

Wear masks in public: WHO

GENEVA: The World Health Organization on Friday changed its advice on face masks amid the coronavirus pandemic, saying they should be worn in places where the virus is widespread and physical distancing is difficult.

The use of masks has been a hot topic ever since the pandemic first emerged in China in December.

“In light of evolving evidence, WHO advises that governments should encourage



the general public to wear masks where there is widespread transmission and physical distancing is difficult,” said WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus.

In areas with community-level virus transmission, “we advise that people aged 60 years or over, or those with underlying conditions, should wear a medical mask in situations where physical distancing is not possible”, he added. — **AFP**

SAMUEL KUTTY

TENANTS STRUGGLE TO PAY RENT

MUSCAT: Even as the authorities have eased the lockdown measures, a growing chorus of voices in Muscat — from both commercial and residential — is the non-availability of funds to pay rents.

Due to the lockdown, most businesses were closed, jobs affected and financial transactions coming to a near halt. As a result many tenants have been left without any livelihood.

“The debt resulting from non-payment of

rent is mounting. In the first month of the lockdown, I had managed to pay from the balance cash that I had. Now I am struggling to empty even to feed my workers”, said Abdul Rahman, owner of a textile shop in Ruwi. He is one among many small-time businessmen in the capital city who are

struggling to pay rent after their businesses remained closed as part of the measures put in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

The situation is no different with residential tenants; several of them are not able to pay as their paying capacity has exhausted.

“How will I pay the rent when I

am not getting a salary from the company”, asks Cyril Mathew who works as a supervisor for a construction company. “To go a month without salaries would be very stressful as we have to pay rent and other bills. Fortunately, my landlord is sympathetic, allowing me to pay in later months. But how can I when my job itself is at stake”.

For small businesses that haven't found ways to sell products and services through online channels or other means, paying the rent is difficult in the current situation.

TURN TO P2

Oman reports 930 new COVID-19 cases

STAFF REPORTER

MUSCAT: The Sultanate on Saturday reported 930 new COVID-19 cases of which 239 are Omanis and 691 residents. The total cases now stand at 16, 016. On Friday, seven patients succumbed to the virus taking the total death toll to 72.

According to the Ministry of Health, 3,128 people were tested on Saturday and 45 people were hospitalised, taking the number of admitted COVID-19 patients to 251, including 67 in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU).

Muttrah continued to lead cases in the Muscat Governorate with 4,706 patients followed by Seeb (3,608), Bausher (3,149) Al Amerat (489) Muscat (170) and Qurayat (73)

North Al Batinah has 1,045 cases followed by South Al Batinah 990 cases, South Al Sharqiyah, 390 cases, North Al Sharqiyah 209 cases, Al Dakhiliyah Governorate 605 cases, Buraimi 171 cases, Dhahirah 152 cases, Dhofar 45 cases, Al Wusta 205 cases and Musandam 2 cases.



OMAN

MORE COMMERCIAL OUTLETS MAY OPEN THIS WEEK

KABEER YOUSUF

MUSCAT: More commercial activities will be allowed in the coming days, Ahmed bin Abdullah al Shuhi, Minister of Regional Municipalities and Water Resources, has said. The move comes after many sectors were given permission to operate in the past weeks and lockdown eased in major wilayats in the capital area.

Al Shuhi said the two earlier packages had closely followed the Supreme Committee regulations on conducting business safely with strict adherence to the health instructions.

“Activities that were opened in two packages constituted 70 per cent, and the third package will be announced soon. Businesses included in the



first two packages were found to be adhering to safety instructions of the Supreme Committee,” the minister said. He said as many as 9,088 violations were reported during the

time of first and second packages.

The minister was categorical about barbershops and beauty salons that they were not allowed to open now because

they posed risk of transmitting the virus.

“Whoever renewed their contracts and paid the fines, the amount will be carried over to the next year or the next contract period and there will not be any fines for delaying the renewal of contracts during the COVID-19 period,” he said.

He added that the “third package approved by the technical committee is an ambitious package”.

“However, the new package will not include the reopening of wedding halls, beauty salons, and recreational activities in view of the safety of public health.”

Meanwhile, Mini Padikkal, clinical dietician and health practitioner, shares some precautionary measures before, during and after shopping:

- 1 It's better to do e-shopping to avoid contact and touch. It is better to pay via credit card as much as possible.
- 2 It is time for healthcare and secure shopping. While health shopping is focused on healthy food, secure shopping is about taking precautionary measures against infection. These two are applicable to the payment method, dealing with procurement and shopping cart, as well as maintaining social distancing.
- 3 If you're visiting a shopping mall, make sure to disinfect your hands and shopping cart, and do not touch items that are not on the shopping list.
- 4 Keep your own shopping bags and fill the bag with your stuff, so that the seller need not touch the bag and risk infection.
- 5 Make it a point to wash your hands thoroughly with water and soap before and after shopping.
- 6 Crowded places are always risky. Avoid shopping at crowded places.
- 7 It is advised to assign one member of the family for shopping. Elder people, pregnant and children should be exempted from going to shop.
- 8 Wash your hands with water and soap before opening the bags after you arrived at the house from shopping.

TENANTS STRUGGLE TO PAY RENT

FROM PAGE 1

“Even if the lockdown is fully lifted, the customer flow will not be the same as it was before the outbreak of the coronavirus. Chances of business recovery in the near future look grim”, said Martin Gomez, who runs a tailoring shop.

Meanwhile, following an appeal from the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, a few owners of

commercial centres, landlords and real estate companies agreed to waive, reduce or defer rents.

“My house owner, understanding my situation, gave me a one-month waiver for May. But I do not know how I will pay this month”, said Haris Mohammed, who runs a mobile shop.

Experts familiar with the situation say this is a nightmare for both

landlords and tenants alike.

“This is an exceptional situation that we are witnessing. The vast majority of private landlords own one or two properties, many with mortgages and they too will be facing the same challenges of job losses”, said Hamed al Lawati, a real estate investor.

He said that there are high net worth landlords who can reduce or write off rentals, but most landlords

rely on the rental income to survive.

Still he advised that the situation may not be used as an excuse to avoid paying rent.

According to Hamed, for tenants with a history of accumulated arrears or delayed payment, it is better to accept the situation and work with the landlords to chalk out a plan for the payment till things return to normal.

RESTRICTIONS
WILL CONTINUE
IN OLD MUTTRAH
SOUQ AREA,
HAMRIYA AND
WADI KABIR
INDUSTRIAL AREA



MUTTRAH LOCKDOWN PARTIALLY EASED

NO CHECKPOINTS AT DARSAIT AND WADI KABIR

SAMUEL KUTTY

MUSCAT: Authorities on Saturday allowed partial yet cautious easing of coronavirus restrictions in most parts of the Wilayat of Muttrah after more than two months of lockdown. Following instructions from the Supreme Committee dealing with the COVID-19 situation that sanitary isolation of the wilayat be removed, the Royal Oman Police lifted checkpoints in Darsait and Al Wadi Al Kabir.

However, restrictions will continue in old Muttrah Souq area, Hamriya and Wadi Kabir Industrial area. According to Dr Saif al Abri, Director-General of Disease Surveillance and Control, Ministry of Health, these areas will remain under isolation due to high infection rate. "The epidemiological situation in Hamriya, old Muttrah and Wadi Kabir Industrial area will be reviewed during the next two weeks," Dr Abri said at the weekend press confer-

ence. The health isolation in the commercial market area in the Wilayat of Jaalan Bani Bu Ali in the South Al Sharqiyah Governorate has also been lifted. Despite lifting of the lockdown, which is being done to inject life into the economy and ease the pressure from populations wearying of confinement, all other health and safety measures will continue to be enforced in all the areas. Apart from using all the personal protection equipment including mandatory

wearing of masks, people should continue to maintain social distancing or physical spacing at all the places. According to the directive from the Supreme Committee, some commercial activities will be allowed to open only during the period from 7 am to 6 pm. While public transportation and taxis will not be permitted in the wilayat, shifting of household items as part of the change of residence is not allowed.





