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editor@omanobserver.om

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EDITOR-IN-CHIEF: ABDULLAH BIN SALIM AL SHUEILI

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HIS MAJESTY THANKED BY QUEEN OF DENMARK

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has received a cable of thanks from Queen Margrethe II of Denmark in reply to His Majesty's cable of greetings on the occasion of her birthday. In her cable, Queen Margrethe II expressed her thanks and appreciation for His Majesty's cable of greetings and his best wishes to her and the friendly people of her country. – **ONA**



FOOD SAFETY, EVERYONE'S BUSINESS

The Sultanate, represented by the Ministry of Regional Municipalities and Water Resources, marked the World Food Safety Day, which falls on June 7 every year, under the theme "Food Safety, Everyone's Business." The UN celebration of the World Food Safety Day comes as safe food has many benefits, including concern in preventing, detecting and managing food-borne hazards and to intensify efforts to contribute to food security, human health, economic and agricultural prosperity and sustainable development. **DETAILS ON P5**

NOC NOT MANDATORY TO SWITCH JOBS

DECISION TO BE IMPLEMENTED FROM JANUARY 1, 2021

KABEER YOUSUF

MUSCAT: Oman on Sunday has removed the ban on changing job before completing two years away after cancelling the previous employment contract. Earlier, it was mandatory to have an NOC (No Objection Certificate) for moving from one employer to another even if he/she has completed many years with the employer. The Royal Oman Police's (ROP) decision amended some provisions of the executive regulations of the Foreigners Residence Law, issued by Royal



I've been wanting to change my present job because I feel it's high time I deserve a lift in my career

**EMPLOYEE OF
AN FMCG FIRM**

Decree No 40/15. Article 1 replaces the text of Article (14) of the executive regulations of the aforementioned Residence Law for Foreigners. With the new amendment

to Article No 24 by Lt Gen Hasan bin Mohsin al Shraiqi, Inspector General of Police and Customs, an employee can opt for another job and sponsor without any hindrance provided he or she has completed his/her employment contract with the existing sponsor. "Changing jobs in the country is made easier with the lifting of NOC criteria and in order to change a sponsor, an employee has to prove that they have completed the contract with their previous employer to join another company", the statement said.

TURN TO P2



Correct disposal of PPEs must to avoid health risk

VINOD NAIR

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs has stressed the need to use correct means to get rid of used masks because of the health and environmental risks they pose. "Correct disposal of personal protective equipment must be ensured so that it is not a cause of transmission, the Minister of Health said on Thursday.

TURN TO P2

Correct disposal of PPEs must to avoid health risk

FROM PAGE 1

“We have received complaints of people dumping masks and gloves, which is an uncivilised act. No penalties or fines are imposed, and we rely

on people's awareness”, he added. The ministry also said that environmental experts have warned against the use of facial masks that cannot be recycled, as well as products that are often made of plastic. The ministry stated that the process of getting rid of masks and other protective gear randomly on roads and especially

on beaches could become a health and environmental concern because of their impact on wild and marine life. It added that the problem is already arising in various countries around the world, where about eight million tonnes of plastic ends up at sea annually, and they constitute 80 per cent of the waste in the seas according to the

International Union for Conservation of Nature. The ministry said it is preferable to use reusable masks, which are available in the local market. Users should clean and disinfect them regularly according to the specifications and standards approved to ensure the quality and efficiency of these masks.



Ministry of Higher Education

Declaration of tender

COLLEGE OF APPLIED SCIENCES IBRI

Ministry of Higher Education (COLLEGE OF APPLIED SCIENCES IBRI) invites Tenders Contractor firms for the following Tender:

Tender No	Tender Name	Company that are entitled to participate	Tender Price	Last Date for buying Tender papers	The deadline for submission of bids
2/2020	Operation and Maintenance of Sewage Treatment Plant at CAS-Ibri	Specialized in providing regained service and registered with the Tender Board	(RO. 25/-) Twenty Five Rial Omani	27/06/2020	19/07/2020

- Companies Specialized in such activities who have valid Tender Board Certificate may collect Tender Documents starting from Monday 08/06/ 2020, starting at 8:00 am from the website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>
- Bids must be submitted online through the above mentioned website and must include a copy of a temporary insurance in the form of a bank bond or a certified check from a bank operating in the Sultanate of at least (1%) of the tender value and valid up to (90) days from the date of submitting bids.
- The Original bid bonds of (1%) must be submitted in an enclosed envelope to Ibri College of Applied Sciences (Finance Affairs Section) before the deadline date for submission of bids.
- For any enquires or explanations about the Tender : Please do it through the website: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>)
- For any enquires or Technical Support about E-Tendering System: Please contact number: +968 241 66670 or E-mail: etenderhd@mtc.gov.om.
- The College is not bound to accept the lowest or any other tender.



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Ministry of Higher Education

College of Applied Sciences, IBRI

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

College of Applied Sciences, Ibri

Ministry of Higher Education invites Tenders Contractor firms for the following Tender:

Tender No	Tender Name	Company that are entitled to participate	Tender's Price	Last Date for buying Tender papers	The deadline for submission of bids
01/2020	Renting a restaurant for supplying, preparing, processing and providing meals for male and female students, and Renting a shop for supplying and selling snacks at CAS-Ibri	Specialized in providing regained service and registered with the Tender Board	(RO. 25/-) Twenty Five Rial Omani	27/06/2020	19 /07/2020

Tender Documents may be collected from Administration & Finance Affairs at COLLEGE OF APPLIED SCIENCES IBRI, during normal working hours starting from Monday 08 / 06/ 2020.

To all companies that are included with its bid a temporary insurance in the form of bank guarantee or a certified check from a bank operating in the Sultanate of at least (1%) of the tender value is entitled on behalf of Dr. / Chairman of the Sub-Committee of Tender.

Submit bids, signed and sealed with red wax and addressed on behalf of the Chairman of the Tender Committee of Interior and Ministry of Higher Education is written from the outside number and the merits of the practice not to write on the envelope the name of the bidder or what it refers.

Must be placed offers tender box internal circuit referred to above. Before ten o'clock in the morning schedule, above; and will not be significant bids submitted after that date regardless of the reasons for the delay, and must attend a representative of the company that its tender offer in the auction when a bid opening.

Ministry is not bound to accept the highest or any other tender.

Chairman of the Sub-Committee of Tender
COLLEGE OF APPLIED SCIENCES, IBRI



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VINOD NAIR

MUSCAT: Officials from the Ministry of Social Development (MoSD) met with owners and representatives of private nurseries on Sunday to discuss the challenges faced by them. The meeting also discussed the measures and procedures to be implemented if nurseries are allowed to operate by the Supreme Committee. The meeting, also attended by the Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Development,



reviewed several solutions that would cope with all challenges in coordination with the concerned authorities. With most private and public sector offices resuming work, the

opening of the nurseries is important, especially for working women as many of them have no one to take care of children during work hours, said a working mother.

NOC not mandatory to switch jobs

FROM PAGE 1

The rule will come into effect from January 2021. The decision has been welcomed by a section of the business community and those who wanted to switch jobs. Speaking to the Observer, Omar Ashraf, a leading business person having a huge workforce on his payroll, said this can help retain the talent and skill and progress in business. “I see this as an opportunity to nurture



the skills and expertise of our staff and progress in business, and in the long run this rule will help many experienced staff to stay back and show loyalty to the company”, Omar

added. “I've been wanting to change my present job because I feel it's high time I deserve a lift in my career”, a sales and marketing employee of an FMCG firm, said.



Curb on sale of cosmetics containing hydroquinone

MUSCAT: Dr Said bin Khamis al Kaabi, Chairman of the Public Authority for Consumer Protection (PACP) has issued decision No 98/2020 regulating some cosmetics.

As per the decision, an approval from the

Ministry of Health is required for trading cosmetics that contain hydroquinone substance.

Cosmetics containing mercury substance should be traded only after obtaining an approval from the Ministry of Commerce

and Industry.

An administrative fine of RO 50 and up to RO 1,000 will be imposed for first-time violation. A fine between RO 50 and RO 2,000 per day will be imposed in case of subsequent violation.

