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20 Ramadhan Thursday 14/5/2020			
Prayer times			
	Muscat	Nizwa	Salalah
FAJR:	04:02	04:08	04:34
DHUHR:	12:08	12:12	12:25
ASR:	03:31	03:34	03:38
MAGHRIB:	06:46	06:49	06:53
ISHA:	08:04	08:07	08:06

Ramadhan
Mubarak
2020/1441 AH
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Record 298 cases in a day, Muscat tops

STAFF REPORTER

MUSCAT: The Sultanate reported a record spike in a single day with 298 COVID-19 cases on Wednesday taking the total number of infections to 4,019.

Fresh cases include 89 Omanis and 209 expats, the Ministry of Health said. It said 39 patients have recovered from novel coronavirus.

Of the 298 new cases, 245 were from Muscat, taking the total in the capital governorate to 2,971. The rest are from South Al Batinah (24), Al Dakhiliyah (15), South Al Sharqiyah (5) and Al Buraimi (1).

The Wilayat of Muttrah continued to top the Muscat Governorate with 1,982 cases followed by Seeb (485), Bausher (420), Al Amerat (83), Muscat (25) and Qurayat (6). The total number of COVID-19 deaths in the Sultanate is 17.

EID BUZZ MISSING; BUT CHEER ALIVE

CELEBRATIONS LOW-KEY DUE TO CORONAVIRUS LOCKDOWN

SAMUEL KUTTY

MUSCAT: With the extended stay-at-home order continues, the celebrations marking the culmination of Ramdhan will be a low-key affair this year.

Owing to the coronavirus pandemic, mosques are closed, special evening prayers and iftar congregations have been cancelled and believers are told pray at home.

And shopping that adds colour to the festivity is almost nil as

malls remain closed with uncertainty clouding their opening. People are now thinking about what they can do differently this year in order to celebrate Eid al Fitr under lockdown.

Although some people have begun shopping online, many said they do not want to go to shopping malls, even if they are allowed to open, as it can risk their lives.

Instead, they say, "we must celebrate the Eid in the current manner that we observe Ramadhan respecting

the lockdown rules".

And with restrictions set to remain in place, Nasser al Wahaibi, said there will be a lot of differences in the celebrations. "This time, in many ways it will be a more sincere Eid", he said.

Although the coronavirus has forced a change in the customs and traditions, the retired teacher said, "the current situation could help put things in perspective as it is good time for self-reflection".

TURN TO P2

The man who feeds the poor in Muttrah



Ali Thani distributes food with the help of volunteers.

KABEER YOUSUF

MUSCAT: In the narrow lanes of Muttrah where people are cooped up inside their homes due to lockdown, Ali Thani's knock is a relief. The middle aged restaurateur distributes over 1,000

food packets just before iftar everyday.

Close to sunset, he pulls over his 4X4 to a side in the Ayeen area mostly populated by poor expats and starts unloading the bundles of cooked food as well as fresh fruits and vegetables.

"Ali Thani has been doing this ever since the Muscat Governorate went under lockdown", says Issam al Balushi, a social worker and a public servant, who helps the Good Samaritan in his noble mission.

TURN TO P2

FROM PAGE 1

Eid buzz missing; but cheer alive

Most market places including traditional souqs now wear a deserted look as they are bereft of visitors to prevent the potential spread of the novel coronavirus in Oman.

Salim al Lawati, a bank employee said, "We have sacrificed a lot till now and should not allow our efforts to go waste by venturing out for the sake of shopping. Any negligence will not only put our lives but even those close to us in danger".

While urging others to tone down celebrations by staying at home, not crowding markets, Abdul Reda from Lebanon reminded that all are now battling a pandemic and the best way to avoid catching it is by staying at home.

The man who feeds the poor in Muttrah

Ali Thani has two restaurants in Muscat and one in Sharqiyah. He dropped out of school and took up odd jobs to support his family at a younger age.

"I was really feeling miserable when I found that people are not able to go out and buy their provisions and prepare their meals for iftar and suhoor just as they did last year. All I could do was to bring some food from my restaurants and feed the needy in this area", Ali said.

A group of Omani and expatriate youngsters help Ali to distribute the food. The packet contains some fresh fruits, vegetables, cooked rice, harees, makbous, juice and laban bottles which is sufficient for a family of three or four for an evening.