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TANFEEDH
EMPLOYMENT
LAB REVIEWS
PROGRESS



MUSCAT: The Labour Lab and Employment Supervisory Committee, part of the National Programme for Enhancing Economic Diversification (Tanfeedh), held its fourth meeting this year under the Chairmanship of Shaikh Abdullah bin Nasser al Bakri, Minister of Manpower, on Saturday.

The meeting was attended by representatives of government departments, private sector and experts from the Implementation Support and Follow-up Unit (ISFU). The committee reviewed the implementation of the initiatives and the steps that have been accomplished in accordance with

the prescribed time frame. It also followed up the procedures pertaining to the implementation of initiatives relating to the employment and labour market lab, underscoring the necessity of integrated roles of the supervisory entities and the Ministry of Manpower as an enabler for realising the

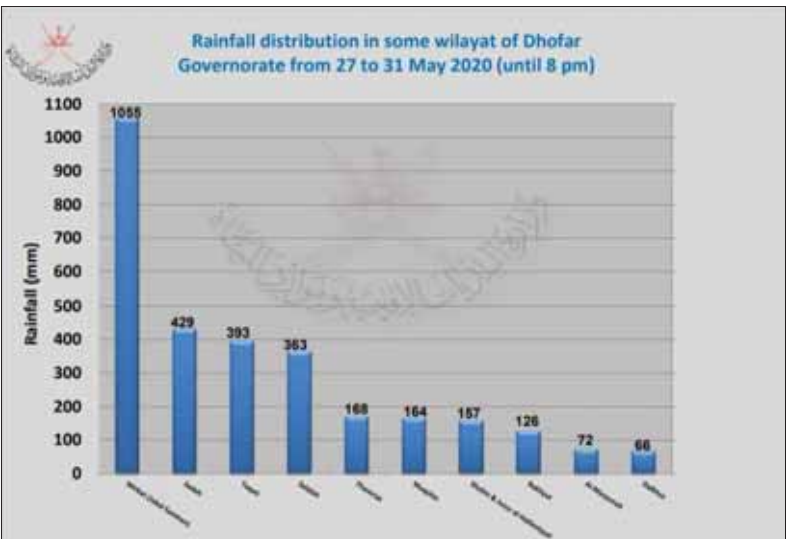
desired goals of Tanfeedh. The meeting also reviewed the developments stemming from the COVID-19 outbreak and its implications on the implementation of the lab's initiatives and the alternative plans for implementing follow-up and the realisation of performance indicators. — **ONA**

CLIMATE CHANGE: RECORD RAIN
IN HISTORY OF MODERN OMAN



KAUSHALENDRA SINGH

SALALAH: The latest tropical depression that passed recently through Dhofar Governorate has established entirely new facts in front of the weather experts, people involved in water resources and policymakers to ponder over and draw strategies in line with the challenges posed by the nature. It rained heavily for five days in some parts of the governorate to an extent that it established a record of highest rainfall and subsequent highest accumulation of water in Jabal Samhan in the history of modern Oman. If we go by the available sources in the Ministry of Regional Municipalities and Water Resources, Mirbat (Jabal Samhan) alone received 1055mm of water from May 27 to 31 followed by Sadah, Salalah,



Thamrait, Maqshan, Shaleem, Rakhyout, Al Mazyouna and Dhalkout. The rainfall in Sadah during the same period was 429mm, Taqah 393mm, Salalah 363mm, Thamrait 168mm, Maqshan 164mm, Shaleem 157mm, Rakhyout 126mm, Al Mazyouna 72mm and Dhalkout 66mm. A graph of rainfall distribution in some wilayats of the governorate also suggests that the tropical

depression caused the third highest 24-hour rainfall and subsequent water accumulation in the history of modern Oman. It may just be a coincidence that one of the most powerful tropical cyclones in recent times in Dhofar was Mekunu that had hit Dhofar just two years ago (May 25, 2018). It was powerful in terms of rain with high wind speed and subsequent damage to infrastructure, roads and wadis, but the total rainfall then was far less than the current tropical depression. A Category-1 tropical cyclone, Mekunu brought more than 500mm of rainfall over Dhofar in three days, which was five-fold more than the annual average of 83mm. It is up to the weather and water resources experts to evaluate, analyse and do a comparison, but it is for sure that in terms of rainfall, the latest tropical depression was far bigger.



BAHLA FARMER PRODUCES 200 TONNES OF WATERMELON

MUSCAT: BAHLA: An Omani farmer has set a record of sorts by producing over 200 tonnes of watermelon at his farm in Wadi Qurayat village in the Wilayat of Bahla.

Hamad bin Ali al Hinai cultivated indigenous watermelon on 10 acres this season and his harvest has been deemed to be the highest among his fellow farmers.

Speaking to Oman News Agency (ONA), Al Hinai said: “I started the project three years ago with the main aim of diversifying income sources through investing in many farms in Wadi Qurayat. I have followed experts’

recommendations regarding the expansion and diversification of crop production to boost food security, which has become a key goal for countries that target to achieve self-sufficiency in domestic crops.”

He added, “I began in 2016 by cultivating on three acres mainly with the purpose of gaining experience and acquiring essential know-how about various stages of cultivation.

“In the following season my project saw horizontal and vertical expansion by adding two more acres and applying the system of agricultural cycle. During the third season I cultivated on

10 acres and also introduced the integrated management system for fighting pests through enhanced use of insecticides, thereby managing to produce more than 200 tonnes of native watermelon. Al Hinai utilised social media and managed to sell his produce to wholesale traders and retailers despite initial worries of marketing woes due to the coronavirus crisis.

Al Hinai is now planning to double the acreage in the next agricultural season and increase revenues from cultivating high-quality watermelon to gain a competitive edge in the local market. — ONA

ESO WINS \$5,000 MARINE TURTLE SUSTAINABILITY GRANT

STAFF REPORTER

MUSCAT: The Environment Society of Oman (ESO) has won the \$ 5,000 Summer Marine Turtle Sustainability Grant. To support projects dedicated to protecting nesting turtles, nonprofit groups Turtle Island Restoration Network and SEE Turtles held a contest this summer, known as the Summer Sea Turtle Sustainability Grant, to offer non-profit organisations around the world emergency funds.

Forty-five nonprofit organisations applied for the grant and more than 30,000 individuals from around the world voted for the group they wanted to receive the funds. One \$5,000 grant was awarded to the Environment

Society of Oman (ESO) for receiving the most votes. A second grant was given to Fundação Tartaruga, who was randomly selected to receive \$1,000.

“It was a pleasure for Turtle Island Restoration Network to sponsor this grant to protect nesting sea turtles,” said Todd Steiner, executive director of Turtle Island Restoration Network.

“SEE Turtles is thrilled to be able to partner with Turtle Island Restoration Network to provide needed funding for sea turtle projects around the world,” said Brad Nahill, president of SEE Turtles.

“The Environment Society of Oman protects one of the most important loggerhead beaches in the world and we are glad to be able to help support their efforts.”



The Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

The Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs invites companies and specialized institutions to submit their proposals for the following tender:

Tender No	Tender Name	The tender document value (no retrieved)	Date of purchase of tender documents	Last date for purchasing tender	Last date for submission of tender
2/2020	Development of Turtle Beach at Ras Al-Jinz (Re-tendering)	25 R.O	7/6/2020	23/7/2020	9/8/2020

Listed companies can tender Board wishing to participate by purchasing tender progress by decreasing site email: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>)

All companies are required to submit (1%) of the tender value to the Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs valid for a period of (120) days from the date of submitting the tender to the Finance Department at the Ministry building in Al-Khuwair before the opening date of the tenders .

For any assistance in E-tendering, please call: 24166670 or email etenderhd@ita.gov.om.

OMAN

Commerce ministry's efforts to limit virus spread hailed

MUSCAT: Many officials in the private sector have praised the efforts made by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry in cooperation with the relevant government agencies to limit the spread of coronavirus pandemic.