—ONA

In support of frontliners

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH

MUSCAT: One act of volunteerism multiplies and brings others to forefront to support the initiative of others. The Grand Millennium Muscat and Millennium Executive Apartments came across the initiative of Oman Medical Association (OMA) during Ramadhan and came out with the idea of lunch boxes.

The activity is aimed at supporting medical staff to combat the widespread pandemic on the global scale. The team is there to show support and respect the volunteer health workers by delivering lunch boxes prepared by the talented chefs.

During Ramadhan the OMA had launched Muafaa (recovery) initiative under the title 'for the sake of Oman' after getting an approval from the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Social Development. The 60-bed hospital in Al Amerat is also equipped with four ICU beds.

"The private sector hospital was just getting ready but then OMA spoke to the owner of the hospital and converted everything for safe handling of COVID-19 cases. With the changes the hospital was ready for the treatment of patients with moderate to mild symptoms. Most importantly it is managed by health professional volunteers.

The Grand Millennium Muscat and Millennium Executive Apartments in collaboration with Oman Medical Association's support expressed their appreciation for the second time.

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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

2 accidents in Mahout due to sandstorm

MUSCAT: Two accidents of vehicles ramming into the road barriers occurred in the Wilayat of Mahout in Al Wusta Governorate as sandstorm left piles of sand on the main road.

Sandstorm also blew on the Adam-Thamrait carriageway, as a result piles of sand

formed on the road and the vehicular movement was hampered due to low visibility.

Royal Oman Police (ROP) advised motorists to be wary of sand piles on the roads and to stay focused particularly at night.

— ONA



Let’s not wait for a day to conserve environment

KAUSHALENDRA SINGH

SALALAH: Unlike previous years, the Directorate of Environment in Dhofar marked the World Environment Day on a small scale by planting some trees in the directorate premises on Sunday. The scale of the event was restricted due to COVID-19 pandemic, as very limited people participated in the event wearing masks and taking care of hand hygiene.

Dr Ahmed Abdullah Mahroos al Saiari, Director-General of Environment and Climate Affairs, planted trees and dwelt upon the importance of the Day. He emphasised upon the practices humankind should adopt in day-to-day life to conserve the environment.

The event themed - ‘Together we can act for nature’ - was organised jointly by the Directorate of Environment in Dhofar, Oman Construction and Engineering Company (OCEC) and Loban Technical Trading Company. Keeping in mind the social distancing factor, only a few employees of the Directorate took part in the event.

Dr Al Saiari called for everyone’s involvement in environment protection for which one should not wait for a day like ‘World Environment Day’. “Every day is a day for the environment and the nomenclatures of such days



come as reminders for us to deliver our duties as human being, which consumes the most from the environment but contributes the least.”

“We can start from home the protection of the environment by practicing conservation of water, plantation of trees and optimal use of electricity and fuel. We need to pass on this to our children. Our practices would make an impact on them and they would emerge as responsible citizens. It is all up to us how we take it,” he said, while

reminding how much people take from the environment on a daily basis and act carelessly when their turn of giving back to nature comes.

Rakesh Jha, Managing Director of the OCEC, put emphasis on awareness and enforcement of the best practices by the companies in this regard. “We can not compensate fully what we get from nature but can certainly minimise the adverse impacts by following certain norms and adopting the best practices.

He involved some schoolchildren in the campaign to make it broad-based and adopted social media to reach to the schoolchildren. He thanked Daksha Jha and Niyatee for participating in the campaign and being part of the great initiatives of the Directorate in conserving the environment.

Dr Fawaz, Dr Salim Sakroon and Mohammed Hardan shared valuable information on the native plants of Oman on this occasion.

Hotels set to reopen with new safety precautions

Visitors will be provided with face masks and disinfectants upon arrival, and their luggage will be sterilised

ZAINAB AL NASSRI

MUSCAT: The hospitality industry in Oman is geared up to resume operations with standard precautionary measures against COVID-19 pandemic, as the Sultanate's Ministry of Tourism announced a package on Sunday to ensure economic continuity along with care for general health.

Addressing the owners, operators and employees of the hotel establishments, restaurants and cafes, the ministry's package is directed towards adherence to the guideline while maintaining regular caution.

The guideline aims at ensuring personal protection to all workers, hotel guests and visitors to restaurants and cafes. It is aimed at striking a balance between an attempt to normal life and the continuation of precautionary measures.

According to the guideline, the precautions start from the establishment's entrance as it requested to provide guidance boards at



the main entrance, before the procedures for receiving room keys. It also requested to provide face masks at the main entrance so that everyone is committed to wear it immediately upon entering the facility.

It also requested that hand sanitisers be provided at a visible place near the main entrance permanently along with a thermometer (digital) to check body tem-

perature of all employees and guests before entering the facility.

According to the instructions, luggage must be sterilised upon arrival and leaving the hotel. Sterilisation of luggage carts is a must before and after use.

The instructions include sterilisation of electronic payment devices after each use, removing all devices and common materials in the lobby as public phones

and publications of all kinds, cleaning the reception table with sterile materials after completing each guest's procedures, maintaining a distance not less than two metres between the receptionist and the guest, and putting ground signals around the waiting places of guests not less than two metres between one signal and the other, or finish the procedures in the guest room directly.

Sultanate marks Food Safety Day

MUSCAT: The Sultanate, represented by the Ministry of Regional Municipalities and Water Resources, marked the World Food Safety Day 2020, which falls on 7 June of each year, under the theme "Food Safety, Everyone's Business".

The United Nations' celebration of the World Food Safety Day promotes global food safety awareness to help prevent, detect and manage food-borne hazards and to intensify efforts to contribute to food security, human health, economic and agricultural

prosperity and sustainable development.

The ministry, represented by the Food Safety and Quality Centre, makes continuous efforts to implement the programmes, plans and control systems related to the safety of the quality and suitability of food products and raise the level of food safety awareness to all concerned, whether those who produce food, provide, sell, or prepare food; to ensure the implementation of the food safety and quality policy in the various stages of its circulation. — ONA



OMAN

Ban on ownership of land by non-Omanis in some places

SAMUEL KUTTY

MUSCAT: Non-Omanis have been banned from owning land and real estate in some places in the Sultanate.

Regulations in this regard was issued by Shaikh Saif bin Mohammed bin Saif al Shabibi, Minister of Housing, on Sunday through Ministerial Resolution 292/2020.

According to the decision, "anything that violates the regulations, or contradicts their provisions will amount to cancellations of the deals".

The regulations, issued on the basis of Royal Decree 29/2018, state that "necessary approvals should be sought from the competent authorities including the ministry of Finance". The Royal Decree, issued in November 2018 that entrusted the ministry of housing to follow up with implementation of the provisions of the law, said that "non-Omanis were not



allowed to own land or properties in areas other than where they are eligible to possess".

Accordingly, real estate and land cannot be owned by any non-Omani in Musandam, Al Buraimi, Al Dhahirah, Al Wusta, Dhofar (except Salalah), Liwa, Shinas, Masirah, Jabal Akhdhar and Jabal Shams.

Also it banned ownership of land in mountains and islands of strategic importance that are situated near palaces, security and military apparatus and ancient archaeological lanes determined by the competent authorities.

According to Article two of the decree, non-Omanis

are banned from utilising their lands and properties for agricultural in all governorates of the Sultanate.

"Any person, who loses Omani citizenship or who has withdrawn, shall dispose of the land located in the listed places to an Omani national", said the Article three of the decree.

14 MORE FLIGHTS TO REPATRIATE INDIANS FROM JUNE 9 TO 23

KABEER YOUSUF

MUSCAT: The last flight of the Indian repatriation programme Phase 2+, AI 908 from Muscat to Chennai left Oman with 144 passengers and two infants on Sunday.

The passengers, comprising stranded visitors, pregnant, elderly, people needing medical assistance and others



travelling on compelling grounds were received by the government officials

and health workers at the Chennai International Airport.

The Phase 2++, which will begin on June 9, will have 14 more services to carry Indians to various destinations of India till June 23.

