand, respect and support the decisions taken by the French government to

stop the league. Health, as the government has always said, must be a priority for all of us," PSG president Nasser al Khelaifi, who dedicated the title to the caregivers involved in fighting

COVID-19, said in a statement.

"I would like to thank the players, the coach, the sporting and medical staff as well as all the employees of the club for their great work. This trophy rewards their daily commitment," he added.

The new season will start on August 22-23 at the latest, probably behind closed doors as popular events are banned until September in France.

"If then playing without spectators is allowed, we will try to play the Cup finals (League Cup and French Cup) in early August," said Quillot.

PSG are to play against St Etienne in the Cup final and Olympique Lyonnais in the League Cup final.

The finals' results could affect who joins fourth-placed Lille in the Europa League, although Uefa regulations state that leagues must say who is qualified by May 25 at the latest.

The LFP's announcement ended weeks of speculations and rows between club presidents.

"French football did not emerge greater from this crisis," LFP president Nathalie Boy de la Tour said. — **Reuters**