They affirmed that the medicines in the Sultanate were being manufactured at a steady pace, with the participation of pharmaceutical factories which have worked hard with focus on innovation and research.

They also praised the efforts made by the Omani factories manufacturing tools and various products such as masks, gloves and disinfectants.

Eng Said bin Nasser al Rashdi, CEO of the Omani Industrialists Association, said that the Ministry of Commerce and Industry played a big role in overcoming the challenges faced by local factories as it is the first sponsor of the sector.

He pointed out that the Omani Industrialists Association made an effort



OFFICIALS IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR AFFIRMED THAT THE MEDICINES IN THE SULTANATE WERE BEING MANUFACTURED AT A STEADY PACE WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF PHARMACEUTICAL FACTORIES

to help the factories to continue to work under the current conditions and negotiate with concerned stakeholders about safety and security requirements with minimal impact on the operation of the plant.

Khalid bin Rashid al Omairi of Al Bahjah Group, which includes both the Oman Hygienic Products and the Oman Pharmaceutical Products,

said, "Coronavirus pandemic crisis contributed to encouraging investors to invest in medical supplies, and get to know the local companies that manufacture these products in the Sultanate. It also unveiled highly efficient Omani cadre capable of leadership in the field of manufacturing medical materials."

— ONA

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Commerce and Industry is making great efforts to help innovators by conducting preliminary search of the invention ideas and providing them with the research results. This helps innovators know the strength of their ideas and the possibility of protecting them, by searching in documents similar or close to the idea in international databases, which can save effort, money and time as well as avoid duplication of ideas.

This procedure reduces repeat of ideas, focuses on new and qualitative ideas, and provides technical advice to inventors on the use of patents in different databases of invention and

MINISTRY COMES TO THE AID OF INVENTORS

the technical information they contain due to their scientific additions in developing local patents.

This facilitates the transfer of technology from this invention and making use of it locally, which contributes to providing an appropriate supportive environment for innovators by facilitating the procedures required to preserve their rights.

The ministry clarified that the number of patent applications that were registered online during April

and May 2020 amounted to 35 from a total of 162 patent applications, including 12 patent applications related to facing effects of the coronavirus. There are other applications under registration through the follow up of specialists with the owners of these innovations.

Twenty applications were also registered for trademarks, including special trademarks for electronic applications that contributed to providing services to society. In addition, three

applications were submitted for literary works.

Ruqaiyah bint Mohsin al Harrasiyah, a patent specialist at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, said: "The massive spread of the coronavirus in many countries of the world has led to a new reality and challenge, pushing the world to use maximum creative potential in the pursuit of vaccine, medical examination methods and preventive and surveillance tools.

— ONA

India pips Italy's coronavirus tally



A vendor arranges facemasks on mannequins installed outside a retail apparel store after the government eased a lockdown imposed as a preventive measure against COVID-19 in Siliguri, West Bengal, on Saturday. — AFP

MUMBAI: India reported a record 9,887 new coronavirus cases in one day on Saturday and overtook Italy as the world's sixth-biggest outbreak, two days before the relaxing of a lockdown with the reopening of malls, restaurants and places of worship.

With its total number of cases rising to more than 236,000, India now has fewer infections than only the United States, Brazil, Russia, Britain and Spain, according to a Reuters tally. However, India's toll of deaths from COVID-19, the disease

caused by the virus, is 6,642, small compared with those other countries.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government, anxious to jump-start an economy crippled by the epidemic and put millions of people back to work, is easing its lockdown of the 1.3 billion population imposed in March, which the government says helped avoid an exponential rise in cases.

Restrictions will be loosened from Monday but some experts are worried it is too soon. Giridhar R Babu, epide-

miologist at the Public Health Foundation of India, in particular questioned the re-opening of religious places. "We can survive and sustain the gains without ... opening up religious places for sometime," Babu said on Twitter.

Concerts, sporting events and political rallies are still banned.

The World Health Organization (WHO) said late on Friday India's lockdown had helped it dampen down transmission of the disease, but there was a risk the cases could rise again.

— Reuters

IN BRIEF

108-year-old beats COVID-19

ROME: Fatima Negrini, a 108-year-old woman from Italy, has joined the ranks of the very few centenarians who have recovered from COVID-19. "God forgot about me," Italian newspaper Corriere della Sera quoted Negrini as saying in its Saturday edition, reporting that the woman turned 108 on Wednesday. The paper published a picture of the wheelchair-bound Negrini in front of a chocolate and cream cake, flanked by a carer with a giant heart-shaped birthday card.

She caught the novel coronavirus in April and tested negative in mid-May, and was "always" an asymptomatic COVID-19 patient, he added. Negrini has three sons aged 89, 88 and 78, four grandchildren and two great-grandchildren, Corriere said. In Negrini's nursing home, several residents died. — dpa

Al Qaeda leader killed

PARIS: France said its forces have killed the leader of Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, in a blow to the group behind a string of deadly attacks across the troubled Sahel region.

Abdelmalek Droukdel was killed on Thursday in northern Mali near the Algerian border, where the group has bases from which it has carried out attacks and abductions of Westerners in the sub-Saharan Sahel zone, Defence Minister Florence Parly said on Friday. — AFP



What do we need this WHO for? The WHO recommended a few days ago not to carry on with the study into hydroxychloroquine, and now they are restarting it..

JAIR BOLSONARO,
BRAZILIAN PRESIDENT

Brazil threatens withdrawal from WHO

RIO DE JANEIRO: Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro has threatened to pull the country out of the World Health Organization (WHO), citing the US decision to withdraw late last month.

"The US has already withdrawn. Either the WHO works without any ideological prejudices or we are out," he told CNN Brasil on Friday. "We do not need any people from outside to give

us tips about health here."

President Donald Trump said at the end of May the US would be "terminating" its relationship with the WHO. He accused the UN agency of failing to enact reforms in the face of US concerns over its handling of the coronavirus pandemic and that it put too much faith in information from China.

While the US is one of the

biggest funders of the WHO, Brazil already stopped paying contributions in 2019 and owes \$33 million to the organisation, according to the newspaper Folha de S Paulo.

"What do we need this WHO for? The WHO recommended a few days ago not to carry on with the study into hydroxychloroquine, and now they are restarting it." — dpa