8 flights to India in second phase of repatriation



STAFF REPORTER

MUSCAT: To facilitate the return of stranded nationals in the Sultanate, India will operate eight more special flights between May 17 and 23.

The schedules are Muscat-Trivandrum (May 17), Muscat-Hyderabad (May 18), Muscat-Bangalore (May 20), Salalah-Calicut (May 20), Muscat- Delhi (May 21), Muscat-Kannur (May 22), Muscat-Kochi (May 23), and Muscat-Gaya (May 23).

In the second phase, there will be six flights from Muscat to different destinations in India outside Kerala and Tamil Nadu.

As in the case of two earlier flights, the passenger lists for all these eight flights will be finalised

by the Embassy on the basis of the registration made by the nationals on its website.

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 shortlisted people for each flight directly through email/telephone.

The cost of tickets will have to be borne by the passengers themselves and air tickets will be issued by the airline to shortlisted persons. All passengers are required to confirm acceptance of all conditions of travel, including quarantine requirements in India as well as health requirements in order to board the flight.



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Foreigners Residency Law Businesses warn against repealing of Article 11



VINOD NAIR

MUSCAT: Business owners in the Sultanate have warned against the repealing of Article 11 of the Foreigners Residency Law, which allowed expatriates to change jobs freely in the country.

Article 11 of the Foreigners Residency Law says that an expatriate employee shall not be granted an employment visa if he or she has worked in Oman but has not completed two years from the date of his or her last departure.

One of the decisions highlighted by the businesses is that the repealing of the article can influence demographics in various governorates and wilayats where there is more demand for employment.

It also hinted at the possibility of slowing of the productivity rates of private sector institutions due to labour leakage of skilled and

trained expatriate labour to the competitors.

It also hinted at the possible flourishing of the hidden labour through the movement of the labour from the current employers, which will affect the economic stability of the business.

It will also weaken the local companies as the foreign workers may try to establish their own companies, especially in light of the new foreign capital investment law.

There is a possibility of the leaking of confidential information of institutions to other parties or the competitor after changing the job.

It will increase pressure on the judiciary by raising the volume of cases and disputes between the worker and the employer.

It will impact businesses and their competitiveness due to the high wages of foreign workers, which will increase during the transfer of jobs.

Legal action against water bottling firm for manipulation

MUSCAT: A water bottling company has been referred to the judicial authorities after it sold water carton boxes with the 'date of production' that was disputed, said the Public Authority for Consumer Protection (PACP) here on Wednesday.

The production dates printed on the boxes were different from what was printed on the bottles.

The matter was brought to the notice by a customer who had purchased a number of 500 ml drinking water boxes from one of the water bottling factories, which was delivered at his home. In the process, he found that the production dates printed on the bottles were different from what was printed on the boxes.

PACP has called upon all commercial establishments to abide by the consumer protection law and its executive regulations, and not to take advantage of the current circumstances to carry out fraud against consumers, to avoid legal measures against them.



Ministry of
Higher Education

ELECTRONIC TENDER

The Internal Tenders Committee of the Ministry of Higher Education announced the following tender:

Tender No.	Tender Name	Company that are entitled to participate	Tender Price	Last Date for purchasing Tender	The deadline for submission of tenders
5/2020 Recall - 1	Microsoft Products Under Microsoft Enrollment for Education Solution (EES) For colleges of applied sciences and Rustaq College of Education	Specialized in providing Same service and registered with the Tender Board With Grade, Excellent	RO.25 /=-	22/05/2020	01/06/2020

The purchasing of the tender documents by E-Tendering system will starting on Wednesday 13/05/2020 at 07:30 am. To purchasing, please visit the following link:

<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om/>

All companies that are bidding must provide a bank guarantee or a certified cheque from a bank operating in the Sultanate for at least (1%) of the tender value on behalf of His Excellency Dr. / Chairman of the Internal Tender Committee.

Preference will be given to companies' or small and medium enterprises registered with the General Authority for the development of Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) that includes the largest proportion of its tender Omanization.

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

Chairman of Tender Committee
Ministry of Higher Education

www.mohe.gov.om



OMAN

ADDITIONAL 5PC CUT IN BUDGETS OF MINISTRIES, GOVT UNITS
More steps to cope with crisis

MUSCAT: Darwish bin Ismaeel al Balushi, Minister Responsible for Financial Affairs, has said the global economy is currently witnessing an unprecedented economic crisis due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the sharp fall in international oil prices, causing worse-than-expected impact on all countries.