The first flight will be to Vijayawada in Andhra Pradesh followed by Kozhikode and Kochi.

"More flights have been kept for South Indian destinations as people from this region constitute the major share of the diaspora", an embassy official has clarified.

Passenger lists for all the flights as part of the Vande Bharat mission will be finalised by the embassy on the basis of information received by it. Priority will be

given to medical emergency cases, pregnant women, workers in distress, senior citizens as well as to other Indian nationals who are stranded in difficult situations.

"The embassy will be contacting the short-listed people for each flight directly through e-mail/telephone. The embassy will then share the list of short-listed people with Air India and all such people will be contacted by Air India for booking of tickets."

The cost of tickets will have to be borne by the passengers themselves and air tickets will be issued by the airline only to short-listed persons.

Libya's unity forces in battle to retake strategic Sirte



TRIPOLI: Fighters loyal to Libya's UN-recognised government on Sunday kept up their counter-offensive against forces of strongman Khalifa Haftar, but fighting slowed on the outskirts of the strategic city of Sirte. The Mediterranean coastal city — the home of former ruler Moamer Gaddafi, who was ousted and killed in 2011 in a Nato-backed uprising — is also a key gateway to the country's major oil fields in the east. The Turkish-backed Government of National Accord (GNA) based in Tripoli has in recent weeks retaken all remaining outposts of western Libya from pro-Haftar loyalists, who had sought to capture the capital in a 14-month offensive. Haftar, following his string of military setbacks, was in Cairo on Saturday where he supported a ceasefire proposal made by his



Air strikes were targeting enemy positions in Sirte and orders have been given to our forces to begin their advance and to systematically attack all rebel positions.

MOHAMAD GNOUNOU,
A SPOKESMAN FOR THE
GNA'S FORCES

key backer, President Abdel Fattah al Sisi, meant to take effect at 0400 GMT Monday. The so-called "Cairo declaration" called for the withdrawal of "foreign mercenaries from all Libyan territory, dismantling militias and handing over their weaponry," Sisi said. But the resurgent GNA has rejected the truce plan and bombarded Sirte, the

last major settlement before the traditional boundary between western Libya and the east, Haftar's traditional stronghold. Mohamad Gnounou, a spokesman for the GNA's forces, declared on Saturday that "we will choose the time and place when" the war ends. He said air strikes were targeting enemy positions in Sirte and "orders have been given to our forces to begin their advance and to systematically attack all rebel positions". Pro-GNA forces also said they had on Saturday shot down a Chinese-made Wing Loong drone. However, fighting stalled on the outskirts of the city on Sunday, GNA sources acknowledged. Libya has been in chaos since the fall of Gaddafi, which also opened a new gateway in North Africa for desperate migrants bound for Europe.

— AFP

BRIEFS

Saudi coronavirus cases exceed 100,000

RIYADH: The number of coronavirus cases in Saudi Arabia exceeded 100,000 on Sunday following a rise in new infections over the past ten days. The Saudi Ministry of Health reported 3,045 new cases on Sunday, taking the total to 101,914, with 712 deaths. The number of new daily cases exceeded 3,000 for the first time on Saturday. The country of 30 million people recorded its first COVID-19 infection on March 2. Health authorities said in April the virus could eventually infect between 10,000 and 200,000 people in Saudi Arabia. The kingdom topped 50,000 cases on May 16.

Former top Republican endorses Biden

WASHINGTON: Former Secretary of State and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Colin Powell on Sunday endorsed Democratic former US Vice President Joe Biden, becoming the first major Republican to publicly back Donald Trump's rival ahead of November's election. Powell, who led the US military during the 1991 Gulf War under Republican former President George H W Bush and later led the US Department of State under President George W Bush, said Trump was "ineffective" and has only gotten worse since he took office. Asked if he would vote for Biden, he added: "I will be voting for him."

Pope says worst of virus is over

VATICAN CITY: Pope Francis said on Sunday the worst of the coronavirus crisis was over in Italy, addressing the faithful for the first time in Saint Peter's Square since the health emergency began. The pontiff's address came a day after the Vatican said there were no more cases of COVID-19 within its population. "Your presence in the square is a sign that in Italy the acute phase of the epidemic is over," Francis told those assembled for his weekly Angelus prayer. "But be careful... do not celebrate victory too soon," he added, warning of the need to continue following social distancing rules.

— Agencies



A couple cries near a makeshift memorial to George Floyd near the site where he died in police custody in Minneapolis, Minnesota. - Reuters

Anti-racism protesters fill streets of US cities

WASHINGTON: Protesters streamed into Washington for huge demonstrations over the death of George Floyd and against the inequality facing black Americans, as the movement triggered by his killing at police hands entered a second weekend. With protests in solidarity under way around the

world, police closed off a wide area around the White House with black metal grates, as tens of thousands of people -- black, white and brown, both young and old -- rallied for racial justice. "This fight has been happening for many many decades, hundreds of years, and at this point it's time for a change, it's time to make

the future brighter," said Washington native Christine Montgomery, the mother of a 10-year-old boy. "I'm here so my son is not the next hashtag that is circulating worldwide." Some protesters attached pictures of Floyd and other black Americans killed by police to the tall barrier surrounding the White

House. On a sunny but oppressively hot day, many people wore masks because of the coronavirus pandemic. Volunteers handed out water and other supplies as the area took on a block party vibe with food trucks and vendors selling Black Lives Matter T-shirts. — AFP

BRIEFS

India, China seek to resolve border face-off

NEW DELHI: India and China have agreed to "peacefully resolve" a latest border flare-up that has heightened tensions between the nuclear-armed neighbours, New Delhi said on Sunday, after a high-level meeting between army commanders. Tensions have flared in recent weeks between the two regional powers over their 3,500-kilometre frontier, which has never been properly demarcated.

Dozens hurt in clashes as protesters flood Beirut

BEIRUT: Protesters poured into the streets of the Lebanese capital to decry the collapse of the economy, as clashes erupted between supporters and opponents of the Hezbollah. Hundreds filled the streets in and around the protest hub of Martyrs Square in the centre of Beirut, with skirmishes also between protesters and security forces, who fired tear gas.

Israelis rally against West Bank annexation plan

TEL AVIV: Thousands of Israelis rallied in Tel Aviv on Saturday night against the government's plans to annex parts of the occupied West Bank, an AFP reporter said. Demonstrators waved Israeli and Palestinians flags and held placards against the occupation of the West Bank and the possible annexation of parts of it, in a rally organised by leftwing NGOs and political parties.



No one can stay silent. No one can ignore injustice

JOE BIDEN

In every corner of this country last weekend, George Floyd's words, which were the words of Eric Garner before him, are echoing from millions of voices in our streets and in our hearts. "I can't breathe."

And, Friday should have been Breonna Taylor's 27th birthday — a day he didn't live to see.

They are among the latest additions to an endless list of lives stolen and potential wiped out unnecessarily.

On Friday, in discussing a jobs report that made clear 20 million Americans remain unemployed, Donald Trump said he hoped that George Floyd was "looking down and seeing this is a great day for our country."

He invoked the name of a man brutally killed in an act of needless violence and a larger tide of injustice that has metastasised

on this president's watch to celebrate a jobs report that included an unemployment rate of 35 per cent among black youth.

Systemic racism affects every aspect of our society. COVID-19 is ravaging our country, with almost 110,000 people now dead, but it is killing black people at almost 2.5 times the rate as white people.

These are more than just numbers — they are lives. They represent families worried about losing their homes and feeding their children. And, they are a wake-up call to all of us.

The truth of our nation is that too often, the colour of your skin alone can endanger your life and, for far too long, systemic racism has oppressed communities of colour in the United States. Black and brown communities must no longer be the only ones to bear the weight of pushing for change. No one can stay silent. No one can ignore injustice. — dpa

Have a safe return to office!



ABDULAZIZ AL JAHDHAMI

aljahdhami22@gmail.com

Welcome back to office to all those who resumed work after 'work from home' experience. It was the first-of-its-kind experience that most of us have undergone during the peak of coronavirus spread in the Sultanate. Although the virus is still spreading, employees of almost all government bodies and some corporates have resumed work from office lately.