WORLD

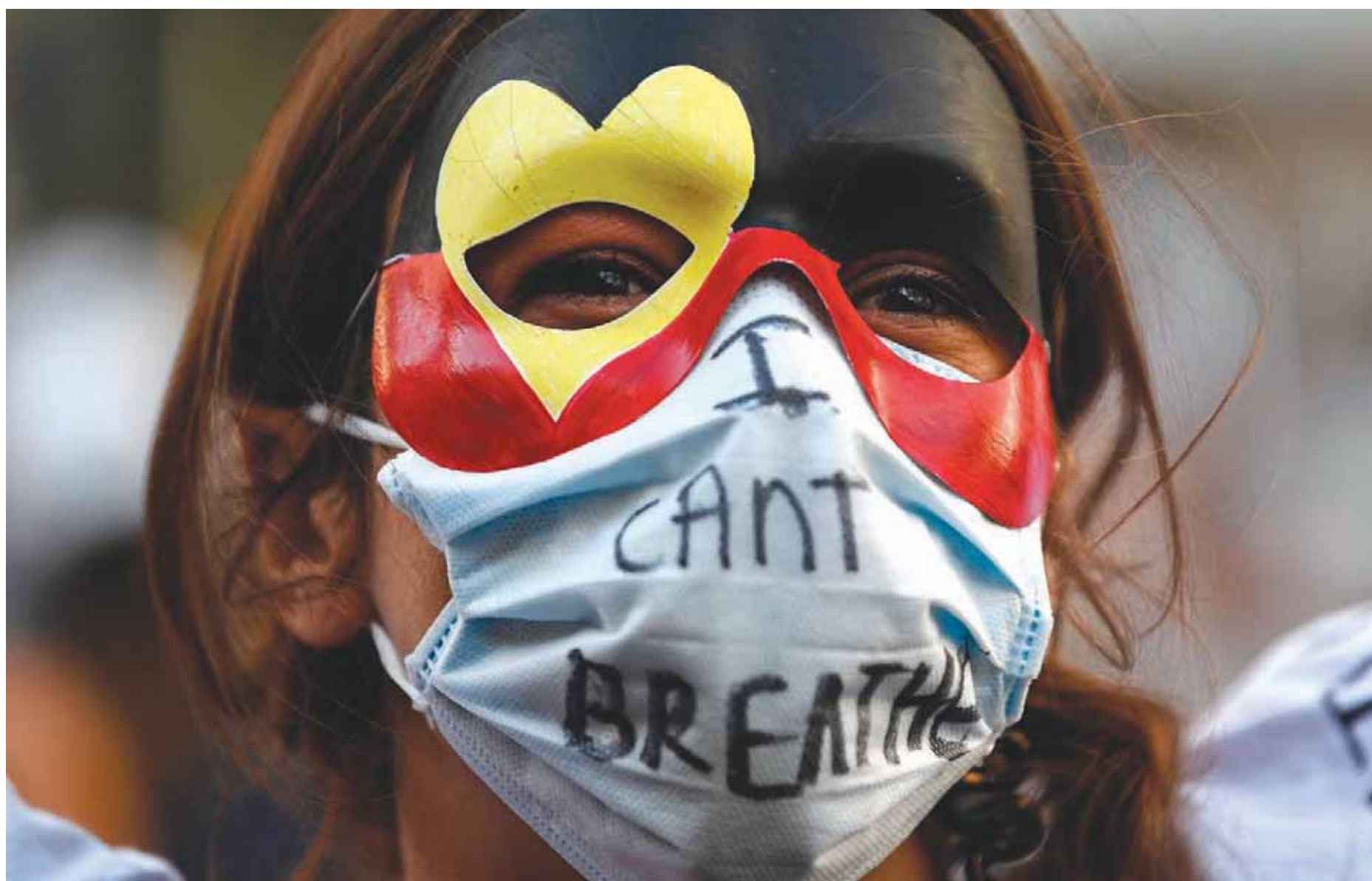
GLOBAL RACE PROTESTS MARK FLOYD'S DEATH

MINNEAPOLIS: The white former Minneapolis police officer shown in video footage using his knee to pin an unarmed black man's neck to the street was charged with murder on Friday in the man's death, an incident that has unleashed four nights of violent protests.

LONDON: Taking a knee, chanting and ignoring social distancing measures, outraged protesters from Sydney to London kicked off a weekend of global rallies on Saturday against racism and police brutality.

The death during the arrest of George Floyd, an unarmed black man in the US state of Minnesota, has brought tens of thousands out onto the streets during a pandemic that is ebbing in Asia and Europe, but spreading in other parts of the world. Londoners intend to rally outside parliament on Saturday and hold a big demonstration in front of the US Embassy on the opposite bank of the Thames River on Sunday.

Aboriginal protesters performed a traditional smoking ceremony at the start of a "Black Lives Matter" pro-



Demonstrators attends a Black Lives Matter protest to express solidarity with US protesters in Sydney on Saturday. — **AFP**

test in Sydney, which was sanctioned at the last minute after initially being banned on health grounds.

Tens of thousands of Australians defied government orders to stay home regardless, holding up signs and wearing face masks marked up "I can't breathe"

— the words Floyd kept repeating while handcuffed as a policeman knelt on his neck.

Thousands more dressed in black to mourn Floyd's death in Melbourne and other Australian cities.

Floyd's death came during the spread of a disease that

has disproportionately affected black people and ethnic minorities in global centres such as London and New York.

It also came in the throes of a historic economic downturn that has statistically affected the poor and marginalised the most. — **AFP.**

Gargling with bleach? Americans use disinfectants

NEW YORK: More than a third of Americans misused cleaners and disinfectants to try to prevent infection by the coronavirus, according to a survey taken shortly after President Donald Trump publicly asked whether injecting such products could treat COVID-19.

Washing food with bleach, using household cleaning or disinfectant products on bare skin, and intentionally inhaling or ingesting these products were some of the most commonly reported "high-risk" practices in a May 4 online survey of 502 US adults, the Centers for Disease

Control and Prevention (CDC) reported. The survey's lead author said it was undertaken following a "sharp increase" in calls to poison control centers for exposure to cleaners and disinfectants during the pandemic.

In late April, Trump asked scientists during one of his coronavirus task force briefings whether inserting disinfectant into the bodies of people infected with the virus might help clear the disease, horrifying health experts. Makers of household cleaners were compelled to urge people not to drink or inject their

products.

Some 39 per cent of people surveyed reported intentionally engaging in at least one high-risk practice not recommended by the CDC to prevent coronavirus infection, including using bleach to clean food or misting the body with a disinfectant spray. Four per cent drank or gargled with diluted bleach solutions, soapy water or disinfectants.

A quarter of those surveyed reported having at least one adverse health effect during the previous month that they believed resulted from using these products. — **Reuters**

ANALYSIS



A recent Ixe poll found that 59 per cent of Italians trust their prime minister.

VIRUS CRISIS BOOSTS CONTE

Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte's handling of the coronavirus crisis has allowed him to shed his reputation as a weak-willed puppet of other parties and even bolstered his country's image abroad, some experts say.

Italy — once the epicentre of the outbreak in Europe, which has killed around 34,000 people in the country since February — is slowly emerging from the world's longest coronavirus shutdown, which has ravaged its economy.

At the same time, the once discounted prime minister is now seeing his approval ratings soar.

"Conte's management of the crisis has been broadly appreciated," said Alessandro Giacone, political history lecturer at the University of Bologna.

A recent Ixe poll found that 59 per cent of Italians trust Conte, who uses Facebook and direct appeals on national television to take his message to the masses.

In a political culture known for bluster and rhetoric, Conte has been perceived as a clear head who has not tried to spare Italians from the difficult realities of the past few months, but who has

spoken clearly and directly of challenges ahead.

At the same time, he has shown political courage in taking potentially unpopular decisions, such as Italy's long lockdown which helped stem the spread of the virus, yet drastically hurt its economy. That decision will hang over Conte's head as the country now tries to regain its economic footing after the crisis.

When Conte was named prime minister in June 2018 by the anti-establishment Five Star Movement (M5S), to which he is close ideologically, he was a complete unknown.

A law lecturer with no political experience, the press portrayed him as a puppet whose strings were pulled by his two deputy prime ministers, M5S's Luigi Di Maio and in particular Matteo Salvini, head of the far-right League.

But that all changed when Conte formed a new coalition government in September, between the M5S and the centre-left Democratic Party (PD). Along with France and Germany, Conte was also a driving force behind the 750-billion-euro European recovery plan which was agreed last month. — AFP

More than surviving



RAY PETERSEN

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Lockdown may not be too much fun, here in Oman, or anywhere else in the world, but we are doing much more than simply 'surviving', aren't we?

An American psychologist, Abraham Maslow, in 1943 presented a paper entitled "A Theory of Human Motivation", which has been at the root of all educational, management, sociological and psychological thinking ever since, as he provides a 'road map' of human behavioral needs. Much of what Maslow identified in his five-stage model, will be apparent to us as we navigate our way through the isolation requirements of COVID-19.

His model is usually presented in the form of a pyramid of five levels, the first of which is that of the most fundamental needs like food and water, health, shelter, clothing and sleep. All of us will have these needs met, or we will not survive.

The second level is identified as safety and security, which reaches from physical to emotional security, and as far as financial security, and of course, while our basic health needs are met at the initial stage, currently we are all at risk from a pandemic, so we do not have health security. This would normally be met in the form of health insurance policies; however, COVID-19 makes us feel insecure.

The third level is that of being loved and having a sense of belonging. Most of us are fortunate to have at least part of our family in lockdown, or isolation with us, and there is no doubt that those who are separated from their loved ones will notice the difference.