In comments to Oman News Agency, the minister said the decrease in the price of Oman's crude oil has led to a sharp fall in oil revenues which will affect the government's ability to fund the implementation of the development and social spending programmes approved by the budget as well as expose the financial position to several risks.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Finance issued a Financial Circular No 16/2020 which relates to the reduction of budgets of ministries and government units, to carry out an additional 5 per cent cut on budgets.

The minister said that the government has taken a set of measures to slash public spending in a bid to reduce the impact of the financial crisis. He noted that the financial effect



from these measures is projected to surpass RO 1 billion in addition to RO 300 million in the revenues side.

These measures include: Cutting current spending at the civil, military and security units by 10 per cent, reducing the allocations approved for the development budget by 10 per cent, reducing the administrative and operating expense for the state-owned companies by at least 10 per cent, cutting government subsidy to state-owned companies by 50 per cent, reducing the allowances of the board of directors of public authorities and establishments and their subsidiaries and

committees by 50 per cent, reducing the financial allocations for official missions by at least 50 per cent at all civil, military and security units and government companies, negotiating with the owners of properties rented by the government units to reduce the rent by no less than 10 per cent, suspending the implementation of new capital projects of the state-owned companies and rescheduling existing financial obligation, suspending promotions and allowances for all employees of the state-owned companies regardless of the company's financial results, suspending all overseas training courses,

workshops, conferences and exhibitions for the civil, military and security units as well as the state-owned companies, suspending exceptional allowances for all government employees, suspending celebrations and non-essential events, prioritizing the private sector in the expansion and establishment projects at the state-owned companies, strengthening the role of the public-private-partnership, covering newly emerging financial obligations during the current year from the approved budget through the optimization of expenses without requesting extra allocations. — ONA

Ramadan Iftar Program

RAMADAN MUBARAK

The Prophet (ﷺ) said, "He who provides a fasting person something with which to break his fast, will earn the same reward as the one who was observing the fast, without diminishing in any way the reward of the latter."

The Oman Charitable Organization is pleased to announce that it will receive donations for Ramadan Iftar Program in Sultanate of Oman for the year 1441 AH / AD 2020 through the following accounts :

Omantel users cost 1 RO
Send **Donate** to **90022**

Ooredoo users cost 1 RO
Send **Donate** to **90909**

Or donate via devices automated payment of a company * ONEIC *

National Bank of Oman
1049337798001

Bank Dhofar
01040609090001

Donations Portal for Charitable Organization
www.donate.om

OCO Headquarters : Muscat Governorate , Al Khuwair 33 , Street No. 47, next to Sultan Said bin Taimur Mosque, or one of its branches :

South Al-Sharqiyah Governorate
25541087
Sur / Al-muntafaa

North Al-Batinah Governorate
26864241
Sahar/Al-Hambar

Musandam Governorate
26731588
Khasab / Al-Shaebah

Dhofar Governorate
23234735
Salalah / Al-saada

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Minor financial offenders freed through Fak Kurba

KABEER YOUSUF

MUSCAT: Hundreds of prisoners who are currently serving jail terms for minor offences have been freed under 'Fak Kurba' programme of the Omani Lawyers Association.

Currently in its seventh edition, the 'Fak Kurba' programme has been a bridge to freedom for thousands of citizens who fell into some financial commitments beyond their capacities.

"Thousands of individuals and their families have been able to secure their acquittal from minor financial disputes that landed them behind bars over the past seven years", said Mohammed bin Ibrahim al Zadjali, Chairman of Omani Lawyers Association and Member of Majlis Ash'shura from Batinah Governorate.

This year the number, of those who benefited over the last two weeks of Ramadhan, reached 295 cases, including 33 women.

OTF launches youth innovation programme

MUSCAT: Oman Technology Fund (OTF), in partnership with the UNICEF Oman, has launched the Technology Challenge for Youth programme aimed to fight the COVID-19 pandemic and build up virtual services platforms.

The programme seeks to provide support to start-up innovators through innovative platforms with the objective of developing technology-based solutions for the education and health sectors to help young Omanis cope with distance education and training problems as well as online employment.

The move was necessitated by the need to find technological solutions for virtual communication services including for telework at public and private establishments following the deactivation of physical institutions due to the coronavirus-induced shut-downs.