Despite the fear of possibility of catching the virus at workplace, employees have passionately come back to office.

Now it is time to think about what work looks like after stay-at-home or work remotely are stopped. The process of bringing employees back to offices needs to be carefully planned. Each workplace is different and there is no one-size-fits-all preparation plan that will work for all workplaces. Unique situations could certainly arise as the post-pandemic situation is something abnormal to people.

However, many organisations may consider establishing guidelines for the use of personal protective equipment, such as face masks and gloves, checking employees and visitors for high temperature before entering the workplace, and establishing rules governing when employees can return to work after recovering from an infection. Accordingly, businesses and organisations will need to make significant health and safety changes to ensure a comfortable and safe workplace.

Therefore, how your organisation and business will look and function in would in the new work environment depends on various factors. Definitely that some of those factors could be out of control, but some could be embraced in order to speed up the workforce strategy for both in the short and long-term. What an organisation should do upon the return of employees to workplace represents the short-term, while what should the business look like reflects the longer term.

Health and safety risks at work come on top of the list of factors that need to be identified and appropriately managed. Social distancing and maintaining self-cleanness are also key to keeping one safe and stay healthy and protected from catching the virus. As employees are concerned, they must actively have control against the transmission of coronavirus while at work. Likewise, businesses and organisations will in view of that need to make significant health and safety changes to ensure a comfortable and safe workplace.

Have a safe return to office everyone!

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

FEATURES

Destroying what destroys Oman bees

RUQAYA AL KINDI

Honeybee breeding is an ancient Omani profession practiced for generations and therefore has become an important heritage that is also a source of income for many Omani families.

Both domesticated and wild bees have significantly contributed to the development of agriculture in the Sultanate whereas it is known that more than 75 percent of cross-pollination of plants are contributed by these hardworking pollinators.

But despite thriving conditions of bee breeding in the country, honeybee colonies all over the world are at risk from a variety of threats ranging from pesticides to habitat loss. The biggest threat however is caused by parasites particularly Varroa destructor.

These parasites attack the bees and their cells and cause them to weaken making them vulnerable to infection with other pests and diseases.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries said that it is a global problem that has moved to the Sultanate mainly caused by importing foreign bees and queens. Importation in itself is considered a disservice to the regulations and laws aimed at protecting Omani strains and not mixing them with non-native strains.

Also called the bees destroyer, the Varroa parasite ultimately destroys a hive.

Hassan al Lawati, head of the bee research department at the General Directorate of Agricultural and Animal Research, has pointed out in one of his lectures that the life cycle of the insect extends from 7-8 days until the bee becomes a complete insect.

Al Lawati said that a bee's lifespan is between two to three months. If the bee cell is not treated for varroa parasite, it will destroy the whole cell.

The Varroa parasite, Al Lawati explained, produces a generation with multiple deformities as it affects their legs, wings, and belly, and members of the bee community are also subject to rapid death

The Varroa parasite, Al Lawati explained, produces a generation with multiple deformities as it affects their legs, wings, and belly, and members of the bee community are also subject to rapid death.

While observing the hives, the beekeepers may notice this parasite on the body of bee workers and some larvae inside the hexagonal homes. If the beekeeper notices some bees killed and scattered on the base of the cell, bees crawling unable to fly, or that the bees move nervously and unbalanced, then the owner should respond quickly to deal with the parasite.

Finding solutions for farmers isn't only the responsibility of the government. Students at universities working closely with insects and plants in the colleges of Science and Agricultural Sciences believe that they can participate in finding the solution

to this serious problem in the Sultanate.

Nafta Student Company that participated in Injaz Oman Competition 2020, came up with a precious product that aims to limit the spread of this Varroa parasite. The product is a tablet in which ingredients are extracted from local plants.

"The Ministry has already provided a product called "Apil life var" to control the Varroa destructor. Although the ministry's product does not contain chemicals and meets the recommendations set, it remains a non-local product (imported) and the Sultanate imports it from France," Arwa Al Anbouri, CEO of the company, explained.

"Some beekeepers said that this product is extremely "concentrated" and if the beekeeper doesn't follow the instructions and the correct dose, this might

be harmful to the bees. While our product is much dilute and constitutes no harm whatsoever to the cell," she said.

The product has been proven to be effective through several stages. "Our initial experiments were in Sultan Qaboos University's labs and then the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries ensured that the experiments were accurate and reliable. To find out the appropriate dose for treatment, the product was tested on 12 cells in two months," Al Anbouri said.

The product is currently available on the market at the National Natural Honey Company. Beekeepers can also reach them through their accounts on social media: Instagram/Twitter: @nafta.om and delivery to all governorates is being catered to. The price of the product is RO 5 for 12 tablets.



INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



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Jebel Shams





ayman00088



Mexican zoo saves animals endangered by virus crisis



KIRA, A TWO and a half year-old tiger, arrived at a zoo in Mexico's northeast in April after her owner could no longer feed her due to the coronavirus-induced economic collapse.

The imposing 130-kilogram tigress was sedated and transported in a cage by truck to her new home in Culiacan zoo in Sinaloa state.

Her owner had responded to a campaign by Mexico's Association of Zoos, Nurseries and Aquariums (AZCARM) to avoid abandoning wild animals

during the lockdown.

"Abandonment happens when people can't cope with their animals any more, and in this pandemic, faced with the lack of economic resources and places to keep them, they prefer to get rid of them," AZCARM president Ernesto Zazueta told AFP.

Alongside the big cat, the Culiacan zoo also welcomed during the lockdown a python, a baby manatee and 14 green macaws, as well as 49 deer rescued from a sugar mill in Tabasco.

MALNOURISHED DEER

The deer arrived at the zoo suffering from malnutrition. Now they graze in a large enclosure alongside ostriches, giraffes and antelopes.

"The tiger was reported because they couldn't look after it; but as for the deer... it was an emergency because they didn't have any food or even anyone to look after them, on top of being in a place that was inadequate for the species," said Diego Garcia, Culiacan's director.

Mexican zoos have been

rescuing illegally trafficked wild animals for years, and others from circuses since a 2015 ban on shows using live animals.

In these reserves, experts try to rehabilitate the animals and where possible return them to their natural habitat.

However, many are forced to live the rest of their lives in zoos because of the long-term physical damages they've suffered or because they've lost their wild instincts.

"When the animals arrive we evaluate them, we rehabilitate them ... Many cannot return to the wild because they don't know how to survive, they don't know how to hunt, nor how to defend themselves," said Zazueta.

MAGNET FOR ILLEGAL TRAFFICKERS

Mexican zoos are struggling, like many businesses, due to lockdown rules imposed over the coronavirus and depriving them of vital entrance fees.

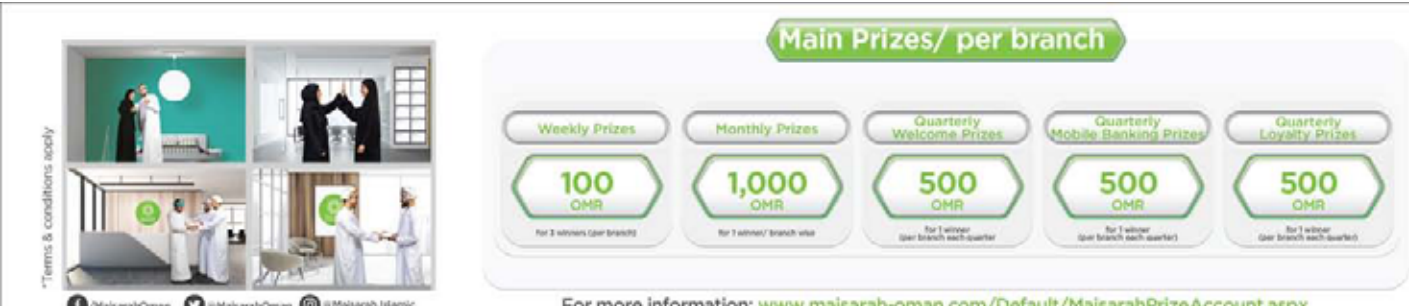
AZCARM is asking the government for support in food donations and in allowing zoos to reopen in the first phase of the country's "new normality," which saw essential businesses including mining, construction and aviation reactivated from Monday.