Then we come to the socially interactive level, where we need the respect and recognition of others whether it be a simple hello, or the acknowledgement of an adoring world after an Olympic victory, we all need different levels of recognition of our value, and that is why we interact with others. We are not being completely egotistical, but we all need to feel, on some level, accepted and respected.

Maslow's final level is labelled 'self-actualization,' meaning that once all the earlier needs are met, you will be able to realise your potential, or as Maslow put it in 1954, "What a man can be, he must be." My purpose today? To help you to recognise that despite some elements of Maslow's amazing hierarchy not being fully met, we are still fortunate to live here, and have few excuses, during these testing times.

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FEATURES



Traveling without leaving the comfort of your home

ZAINAB AL NASSRI

Covid-19 has upended aspects of life around us since its outbreak over the world at the early beginning of this year. With airports and seaports closed, many people were forced to change their summer vacation plans, cancel their travel tickets, and think of other ways to spend holidays inside the home.

Even local summer programs and camps, which were a kind of escape for some people who look for enhancing their children's skills or their own during holidays, are canceled due to fear of infection, so parents had to look for more creative ways to spend the lockdown period with their children at home.

One good way is to choose a country every week, and you pretend that you traveled to that country while you are at home. Doing this is easy and fun. Let's for example choose Japan. How to get that Japan feel? First, you can travel to Japan through cooking. Prepare special dishes served in the country for lunch or dinner, and don't

forget the dessert.

Wear popular clothes in the chosen country, play popular games, attend a documentary program about it, or watch a movie.

Make the most of your free time at home by taking an immersive language course. App courses make learning a new language from home much easier than taking an in-person course.

Tourist blogs, celebrity accounts, and activists in the fields of travel and tourism provide many and varied information pertaining to many countries. You can — while you are sitting in your house on your favorite sofa — travel for long hours by navigating the global network, browsing the videos and pictures available for each country. Perhaps you will learn about new countries that you never thought they exist on the world's map. By the end of the lockdown period, you will have sufficient stock of information, so the next-time travel option will be very wide and the options are varied.

Traveling while sitting at home maybe not bad as you thought after all. It is a good opportunity to escape time, place, and let the virtual world

takes you away to new spots that might be unreachable for you, financially or physically.

Not to mention that staying at home in its general meaning is ideal for learning a new language, drawing, or developing any personal skill, through free or paid online lessons.

Although some may think that spending time at home may be boring or uninteresting, it appeared to be that spending the longest time possible at home has many benefits as well, such as reducing expenses, not spending savings on travel, camping, or visiting theme parks, among others. Staying at home also gives the person plenty of time to plan better and think better.

Being locked down inside home means spending more time with the family and children, easing the responsibility of caring for them outside the home. In addition, it helps avoid minor differences within the group during remote trips, such as arranging activities, or deciding the time for a break and a walk, as everyone has an independent opinion. At home, there are no such differences. Plan your next destination freely and travel at the time that is right for you.

FEATURES

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS

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After lockdown, Australians seek to learn survival skills in the bush



LEARNING AUSTRALIAN BUSH survival skills is becoming popular as city folk turn to nature with the easing of the coronavirus lockdown, organisers of a course outside Sydney said.

The Bushcraft course teaches basic survival skills like foraging for food and water, and also offers insight into traditional indigenous cultures. The course filled up soon after the lockdown began to be eased late last month, and there is a lot of

demand, the organisers said.

“A lot of people come to learn self discipline. How to organise themselves and organise themselves in a natural environment,” said instructor Gordon Dedman at Bushcraft Survival Australia, who is a former army commando.

“The more knowledge you have... it actually gives you a sense of confidence and then you can make better informed decisions.”

Course participants learn

how to erect a shelter, build a fire, solar and celestial navigation, forage for edible plants, some within a timed environment designed to emulate the stress of a real survival situation.

“They’ve got a timed period to make a fire using the procedure that we’ve given them because it makes it efficient. They may have to light a fire to signal for help, to boil water to give to a person that’s suffering from hypothermia,” Dedman said.

“The other thing is that the timed deliverables gives an element of stress and in a survival situation you’re going to be very, very stressed.”

The interest in the course comes as Australia loosens its lockdown laws after months of restrictions that saw runs on supermarket staples, and many Sydney dwellers cooped up at home. Now beaches are reopening and pubs in Sydney are allowed to accept ten patrons for meals. — **Reuters**

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making life easy

OCCI plans unified insurance policy for private education in Oman



CONRAD PRABHU

MUSCAT: Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) has recommended the introduction of a comprehensive insurance policy package to help investors and promoters of private schools and nurseries in the Sultanate to secure their investments and assets, as well as protect their liabilities, against all kinds of the risks – whether caused by natural catastrophes, accidental damages or human negligence.

According to a key official behind this initiative, the proposed Standard Unified Insurance Protection Policy for

Private Education offers privately-run schools, nurseries and related facilities coverage including consequential losses and business disruption stemming from insured natural catastrophes and negligent human actions, including risks posed by pandemics such as the novel coronavirus (COVID-19).

“This is a comprehensive insurance product, which is primarily targeted at schools and nurseries in the private sector in Phase 1 of its roll-out,” said Murtadha bin Mohammed Jawad Ibrahim al Jamalani (pictured), Chairman – OCCI’s Finance and Insurance Committee. “In the second phase, we pro-



“

This is a comprehensive insurance product, which is primarily targeted at schools and nurseries in the private sector in Phase 1 of its roll-out.

MURTADHA BIN MOHAMMED JAWAD IBRAHIM AL JAMALANI,
Chairman – OCCI’s Finance and Insurance Committee

Comprehensive protection:
The proposed Standard Unified Insurance Protection Policy for Private Education offers private schools and nurseries coverage including consequential losses and business disruption stemming from insured natural catastrophes and negligent human actions, including risks posed by pandemics such as the novel coronavirus (COVID-19).

pose to extend coverage to private colleges and universities, and potentially to include government educational institutions as well.”

Speaking to the Observer, Al Jamalani said the policy will cover not only the property and assets of the promoters and investors, but also the teachers and employees, among other liabilities.

The initiative, coming against the backdrop of the disastrous COVID-19 pandemic which has shuttered schools and educational institutions across the Sultanate, has beneficial ramifications for the entire sector, and the underlying national economy as a whole.

Thus, in the event of a major disruption, teachers and staff will continue to receive their wages, for example, while the socio-economic burden of caring for nationals will not fall automatically on the government.

TURN TO PAGE 14



NEW SHRIMP FARM PROJECT ON OMAN’S EAST COAST

CONRAD PRABHU

MUSCAT: Shrimp farming – a hugely promising segment of Oman's burgeoning aquaculture industry – got a further boost on Saturday following the signing of a key contract for the establishment of a new shrimp production farm in South Al Sharqiyah Governorate.

Oriental Shrimp Aquaculture LLC, a subsidiary of Fisheries Development Oman (FDO) – a wholly government-owned fisheries investment vehicle – is setting up the

shrimp farm at Khuwaimah in Jaalan Bani Bu Ali Wilayat.

FDO (formerly Oman Aquaculture Development Company SAOC) was until recently part of Oman Investment Fund (OIF), a sovereign wealth fund of the Sultanate, which together with other wealth funds and state-run investment funds and enterprises, has now been absorbed into the all-compassing Oman Investment Authority (OIA) created by Royal Decree last week.

In a tweet, Fisheries Development Oman (FDO) said the shrimp farm will come up on an area spread

over 200 hectares over the next 18 months. It includes the construction of a hatchery, maturation ponds and farm infrastructure. Output at full capacity is projected at 3,400 tonnes of shrimp annually.

The announcement was welcomed by the Implementation Support and Follow-up Unit (ISFU), a special task force set up under the auspices of the Diwan of Royal Court to oversee the speedy execution of projects and initiatives proposed under the landmark National Programme for Enhancing Economic Diversification

Subsidiary of Fisheries Development Oman (FDO) – the Sultanate’s state-owned fisheries sector investment flagship – awards contract for construction of new project in South Al Sharqiyah.

(Tanfeedh).