Talal bin Sulaiman al Rahbi, Chairman of OTF Board of Directors, said the partnership with UNICEF Oman is a way to enhance the Omani youth's technological innovations related to university education, lifelong learning and employment but more importantly as a contribution to building a knowledge-based Omani community.



Logistics holds potential to stem COVID-19 impact

KAUSHALENDRA SINGH

SALALAH: Amid challenges being faced by the businesses in the wake of COVID-19 pandemic, some promising thoughts came from a section of business leaders who saw big potential of logistics sector in giving the businesses a boost post-pandemic.

At a virtual meet the representatives of the Dhofar branch of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industries (OCCI), Port of Salalah and Mazyouna Free Zone, discussed the strength of the logistics sector in bringing the businesses to next levels and thus contributing to the national economy.

Hussain Huthaim al Batahari, Chairman of OCCI Dhofar chapter, exhorted the businesses to take advantage of Oman's strategic location and availability of the best possible infra-

structure and facilities in terms of ports, customs, airports and highways. They contribute hugely in supporting business activities, as it is assumed that the logistics sector is a vital sector that is best exploited now.

The Chairman of OCCI Dhofar chapter exhorted the businesses to take advantage of Oman's strategic location and availability of the best possible infrastructure and facilities in terms of ports, customs, airports and highways

He called upon the businesses to invest in the logistics sector and develop chain to import directly from the source countries and invest in the field of storage. "That may

be dry or cold stores, import and export of goods, storage and distribution".

Said bin Abdullah al Balushi, Acting Director General of Al Mazyouna Free Zone, said in 2019 the volume of goods through the free zone reached 450,000 tonnes, which is expected to reach 600,000 by the end of 2020.

"In terms of origin and development Al Mazyouna is the Gulf gateway for transit trade to the Republic of Yemen and then to East Africa. The number of investors is increasing. It has reached more than 220.

This is a good indicator thanks to the facilities, availability of logistics chain and strategic location", he said.

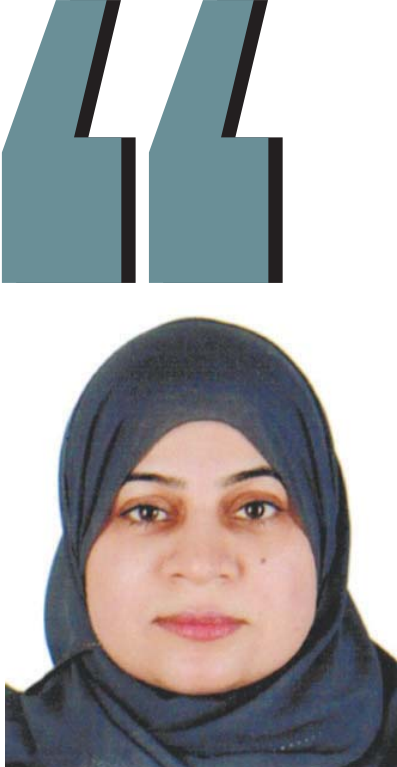
The most important investment in the Mazyouna Free Zone, according to him, is in the field of logistics by having warehouses.



CP THERAPY SUCCESSFUL WITH COVID-19 PATIENTS IN SULTANATE

MUSCAT: In all, 17 coronavirus patients have received convalescent plasma (CP) therapy at the Royal Hospital, of whom five have since recovered from the disease and eight withdrawn from ventilator support, said Dr Firyal al Lawatiah, Senior Consultant, Infectious Diseases and Head of Infectious Disease Department at the hospital.

In comments to Oman, sister publication of the Observer, Dr Al Lawatiah said coronavirus patients who were transfused with convalescent plasma



Dr Al Lawatiah said coronavirus patients who were transfused with convalescent plasma have shown significant improvement

donated by recovered patients have shown significant improvement.

The Department of Blood Banks Services on Wednesday called upon patients who have recovered from COVID-19 to donate blood plasma to help coronavirus sufferers to recover from the disease.

The need for convalescent blood plasma has increased as the number of COVID-19 patients surges.

The Ministry of Health said the clinical trials of convalescent plasma transfusion have shown positive results.

Keeping medical equipment sterile



STAFF REPORTER

MUSCAT: The Central Sterile Services Department (CSSD) at the Royal Hospital is an integrated place in the hospital that performs the operations of cleaning, disinfection and sterilisation of reusable medical equipment, where the sterile supplies, either tools or textiles, are stored to be provided to all the departments of the hospital.