Kira and other animals at the Culiacan zoo have been fed on a monthly donation of 3.5 tons of meat from a local company.

And despite the difficulties, all the animals "are being very well cared for and well fed," said Zazueta.

Mexico is one of the most biodiverse countries in the world, according to the UN Environment Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre.

It is home to 10-12 percent of the biological species on the planet, is number one for reptiles and second for mammals, the government says. — **AFP**



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100 OMR For 3 winners (per branch)	1,000 OMR For 1 winner/ branch visit	500 OMR For 1 winner (per branch each quarter)	500 OMR For 1 winner (per branch each quarter)	500 OMR For 1 winner (per branch each quarter)

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CONSENSUS AMONG
PRODUCERS TO HELP
STABILISE OIL MARKET

CONRAD PRABHU

MUSCAT: Oman has agreed to slash crude output by 200,000 barrels per day (bpd) during July in line with an accord reached by global oil producers on Saturday night to extend record production cuts for another month.

Non-Opec member, as a partner in the so-called Opec+ grouping of leading producers, had participated in Saturday's video conference aimed at shrinking a supply glut that has eroded international oil prices amid the global coronavirus pandemic.

Representing Oman at the virtual meeting were Dr Mohammed bin Hamed al Rumhy, Minister of Oil and Gas, and Ali Abdullah al Riyami (pictured), Director General of Oil & Gas Marketing at the Ministry.

In comments to the

It was an excellent meeting! There was consensus between Opec and non-Opec producers on the extension proposal. Additionally, there was appreciation that the deal agreed in April was achieving its intended goal.

Observer, Al Riyami welcomed the earnestness with which Opec and non-Opec producers had deliberated on the meeting's central objective of propping up international oil prices through a further extension of the production cut.

"It was an excellent meeting! There was consensus between Opec and non-Opec producers on the extension proposal. Additionally, there was appreciation that the deal agreed in April was achieving its intended goal.



ALI ABDULLAH AL RIYAMI,
Director General of Oil & Gas Marketing

The participating countries demonstrated a good understanding about the importance of the deal in stabilising the market."

As part of its commitment to the historic pact reached by the Opec+ alliance in April, the Sultanate had slashed output by 200,000 bpd for May and June 2020. Following the new accord reached on Saturday, it has now pledged to cut its July production by 200,000 bpd as well.

On top of this commitment, the Sultanate is also

considering a further reduction of between 10,000 – 15,000 bpd for the months of June and July 2020 to help "give extra support to the market", said Al Riyami.

From August to December 2020, the Sultanate's share of the production cut will reduce to 161,000 bpd, further dropping to 121,000 bpd for the remainder of the accord from January 2021 to April 2022.

Significantly, the Opec+ alliance also agreed to task the Joint Ministerial Monitoring Committee (JMMC) to meet every month to check whether producers are adhering to their production cuts.

The Sultanate has been a member of the JMMC, as well as the Joint Technical Committee, but gave up its positions on both panels last year to make way for other countries to play their part as well, said Al Riyami.

OMANI TECH START-UP TO LAUNCH DNA TESTING SERVICE

PROMISING POTENTIAL: CONCEIVED AND DEVELOPED BY AN ALL-OMANI TEAM OF PROFESSIONALS, SHAFRA IS SET TO EXEMPLIFY A NEW ERA IN TECH ENTREPRENEURSHIP CURRENTLY BEING FOSTERED IN THE SULTANATE.

CONRAD PRABHU

MUSCAT: A high-tech Omani start-up is gearing up to roll out a first-of-its-kind DNA testing service that offers citizens and residents the opportunity to enhance their health and well-being by unlocking the secrets of their unique genetic code.

The initiative, planned to be launched under the brand name 'Shafra', has won the backing of Oman Technology Fund (OTF), the Sultanate's premier venture capital investment fund. Conceived and developed by an all-Omani team of professionals, Shafra is set to exemplify a new era in tech

entrepreneurship currently being fostered in the Sultanate. "We will be offering a DNA testing service using the most accurate gene sequencing technology," said Dr Raya al Maskari, Chief Scientific Officer – Shafra.me.

"The kits are user-friendly and delivered to our client's doorsteps. Our clients will receive personalised recommendations to help them optimise their wellness and make informed lifestyle choices based on their unique genetic code. The insights provided are backed up by the latest scientific research and will include reports on nutritional needs, food sensitivities, diet and fitness recommendations, sleep habits and many more... so stay



tuned!"

In a tweet, government-backed Oman Technology Fund said Shafra's anticipated launch would eventually pave the way for the Sultanate's entry into a global DNA testing market currently valued at around \$3 billion.

"We are grateful for OTF's investment opportunity and the world-class support and mentoring that we have received through the Techween accelerator programme, which helped us understand the market and develop our idea," Dr Al Maskari noted.

Asked for a timeline for the planned launch of the service in Oman, the Chief Scientific Officer added: "While we cannot provide an exact date of launching our services, we would like to thank our enthusiasts and assure them that we are eagerly working on a few technical aspects to optimise our operations.

We are also working on the necessary legal procedures to ensure our full compliance with regulations and international standards with regards to protecting personal data."

Omantel adopts environmental initiatives to reduce negative impacts on the environment and secure a better life for future generations

Muscat, June 7, 2020 - Omantel, the leading national integrated telecommunications services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, attaches great attention to environmental aspects as the company endeavors to minimize negative impacts on the environment and ensure its sustainability. Environment forms one of the key pillars of Omantel's sustainability strategy.

Every year, Omantel launches and adopts several environmental initiatives aiming to preserve the environment benefiting from Omantel leadership position in the telecom and ICT sector and the partnerships it formed with several stakeholders to maximize the impact of these initiatives.

Omantel believes in the importance of preserving the environment and its sustainability and hence the company is committed to minimizing the effects of its operations on the environment and is seeking to raise awareness of the importance of preserving the environment among different groups of the society. Among its key environmental achievements, the Company has successfully reduced its carbon emissions by 12% in 2019 compared to 2017, an achievement reflecting the company's commitment to "Paris Agreement" on threats related to climate change.

Omantel new headquarters is one of Muscat's iconic buildings that employs state-of-the-art technologies. Omantel ensured during the design stage and various constructions stages, that due attention is paid to relevant environmental factors and aspects, especially those relating to material used in the building. Omantel is proud to announce that the project has achieved 100% compliance for the use of low energy emitting materials used for the interiors. During construction, 59.77% recycled materials were used, 46.14% locally-sourced regional materials and 100% FSC Certified Wood.

Achieving an excellent standard of indoor air quality was imperative to Omantel during the implementation of this project. The building is set to achieve a LEED Point for 'Construction Indoor Air Quality Management', which ensures that the contaminant level in the building of all pollutants that may cause allergies and asthma are within EPA limits. For the wellbeing of employees, the amount of natural light available in all regularly used spaces was of vital importance, the project has achieved daylight >269 Lux in 75% of regularly



occupied spaces and outdoors views can be seen from >90% of regularly occupied spaces. The project has also achieved a potable water saving of 51.44% relative to EPA standards.

LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) is a certification programme which focuses on new, commercial-building projects. To achieve LEED's Gold Certification, a minimum of 60 points is required. Omantel's new HQ Building scored points in several areas, proudly aiming to the achievement of the gold certification. The building is located at Al Irfan business park, a central location that is accessible by public transportation networks, earning the project points for its location and accessibility by public transport.

The new HQ also scores highly for efficiency. By using low-flow fixtures and treated water for irrigation, the project achieved a good standard for water efficiency. Omantel ensured that all materials and resources used in the construction of the building were responsibly sourced, by using recycled, locally-sourced materials in line

with LEED requirements. As well as adhering to responsible construction practices, the project achieved well for its innovative design and high standard indoor environmental quality.