ISFU has played a key role in facilitating the cumbersome licensing and permitting process, which is a prerequisite for getting any project of this nature speedily off the ground.

In fact, the Khuwaimah shrimp farm is one of four such aquaculture projects that were expedited by ISFU as part of its mandate. The biggest of these is envisioned at Barr Al Hikman in Al Wusta Governorate. Investment in the first phase alone is estimated at RO 150 million with output estimated at 43,000 tonnes of Indian White Shrimp per annum. Covering an area of around 8,000 hectares, it will emerge as one of the largest shrimp farms in the world.

Further south at Al Jazer, a similar Indian White Shrimp farm is planned for development with an investment of around RO 60 million. Capacity of the mega farm is estimated at 17,600 tonnes per annum.

Likewise, another shrimp farm is envisaged at Bentout in Wusta Governorate.

Fisheries Development Oman is also making sizable investments in pelagic fisheries and sea-based aquaculture farming.

LOCAL OMANI SMES SWITCH TO SANITISER, FACE MASK PRODUCTION

MUSCAT: A number of Omani-run SMEs are retooling their outfits to cater to the strong local demand for sanitizer liquid and other hygiene and safety products sparked by the coronavirus pandemic.

Notable is the example of Jawharat Al Khaleej Factory for Perfumes, Cosmetics and Detergents, which has ramped up production by 100 per cent to

meet growing domestic demand.

Established in 2008 as a family business, Jawharat Al Khaleej has been catering to the local market for sanitisers, disinfectants and detergents. It is also exported part of its output to markets in the GCC, according to Abdulaziz al Shukri, General Manager.

Following a sharp increase in the cost of raw

materials in the wake of the pandemic, the company successfully obtained funding support from Oman Development Bank (ODB). With this assistance, the company is now producing good quality face masks, as well as sanitisers, for the local market.

Further, as part of its support for national efforts to fight the pandemic, Jawharat Al Khaleej



Factory launched several initiatives, including the disinfection of public places and institutions in Wilayat of Bidbid.

BUSINESS

Al Hayat offers antibody test for COVID-19



Al Hayat International Hospital Chairman and Senior Cardiologist Dr K P Raman.

MUSCAT: Al Hayat Hospital has introduced a low cost test to detect antibodies against the novel coronavirus. It is called the ‘antibody test.’

There are two types of tests for COVID-19 disease. One test is the antigen test or PCR test and the other is called the antibody test. While the PCR test has been there in the market from the outset of the pandemic, the antibody test has just become available upon FDA approval.

PCR test is a swab test and it detects virus protein (antigen) in the throat and nose. Usually this test becomes positive by day 1 or 2 of symptoms and becomes negative by about the 14th day. Rarely PCR positivity may remain beyond three weeks after onset of illness. In response to the virus infection, the body produces proteins called antibodies to fight the virus. The antibody test detects these antibodies in blood.

There are two types of antibodies Ig M and Ig G. Antibodies appear in blood before the end of the first week of symptoms, peak in concentration by the second and third weeks.

Ig M antibody disappears by the end of seven weeks but the Ig G antibody persists. The Ig G antibody is believed to give protection against re-infection (immunity). The long-term persistence and duration of protection conferred by the Ig G antibodies remains unknown.

MSM INDEX DECLINES MARGINALLY

MSM30 closed the week lower by 0.09 per cent. The turnover and volumes were higher than last week by 40 per cent and 29 per cent, respectively. Locals were net buyers while GCC nationals were net sellers.

All the sub-indices closed lower except Industrial. Financial index was down by 0.02 per cent, Services Index was down by 0.64 per cent while the Industrial index was up by 0.82 per cent. Shariah Index closed down by 0.03 per cent during the week.

MSM issued a circular last week restoring the trading hours to four hours instead of three hours, effective from June 7, 2020. Execution of the matching orders in the Under-Monitoring Market will be at 12:00 and 02:00 pm.

Bank Dhofar which earlier announced that it will not exercise its options to call its \$300m Perpetual Additional Tier 1 (AT-1) Capital Securities, further specified the terms and conditions after the first call date. The coupon for the five-year reset period starting from May 27, 2020 is the aggregate of the initial margin of 5.128 per cent per annum and the relevant 5-year reset rate (the mid-swap rate for US Dollar swap transactions with a maturity of 5

years), has been determined as 0.391 per cent per annum.

The aggregate coupon for this five-year reset period is therefore 5.519 per cent per annum. The Bank has a semi-annual right to call the Capital Securities on any interest payment date, with the next possible call date being November 27, 2020.

Insurers in Oman have been directed to pick up COVID-19 treatment tab by the CMA. Insurance companies have been requested to comply with the following instructions:

- ◆ Coverage of the costs of the medical tests and treatment of insured infected with COVID-19 up to the annual benefit limits of their respective policies, when they receive treatment in any hospital.
 - ◆ Adoption of price list and the treatment guidelines approved by the ministry of health for the coverage of cost of medical tests and treatment of insured who have COVID-19 when they receive in any hospital.
 - ◆ Insurance companies shall bear the costs of medical tests and treatment of insured who are currently receiving treatment in any hospital, effective from the date of the issuance of the circular.
 - ◆ Insurance companies shall bear the cost of medical services for all insured who show symptoms of COVID-19 when receiving treatment in any hospital.
- [Courtesy: U-Capital]



BANK DHOFAR WHICH EARLIER ANNOUNCED THAT IT WILL NOT EXERCISE ITS OPTIONS TO CALL ITS \$300M PERPETUAL ADDITIONAL TIER 1 (AT-1) CAPITAL SECURITIES, FURTHER SPECIFIED THE TERMS AND CONDITIONS AFTER THE FIRST CALL DATE.

OCCI PLANS UNIFIED INSURANCE POLICY FOR PRIVATE EDUCATION IN OMAN

FROM PAGE 12

An initial draft concept of the policy was discussed and approved by a special semi-technical committee consisting of members from the OCCI and Oman Insurance Association that met last week to review a number of insurance related issues, said Al Jamalani.

“We are awaiting some key inputs from the Education Committee of the Chamber,

as well as from the Ministry of Education, before we present the proposal to the Ministry itself for their consideration.

We will request the Ministry to include the insurance product in their prescribed guidelines and criteria when considering licensing applications for establishing and operating new schools and nurseries in the private sector. Existing institutions will be covered as well as when their licenses come up for renewal.”

BUSINESS



The 'Fearless Girl' statue is pictured outside the New York Stock Exchange. — Reuters

BOND INVESTORS LOOK FOR FED TO JUSTIFY STEEPENING YIELD CURVE

NEW YORK: Expectations that the global economy has dodged the worst-case coronavirus pandemic scenarios have led to a dramatic sell-off in US government bonds from their record highs, pushing the yield curve to its steepest level since March.

Investors will get a chance next week to see whether the US Federal Reserve agrees with their optimism.

The US central bank's two-day meeting, ending on Wednesday, will be the first since April when Fed Chair Jerome Powell said the US economy could feel the weight of the economic shutdown for more than a year.

The meeting will follow a surprise gain in the Labor Department's closely watched jobs report on Friday that pushed benchmark 10-year Treasury yields to the highest since early March. "The sell-off in the bond market in the last few weeks seems to be justified," said Subadra Rajappa, head of US rates strategy at Societe Generale.

While the Fed could introduce additional bond-buying pro-

WHILE THE FED COULD
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grammes known as quantitative easing or yield-curve control measures to target short-term rates, fund managers say they expect yields will need to rise significantly to justify any intervention in the bulk of the curve. Instead, they are watching for hints that the central bank believes the worst part of the coronavirus crisis has passed.

— Reuters

Opec and allies to agree one- month extension to output cuts



A 3D printed oil pump jack is seen in front of the Opec logo in this illustration picture. — Reuters

BAGHDAD: Opec and its allies led by Russia are "most likely" to agree on a one-month extension to an oil production cuts deal on Saturday, an Opec delegate said.

The delegate, who spoke on condition that he not be identified, said: "It is most likely that the meeting today will result in an extension of the agreement for one month only. This is the general trend within Opec+."

The oil producing states meet on Saturday to approve extending record oil production cuts and to push countries such as Iraq and Nigeria to comply better with existing curbs.

Meanwhile, oil prices rose after an unexpected fall in the May US jobless rate and Opec's decision to bring forward to Saturday discussions on whether to extend record production cuts.

Brent crude futures settled up \$2.31, or 5.8 per cent, at \$42.30 a barrel, surging 19.2 per cent on the week. US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude futures rose \$2.14, or 5.7 per cent, to \$39.55 a barrel, rising 10.7 per cent on the week.

The US Labour Department reported a surprise fall in the jobless rate to 13.3 per cent last month from 14.7 per cent in April.

Brent has risen 17 per cent since May 29 to reach a three-month high, in a range more comfortable for producers like Russia. The contract has more than doubled since crashing as low as \$15.98 a barrel on April 22. — Reuters

BUSINESS

US weighs blacklisting dozens more oil tankers over Venezuela

WASHINGTON: The United States is considering imposing sanctions on dozens of additional foreign oil tankers for trading with Venezuela, US officials said on Friday, the latest effort to sever what Washington sees as a lifeline for President Nicolas Maduro.

Some sanctions could be announced in the near term while others could be imposed over a longer period if the trading activity persists in violation of US restrictions, one of the officials said on condition of anonymity.

Earlier on Friday, four shipping sources said that potential sanctions on at least 40 various ships could be imposed soon, although the Trump administration had not finalised a decision.

Such a move could disrupt global seaborne trade by sharply raising tanker rates.

Vessels that could be targeted include 25 supertankers, which can each carry a maximum of 2 million barrels of oil, and 17 smaller vessels, the sources said.

"The net effect may be a clear message to all ship owners: consider Venezuela off limits," said a senior US official.

A State Department spokesman said US authorities "continue to engage with companies in the energy sector on the possible risks they face by conducting business with PDVSA," but did not directly address the question about the expected sanctions.

"Flag registries, shipping companies and their associated suppliers/vendors be warned: Illegal

US OFFICIALS HAVE STEADILY ADDED TANKERS AND SHIPPING COMPANIES TO THE BLACKLIST OVER THEIR DEALINGS WITH VENEZUELA SINCE WASHINGTON IMPOSED SANCTIONS LAST YEAR, AND HAVE WARNED OF MORE TARGETS IF THEY FAIL TO ABIDE BY SANCTIONS

transactions with the illegitimate regime of Venezuela's Nicolas Maduro may subject you to crippling financial and economic sanctions," the White House's National Security Council warned in a tweet on Tuesday.

Taking aim at two heavily sanctioned foes, the United States is also seeking to deter further fuel shipments from Iran to gasoline-starved Venezuela, US officials said.

The United States and dozens of other nations regard Maduro and his socialist government as illegitimate because of a 2018 election widely seen as fraudulent

Maduro has

accused Washington of orchestrating a coup to remove him to gain control of the South American nation's oil reserves.

US officials have steadily added tankers and shipping companies to the blacklist over their dealings with Venezuela since Washington

imposed sanctions last year, and have warned of more targets if they fail to abide by sanctions.

Some US officials have said privately that President Donald Trump has become frustrated by the failure to oust Maduro, who retains the support of the Venezuelan military as well as Russia, China, Cuba and Iran.

Earlier this week the US Treasury said it had imposed sanctions on four shipping firms for transporting Venezuelan oil, escalating the political standoff by curbing the Opec nation's crude exports.

Washington imposed sanctions on Venezuelan state-run oil company Petroleos de Venezuela in early 2019. Maduro blames the sanctions for a deep economic crisis in Venezuela that has led to shortages of basic goods.

Further tanker sanctions could have an even bigger impact than when the Trump administration blacklisted two units of Chinese tanker company COSCO late last year, market sources said.

That decision caused freight rates to hit record highs, market sources said. — Reuters



A man walks next to a sculpture in front of a building of the Venezuelan state oil company PDVSA in Caracas, Venezuela. — Reuters

Kournikova, a trailblazer in Russian tennis

For a tennis player who failed to win even one singles title on the WTA Tour, the frenzy surrounding Anna Kournikova's relatively short career is still unparalleled.

The blonde Russian was listed among People Magazine's 50 most beautiful people in 1998, voted the hottest female athlete on ESPN and her pictures adorned the covers of publications from Forbes to Sports Illustrated.

Kournikova's popularity could be gauged by the fact that a fast-spreading virus, disguised as a digital photo of the tennis star, infected millions of computers in 2001 and slowed electronic mail systems and caused some servers to be shut down.

She earned millions from endorsements and modelling and her celebrity status grew due to her romance with pop star Enrique Iglesias, with whom she has three children.

Having also played a minor role in the 2000 film 'Me, Myself & Irene', Kournikova joined the US television weight loss contest 'The Biggest Loser' as a trainer in 2011.

While her detractors would never consider the Russian as a serious singles player due to lack of titles, Kournikova was widely acclaimed as a child prodigy.

She picked up a racket and started playing at the age of five in Moscow at a children's sports programme before leaving Russia to train at



Nick Bollettieri's tennis academy in Florida.

She made her debut on the WTA Tour in 1995 as a 14-year-old and the following year she went through the qualifiers to reach the fourth round of the US Open in her Grand Slam debut.

She fell to top-ranked Steffi Graf but did enough at the hardcourt major which earned her the WTA Newcomer of the Year award in 1996.

The following year, the Russian made the semifinals at Wimbledon, which ended up being her best Grand Slam showing in singles.

TEAM PLAYER

Despite a barren trophy cabinet, Kournikova reached a career-high singles ranking of eight in 2000. Recurring injuries, however, forced her to retire early and she did not play on the WTA Tour after 2003.

While she failed to make her mark in

KOURNIKOVA WON 16 DOUBLES TITLES, INCLUDING TWO AUSTRALIAN OPEN CROWNS, AND REACHED THE TOP RANKING IN DOUBLES IN 1999

singles, Kournikova won 16 doubles titles, including two Australian Open crowns with Martina Hingis, and reached the top ranking in doubles in 1999.

The Swiss, who reigned as world No 1 in both singles and doubles, is among many who consider Kournikova as a trailblazer in Russian tennis.

"She was a great player, a team player, and we had great times for those two years",

said Hingis. "She kind of was the one who started this Russian Armada — or Russian generation — along with Elena Likhovtseva.

"She was definitely the one who you could aim for and be like, go around the world and live the 'Russian-American dream.' I loved playing with her".

— Reuters



SPORTS



Drivers race during Hungary GP 2019. — AFP

F1 EXTENDS CONTRACTS FOR SOME CLOSED-RACE CIRCUITS

ITALY, HUNGARY AND BELGIUM
ANNOUNCE CONTRACT EXTENSIONS

ALL THREE ARE HOSTING CLOSED
RACES ON INITIAL F1 CALENDAR

LONDON: Some of the European circuits due to host races without spectators on Formula One's initial 2020 calendar have been given one-year contract extensions to compensate for lost revenues, it emerged on Friday.

Organisers of the Hungarian, Italian and Belgian Grands Prix, which stand to lose out on ticket sales, revealed new deals.

Formula One, whose season has yet to start due to the COVID-19 pandemic, announced an eight-round schedule on Tuesday with the season starting in Austria on July 5.

Austria's Red Bull Ring and Britain's Silverstone will both have two races each with Hungary, Spain, Belgium and Italy hosting the remainder.

"We did our best during the discussions to get a good agreement both for the country and the sport even in these



challenging times," Hungaroring CEO Zsolt Gyulay told the www.hungaroring.hu website.

"We cannot say exact numbers, but (the) rights fee is a fragment of the one we pay in case of an open event. Furthermore, we have achieved an extension in our contract, so now it is valid until 2027 instead of 2026."

Hungary is set to be the third race of

a shortened season on July 19, after Austria's two.

Gyulay said the annual increase of the rights fee had also been reduced.