As a result of these efforts, Omantel was awarded the Green Era Sustainability Award. The award was presented at a special ceremony in Lisbon, Portugal. During the ceremony, the Omantel CSR Manager demonstrated the company's sustainability efforts and said in a speech, "Omantel has been working to adopt the best international practices to ensure that Oman's ecosystem is not compromised despite the rapid development and digital transformation that we are witnessing. Omantel pays great attention to electricity and energy issues and their impact on the environment and hence closely monitors the consumption of electricity and looks for renewable energy alternatives in addition to raising awareness among community members on the need to rationalize electricity consumption".

In another context, Omantel implemented

and launched the e-billing service across all its business lines. E-bills are not only convenient for customers but also save papers and distribution costs thus helping to reduce the carbon footprint of our operations. Omantel has managed to find solutions that have reduced printing by 77%. This initiative saved thousands of trees, which could have been used to produce the paper used to print these bills.

Moreover, in 2019, launched a 750 kwh solar system for the new headquarters which will reduce the electrical consumption from the grid by more than 20%. Omantel has also started a pilot project at 12 sites in the Wusta, Dakhliya and Sharqiya regions to power cell towers using solar panels and batteries. The aim of the project is to reduce the consumption of diesel in remote areas by powering cell sites using solar energy. This is expected to save costs by reducing the cost of logistics and fuel consumption. The diesel generators will start working only when the batteries run out of power. In 2019 we have implemented 3 solar hybrid sites. Each site reduces diesel consumption by 18.72 m3 per year accounting for a total saving of 56.16 m3.

As part of its efforts to safely dispose hazardous and non-hazardous waste, Omantel and be'ah (Oman Environmental Services Holding Company) inked a MoU in support of circular economy for a sustainable future. Based on the MoU, Omantel will provide be'ah with lead-acid batteries, end of life tyres, used lubricating oils of Omantel's transportation fleet and electronic, electric and paper waste, and the latter will



recycle the waste to regain its economic value and support national economy.

In-line with its transparency approach, Omantel issues an annual sustainability report that highlights Omantel's most important activities and performance in the economic, social and environmental fields. The report presents the company's performance in the environmental field for the past three years to highlight improvements made in these areas. The report also tackles the company's efforts to address any areas of weakness to improve environmental performance further.

Omantel is the Sultanate's first and leading integrated telecommunications services provider, enabling the digital society to flourish, allowing new ways of doing business and delivering a world of information, news and entertainment. Omantel seeks to get optimum customer satisfaction.

BUSINESS

BOE TELLS BANKS TO PREPARE FOR A NO-DEAL BREXIT



ANDY JALIL

andyjalil@aol.com

Bank of England (BoE) Governor Andrew Bailey has told UK banks to ramp up their preparations for a no-deal Brexit as the UK sticks to its target to strike a deal before the end of the year. Bailey told British lenders to accelerate their planning for a no-deal Brexit scenario in a call to Sky News.

One bank boss said the discussion suggested the BoE has changed its view on the outcome of Brexit trade talks. "It is fundamental to the BoE's remit that it prepares the UK financial system for all risks that it might face," a BoE spokesperson said.

"In performing that role, the governor meets the leadership of UK banks on a very regular basis. As we have said previously, the possibility that negotiations between the UK and EU over a future trading relationship might not conclude in a deal is one of a number of outcomes that UK banks need to prepare for over the coming months."

Prime Minister Boris Johnson has ruled out an extension of the December 2020 deadline to strike a deal despite the pandemic. A request for a one year or two-year extension of the Brexit trade talks deadline must be lodged by the end of this month.

Banks including executives from Barclays, HSBC, Lloyds Banking Group and RBS were on the call with Bailey. These banks already fear billions of pounds of bad debt as a result of the coronavirus crisis, with millions seeking payment holidays

on their mortgages and credit cards.

UK and EU negotiators are mid-way through a final round of Brexit trade deal negotiations before the end-of-June deadline. However, there are doubts over whether a breakthrough can be achieved, with negotiators far apart on key issues like fisheries.

The UK has also criticised the EU's desire for a set of common standards on concepts like workers' rights, pointing out other EU trade deals do not contain these stipulations.



We have always been clear there is no question of splitting the difference on level playing field and fish. We aren't compromising on these, because our position on these is fundamental to an independent country.

BORIS JOHNSON,
UK Prime Minister

A news report that the UK was willing to compromise on these flashpoints sent sterling spiking earlier last week. But the PM's office quickly denied the report, branding it "wishful thinking".

"We have always been clear there is no question of splitting the difference on level playing field and fish," the Prime Minister's spokesman said. Adding: "We aren't compromising on these, because our position on these is fundamental to an independent country."

Johnson is set to meet EU Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen by the end of June to hold talks aimed at thrashing out a Brexit trade deal before the autumn.

Bailey has told MPs that a failure to strike a Brexit trade deal is "likely to make trade more costly or difficult relative to a comprehensive FTA, reducing trade flows and foreign direct investment". Banks' share prices rose last week as traders gave the FTSE 100 companies a boost after Italy ended its quarantine amid more easing of European lockdowns.

Fed to weigh unemployment, reopening at key meeting



A US dollar banknote is pictured behind a protective mask in this illustration. — Reuters

The Federal Reserve will meet next week for the first time since US states began easing shutdowns imposed to stop the coronavirus pandemic, unexpectedly boosting employment numbers after two months of massive layoffs. The world's largest economy added 2.5 million jobs and the unemployment rate fell in May, according to the Labor Department, even as COVID-19 remains a threat to daily life.

The Fed moved swiftly and aggressively as soon as the pandemic struck, even before businesses were shut down nationwide, as the policy-setting Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) slashed its key lending rate to zero in March.

The central bank also rolled out trillions of dollars in liquidity to support battered markets, and provide lending to large and medium businesses as well as state and local governments.

And Fed chair Jerome Powell has vowed to do more, if necessary.

President Donald Trump who is counting on a solid economic recovery to boost his chances of winning a second term in November, cheered the better-than-expected job numbers.

But despite the unexpected good news the economy remains in trouble and BBVA's chief US economist Nathaniel Karp does not expect the FOMC to waver from its stance any time soon.

"While there are some early signs that the worst part of the crisis has passed, we expect that the Fed will reaffirm its commitment to doing whatever it takes while also reflecting on how the committee is viewing the current crisis," he said.

The virus itself remains a real threat, with cases continuing to climb in the United States, home to the world's worst outbreak with more than 108,000 dead — meaning life and commerce are not yet back to normal. — AFP

China imports plunge, exports fall on virus hit to global growth

BEIJING: China's exports and imports fell in May as the economic slowdown abroad started to take its toll, and after a surprise jump driven by increased demand for anti-epidemic supplies, official data showed Sunday.

With consumer demand muted and key overseas markets suffering downturns, imports saw their sharpest on-year fall in over four years, even as the country worked to restart its economy after bringing activity to a standstill to curb the coronavirus.