The Hungarian Grand Prix has been held every year since 1986 and, with the Monaco showcase cancelled for 2020, will boast the second longest uninterrupted run after Monza.

Vanessa Maes, CEO of Belgium's Spa-Francorchamps race, said this year's event would be organised outside of the regular promoter contract, which had been extended to 2022.

"This new model will allow the Spa-Francorchamps Circuit... to somewhat mitigate the financial effects of this historic crisis," she told the www.spa-francorchamps.be website.

The Italian Automobile Club (ACI) said Monza's contract had been extended to 2025. — Reuters

THREE-TIME OMAN
'KING OF DRIFT' SHARES
 EXPERIENCE DURING
 DEVELOPMENT STAGES
 OF SPORT



LALOU RECALLS DRIFTING PROGRESS

ADIL AL BALUSHI

MUSCAT: Drifting events are big fanfare in the Sultanate with Muscat Speedway arena at the Oman Automobile Association (OAA) regularly seeing huge turnout of fans.

Former Oman drift champion Ali al Balushi, recalls the development stages of the sport during an interview with *Oman Daily Observer*.

"The history of drifting events started with the Muscat Festival in 2006. I can remember the huge crowd who came to enjoy the drifting show during the festival days. After the initial success, the OAA set up a standard Speedway arena. The arena saw

the domestic drifters in action and later on many international drifters participated at Oman International Drift Championship," he said.

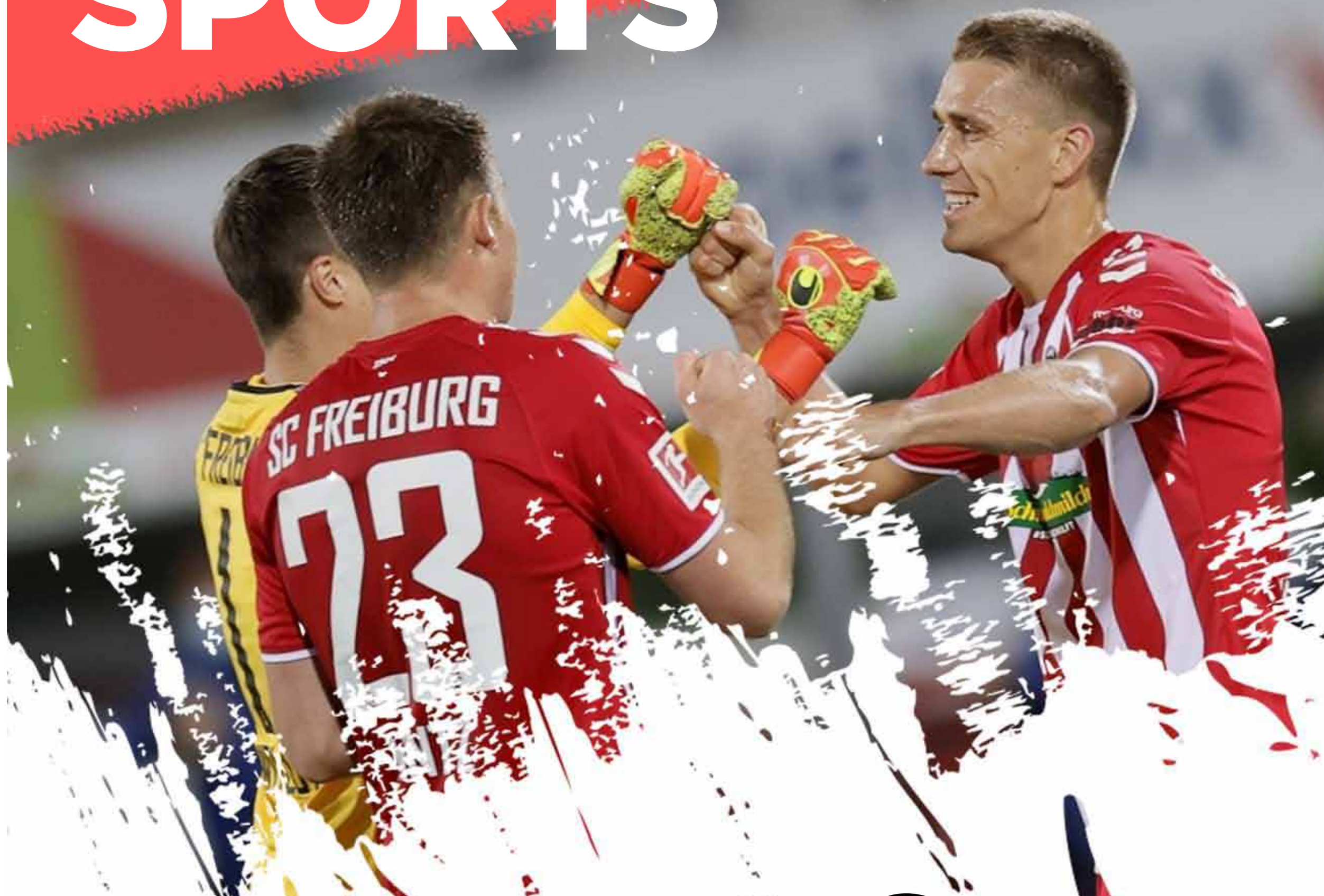
"The first edition of the drifting championship at Muscat Speedway was held in 2013. There were some drift events related to Red Bull in 2010 but all those tournaments were organised at the karting speedway. From

2006 and until now, drifting saw a huge change as Oman became the first country in the region to organise drifting tournaments and championships with professional standards approved by FIA. We followed high implementation of safety regulations and provided qualified and licensed umpires to evaluate the performance of drifters," he explained.

The OAA hosted the Oman International Drift Championship last February in presence of many domestic, GCC and world top drifters. Irish drifter James Deane was the champion and claimed the title for the second consecutive year. Piotr Wiecek from Poland came second while Andrius Vasiliauskas from Lithuania finished third. At domestic level, Sami al Shibani secured the first place while his opponent Haitham al Hadidi was positioned second. Ali al Balushi bagged the third place.

Ali, fondly called 'Lalou' became Oman's 'King of Drift' for three consecutive times from 2013. "I represented the Sultanate at the Red Bull car park drift championship and claimed podium four times from 2013 to 2016. I had shared my technical experience with other colleagues after my appointment as head coach of drifting by OAA in 2013. Nowadays, I am in charge of technical affairs for Muscat Speedway arena. Also, I design the drifting routes besides managing many motor events including drifting," he ended.

SPORTS



PETERSEN

HEADER SINKS 10-MAN GLADBACH

FREIBURG, Germany:

Ten-man Borussia Moenchengladbach suffered a 1-0 defeat at Freiburg after substitute Nils Petersen's superb second-half header dented their Champions league qualifying hopes in a lively Bundesliga game on Friday.

The result left Gladbach, who had Alassane Plea sent off after 68 minutes, fourth on 56 points from 30 games, with fifth-placed Bayer Leverkusen level on points with them

ahead of Saturday's home game against leaders Bayern Munich.

Gladbach dominated the first half and missed a string of chances, with Freiburg goalkeeper Alexander Schwolow denying Plea and Lars Stindl in quick succession as the home side defended desperately.

At the other end, Gian-Luca Waldschmidt skied his shot over the bar and Gladbach keeper Yann Sommer parried a fierce Lucas Hoeler shot with

the hosts relying on counter-attacks.

With Gladbach piling on more pressure after the break, Petersen met Vincenzo Grifo's cross 67 seconds after coming on and headed past Sommer from 10 metres against the run of play in the 58th minute.

Freiburg gained the upper hand after Plea was dismissed 10 minutes later for a second bookable foul and Sommer again denied Hoeler with a fine reflex

save in the dying minutes. The visitors threw men forward late on and whipped a flurry of crosses into the penalty area but the Freiburg defence, superbly marshalled by Schwolow, held out comfortably.

Freiburg, who are chasing a Europa League qualifying spot, stayed eighth on 41 points but are within a point of the two sides above them ahead of the last four rounds of games.

— Reuters