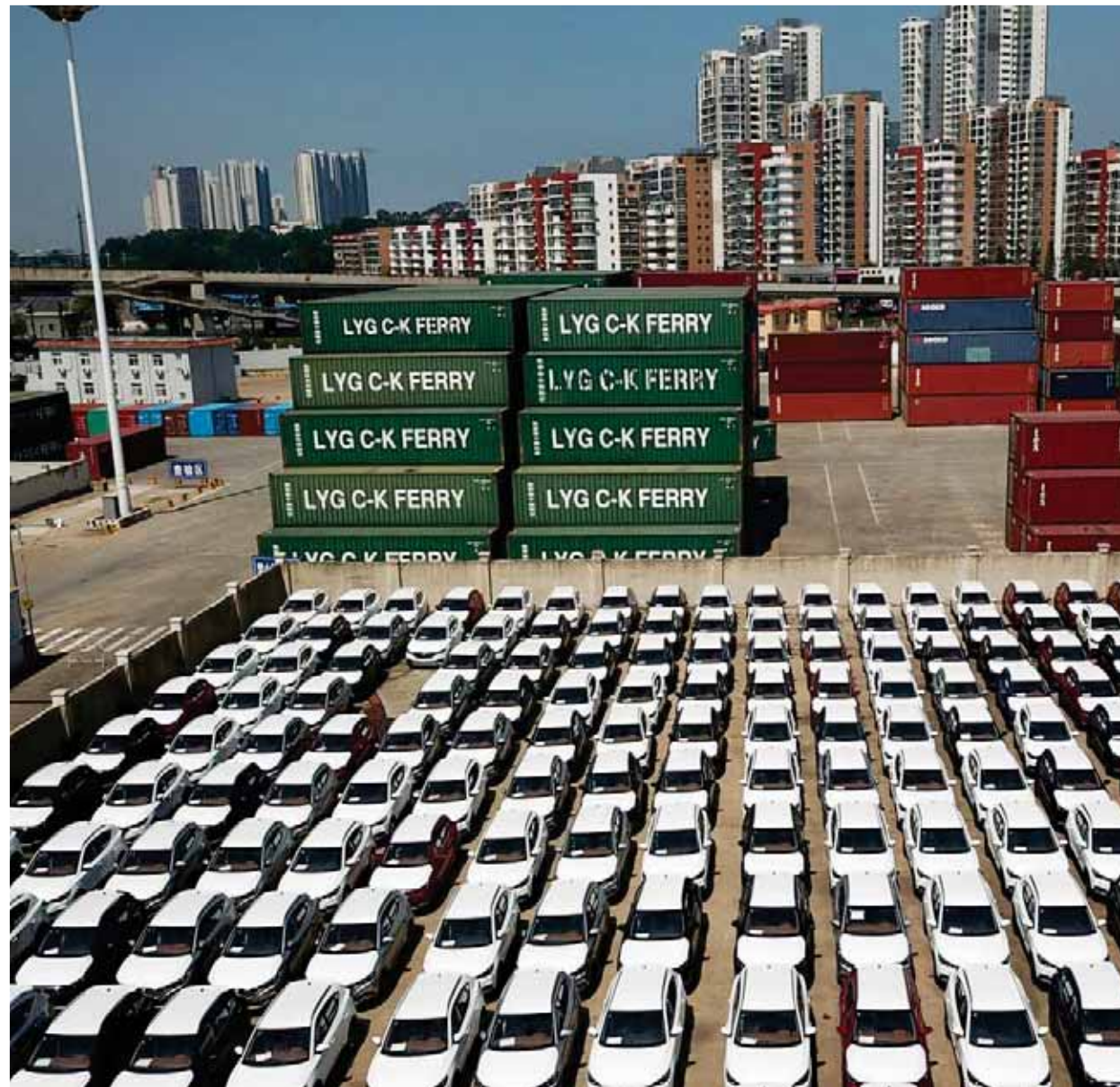
Exports from the manufacturing powerhouse fell 3.3 per cent on-year last month, better than the 6.5 per cent slide expected by a Bloomberg poll of analysts.

But the return to negative territory came after a surprise 3.5 per cent jump in April, which was partly due to medical exports.

Analysts have warned of signs that a larger downturn awaits.

Customs data released Sunday also showed a larger than expected drop in imports on-year, which were down by 16.7 per cent and at a four-year low.

Part of the plunge in the value of imports could be explained by falling com-



Cars to be exported sit at a port in Lianyungang, Jiangsu province, China. — Reuters

IMPORTS SAW THEIR SHARPEST ON-YEAR FALL IN OVER FOUR YEARS, EVEN AS THE COUNTRY WORKED TO RESTART ITS ECONOMY AFTER BRINGING ACTIVITY TO A STANDSTILL TO CURB THE CORONAVIRUS

modity prices worldwide, said Rajiv Biswas of IHS Markit.

Iris Pang, ING chief economist for Greater China, said another reason was likely a drop in parts bought for re-exports — imported goods that are shipped out after further processing — due to the uncertainty of global demand.

Medical exports supported Chinese shipments in April

and May, with shipments of textile yarns, fabrics and products rising 21.3 per cent for the first five months on-year.

Analysts expect this boost to fade however, as the virus situation improves worldwide. "Export growth rebounded in March and April, even as lockdowns came into effect abroad, because of a backlog of orders that had piled up

while Chinese factories were shut in February," said Julian Evans-Pritchard of Capital Economics in a recent report.

But he noted the Purchasing Managers' index, a key gauge of factory activity, still pointed to "a deep downturn in exports that has yet to materialise" as activity in China's major export markets remains subdued. — AFP

Malaysia to double deficit to fund stimulus

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia's fiscal deficit will nearly double to around 6 per cent of annual economic output this year because of the government's recent efforts to revive the economy, the finance minister said, adding it could seek to raise the debt ceiling to finance the stimulus.

Southeast Asia's third-biggest economy has announced incentives worth 295 billion ringgit (\$69 billion) to soften the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, with the government vowing to directly inject 45 billion



A woman wearing a protective face mask crosses a bridge, following the outbreak of the coronavirus in China, in Kuala Lumpur. — Reuters

ringgit of that into the economy, mostly raised through domestic borrowings.

A direct fiscal injection of 10 billion ringgit announced on Friday will be raised through domestic borrowing, Tengku Zafrul Aziz said in an interview in his office on Saturday.

"There is only so much monetary policy can do,"

"So you need fiscal policy to come into play, as long as you have the discipline and the commitment in the longer term to go back to where you should be in terms of the deficit." — Reuters

BUSINESS

Oil producers see signs of oil market recovery

VIENNA: The sharp reduction of global oil production that was agreed because of the pandemic will be extended for one month, around two dozen oil producers including Saudi Arabia and Russia decided on Saturday.

While the reductions that were first agreed in April had "helped garner tentative signs of a recovery in the global economy and oil market," policies must stay in place to keep the market in balance, the countries said in a statement.

The group consisting of the Vienna-based Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (Opec) and a Moscow-led group of allies (Opec+) had decided to slash their joint output by 9.7 million barrels per day (bpd) during May and June, aiming to take around 10 per cent of global oil supplies off the market.

The step was meant to cut supply and raise global oil prices, which had plummeted as the coronavirus crisis hit demand from the manufacturing industries and the transport sector.

In video link negotiations on Saturday, energy and oil ministers from the involved countries also agreed that countries that have been producing more than they should must compensate by producing less in coming months.

Nigeria, Iraq, Angola and Kazakhstan have been overproducing, according to Commerzbank energy analyst Eugen Weinberg in Frankfurt.

"Today all [Opec+ countries] have confirmed their obligations to 100 per cent fulfill the agreements," Russian Energy Minister Alexander Novak said in comments carried by state media.

"We see a positive effect of the joint actions. But the market is still in a fragile state and needs support," Tass agency reported. The agreements should now continue to have a positive



A worker walks on oil pipe at West Qurna oilfield in Iraq's southern province of Basra. — Reuters



Since the cut took effect last month, these adjustments have provided much-needed relief to the market, and we have seen a tentative recovery. Despite the progress achieved to date, we cannot afford to rest on our laurels.

MOHAMED ARKAB
OPEC PRESIDENT



effect on stabilising the energy market, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov also said.

Even after the current cut of 9.7 million bpd runs out, gradually smaller cuts would stay in place until 2022, according to the deal reached in April.

Since the cut took effect last month, "these adjustments have provided much-needed relief to the market,

and we have seen a tentative recovery," Algerian energy minister and current Opec president Mohamed Arkab (pictured) said at the start of the deliberations.

Since April, the benchmark price for European Brent oil has recovered from a level of around \$20 per barrel to above \$42.

The minister also noted that oil demand has picked

up globally as economic activity slowly returns to normalcy.

"Despite the progress achieved to date, we cannot afford to rest on our laurels," Arkab cautioned.

Venezuelan Oil Minister Tareck El Aissami tweeted about the agreement: "This will have a real impact on energy stability and fair prices in the oil market, and will be the starting point for economic recovery".

Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador announced on Friday the country would not take part in the extension but would stick to the April agreement. Energy Minister Rocio Nahle stressed on Twitter that the North American country remains open to dialogue.

Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zangeneh said that China is still the only country with a positive economic trend while a recession persists overall.

The latest decision by oil producers was aimed at pushing the benchmark price for European Brent oil above \$50, he said in a video that was posted online by well-known energy journalist Reza Zandi. — dpa

Djokovic doubts US Open participation

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‘IMPOSSIBLE TO PLAY UNDER COVID-19 PROTOCOLS AT FLUSHING MEADOWS’

.....



BENGALURU: World number one Novak Djokovic has said participating in the US Open would be an impossible task due to the “extreme” COVID-19 protocols in place for the tournament at Flushing Meadows.

The US Open, scheduled to begin on August 31, will be the first Grand Slam to be played after the COVID-19 pandemic suspended the season in March. The French Open was postponed to September while the Wimbledon championships was cancelled.

The suspension of the tennis season was last extended until the end of July but Djokovic, a three-time champion in New York, is not sure the tournament will go ahead.

“I had a telephone conversation with the leaders of world tennis. There were talks about the continuation of the season, mostly about the US Open due in late August, but it’s not known whether it will be held,” Djokovic told Serbia’s Prva TV.

“The rules that they told us that we would have to respect to be there, to play at all, are extreme. We would not have access to Manhattan, we would have to sleep in hotels at the airport, to be tested twice or three times per week.

“Also, we could bring one person to the club which is really

impossible. I mean, you need your coach, then a fitness trainer, then a physiotherapist.”

Djokovic suggested economic factors were behind the push to play the tournament.

“They want the tournament to go ahead at any cost for economic reasons, which I understand,” he said. “But the question is, how many players are willing to accept those terms.”

World number two Rafael Nadal had also said he would not travel to the US in the present circumstances.

Nadal has also questioned whether tennis can restart with the pandemic still gripping large parts of the world and unless every player is able to compete.

“For me it is very difficult to separate the status that the world is living from my real perspective on the world of tennis, no?” Nadal said this week.

“We need to be responsible, we need to be sure that the situation is safe enough, and then of course try to come back to our tour when the things are clear.”

The US leads the world in total cases, numbering over 1.9 million, while it has also recorded more than 109,000 deaths due to the novel coronavirus.

— Reuters

DIXON PUTS IN LONG DAY TO TRIUMPH

IndyCar season gets off to crash-filled start at Texas Motor Speedway



TORONTO: Scott Dixon rocketed to career win number 47 at the Genesys 300 on Saturday as the IndyCar season got off to a crash-filled start at the Texas Motor Speedway after a nearly three-month delay because of the novel coronavirus.

While North America's biggest sports - the NBA, MLB, NHL and MLS - work on return to play scenarios, it was a full day of motor racing in

the United States with both Nascar and IndyCar staging events.

With Nascar running in Atlanta during the afternoon, IndyCar grabbed the rare prime-time spotlight with Dixon, the five-time series champion, putting his marker down on a sixth.

The victory, Dixon's fourth in Texas, leaves him just five back of Mario Andretti in second place on the all-times win list.

It was a dominating performance by the New Zealander, who led 157 of the 200 laps running away from the pack on a restart with three laps to go after Ganassi Racing team mate Felix Rosenqvist crashed to bring out a caution.

"It's such strange times right now, it was such a team effort," said Dixon, holding up a pair of six-shooter pistols that go to the winner. "We were just so fast.

"I'm bummed that the fans aren't here, I wish everyone was here to celebrate.

IndyCar may be back but not the fans. The race was run in front of empty grandstands that can seat up to 135,000 spectators at the sprawling 1.5 mile oval.

After not racing in anything other than esports events, it was a long day in the car for many drivers.

— Reuters

SPORTS

AL KAAF
IS CONSIDERED AMONG THE BEST
FIVE REFEREES IN ASIA



ADIL AL BALUSHI

MUSCAT: He is among the top five referees in Asia with an impressive record of officiating top matches in Asian and global level. Oman's iconic international football referee Ahmed al Kaaf is getting closer to fulfil his ambition to officiate in the World Cup.

Al Kaaf believes he can get nod from Asia to officiate at Fifa World Cup in Qatar in 2022.

Al Kaaf explained his successful refereeing career to Oman Daily Observer in an exclusive interview.

"My refereeing career began in 2007 after former international referee Abdullah Baabood introduced me to this field. My turning point as referee was in 2008 when I was selected as one of the umpires for 'Promising Future Referees' programme run by the Asian Football Federation (AFC). I had graduated from this programme in 2010 as best of five umpires in Asia. Then, I had received a reward from AFC to have a camp among the top referees at Premier League in January 2011," he said.

The 37-year-old had officiated more than 30 matches at AFC Champions League and 16 games at the AFC qualification for Fifa World Cup. Moreover, Al Kaaf was the main

referee for the U-23 AFC final clash between Vietnam and Uzbekistan in China in 2018. The refereeing team also comprised Omanis Abu Baker al Amri, Rashid al Ghaithi and Omar al Yaqoubi as fourth official.

The Salalah resident had officiated two games in the Fifa U-20 World Cup in Poland in 2019. "Based to the requirement of Fifa, it is necessary that the referee should officiate top matches at the continental level as well as top Fifa world events. I managed to officiate top games at different levels, and I am ranked by the AFC as the top five best referees in Asia. I hope to be one of the selections from Asia for the Fifa World Cup in Qatar in 2022. My objective is not only to reach the top Fifa event but I will try to be among the top referees if I am selected," he added.

The Sultanate's international referee took advantage of the current situation of COVID-19 pandemic to develop his fitness level. "I am undergoing training daily for almost two hours and this is very essential to keep yourself fit and healthy. I believe that the referee should work on himself a lot through developing the strong points and addressing the weak areas," he signed off.

OMAN'S
TOP
REFEREE
GETS
CLOSER TO
WC GOAL

SPORTS



BAYERN KEEP DORTMUND AT BAY

BERLIN: Bayern Munich kept title rivals Borussia Dortmund at bay with a ninth successive win in the German Bundesliga on Saturday.

Bayern striker Robert Lewandowski scored his 30th league goal of the season as Bayern came from behind to claim a 4-2 victory over Bayer Leverkusen, a win which kept them seven points ahead of second-placed Dortmund, who beat Hertha Berlin 1-0.

After Lucas Alario secured an early lead for the home side, Bayern struck twice in quick succession just before half-time to turn the game in their favour after Kingsley Coman's equaliser.

A mistake from Moussa Diaby allowed Coman to curl in the equaliser, before a fizzing shot from Leon Goretzka and an elegant lob from Serge Gnabry saw Bayern take a two-goal lead into the break.

"We didn't start well, but I think it's something which really distinguishes us at the moment, that we are able to fight our way back into games", Goretzka told Sky.

Lewandowski sealed the win in the second half, equalling his most prolific

BUNDESLIGA RESULTS ON SATURDAY:

Bayer Leverkusen 2
(Alario 9, Wirtz 89)
Bayern Munich 4
(Coman 27, Goretzka 42, Gnabry 45, Lewandowski 66)

RB Leipzig 1 (Schick 27)
Paderborn 1
(Strohdiek 90+2)

Fortuna Duesseldorf 2
(Hennings 5, 77-pen)
Hoffenheim 2 (Dabbur 16, Zuber 61)

Eintracht Frankfurt 0
Mainz 2 (Niakhate 43, Kunde 77)

Borussia Dortmund 1
(Can 57) Hertha Berlin 0

Bundesliga season, although Leverkusen teenager Florian Wirtz struck late on to become the Bundesliga's youngest-ever scorer at just 17 years and 34 days.

"We already knew he was a huge talent", said Leverkusen coach Peter Bosz of the teenager, who beat the record set by Nuri Sahin for Borussia Dortmund in

November 2005 by 48 days. Can strikes for Dortmund

Dortmund battled to a 1-0 home win over Hertha thanks to a second-half strike from Emre Can.

England winger Jadon Sancho missed from close range just after the break before setting up Can with a deft chip over the back line on 57 minutes. — **AFP**