The department is equipped with the state-of-the-art devices and equipment of international standards and specifications, applying continuous follow-up and maintenance.

The CSSD consists of a full-fledged team specialised in sterilisation and its updates to deliver quality work of high efficiency and which deploys international preventive and precautionary procedures of infection transmission.

Sterilisation is the process of destroy-

ing all living organisms such as bacteria, fungi, viruses including the germinated spores stuck on the surfaces of objects.

The CSSD consists of a full-fledged team specialised in sterilisation and its updates to deliver quality work of high efficiency and which deploys international preventive and precautionary procedures of infection transmission.

To achieve a successful sterilisation process without complications resulting from functional inefficiencies, certain stages must be followed that are divided into five major areas such as cleaning and decontamination, assembly, wrapping, and storage.



TACKLING FEAR WITH GRATITUDE

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH

The holy month of Ramadhan is a time when we try to find many answers to pressing questions. This Ramadhan among many other issues is also the element called fear of the unknown.

Currently many fear about the pandemic at the same time about the future as well.

“A fear is a normal emotion a human being can have in any normal circumstance, especially when it is vague, when it is not clear or when it is a new experience. People have the right to have fear but at the same time they should be optimistic because we do not know what the future holds for us”, explained Hatim al Abdulsalam, member of the Islamic Information Centre of Oman while speaking in Observer’s podcast named, Essence of Ramadhan.

He urged to look at the experience of COVID-19. “Before Coronavirus, we did not have many of the industries that we are focusing on now. We used to depend on import of many things but during the pandemic we learnt to make our own hand sanitizers, learnt to make our own face shields using 3D printing”, he noted.

Sometimes these calamities make us stronger and smarter so according to Hatim, instead of bowing down to fear one should explore the opportunities because something positive comes out of the negative.

Fear could be illusion he pointed out but what about planning for disaster?

“In the Holy Quran it is said that one’s sustenance is recorded in the heavens. None of us can guarantee about

tomorrow. Each one of us is guaranteed with our sustenance so we should do our part and leave the part of sustenance to the Almighty. And let us not forget he is the one who brought us to this world. The means will be given for the ends to be met”, Hatim replied.

Many are going through the anxiety of tomorrow and the insecurities regarding the payments of bills, jobs and businesses.

“We should not worry about what is not present. Let us focus on the pandemic and how to protect ourselves and let tomorrow speak for itself. Lot of industries have been affected at the same time we are alive and we can still be productive go back and work from zero all over again. We just have to think on what is more important – losing my business or losing my life or the loved ones?

My life and my health and the health of my loved ones have more priority compared to everything else. It is a privilege that we are alive. So tomorrow we can focus on other issues”, he explained.

Hatim urged that we focus on today and blessings we have. “If we are not thankful and practice gratitude because of our fear what about other places that are going through the pandemic where they do not even have enough hospital beds for the sick? We have a caring government and people who are involved in charity”.

A shift of focus could result in not having the time to indulge in the insecurities of tomorrow. So along with the fasting and the prayers let there be practising of gratitude by counting one’s blessings.

FATWA

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

Question

Is it permissible to shake hands with a non-mahram woman (one whom he can marry according to Islamic law)?

Answer

The invalidation of fasting depends on the evidence, and there is no evidence that the handshake invalidates it, knowingly that the handshake of the non-mahram is a sin. Allah knows best.





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Ramadhan Mubarak
2020 / 1441 AH



A woman waves a flag in the street during the nightly clap and cheer for healthcare workers during the outbreak of COVID-19 in the Brooklyn borough of New York City on Wednesday. — Reuters

Fauci warns of dangers as countries reopen

WASHINGTON: America's top infectious diseases official has warned that ending lockdowns too quickly could trigger uncontrollable new coronavirus outbreaks, as the global death toll closes in on 300,000.

The stark words from Anthony Fauci came as much of the United States and Europe press ahead with easing curbs that have confined billions to their homes to stem the spread of the disease. Opening up continues despite the toll spiking in some of the world's most populated countries, with Brazil, Russia and the US all reporting bad news.

Concerns were compounded on Tuesday by Fauci's warning to Congress that a run of 14 days with drop in cases was a vital first step before lifting lockdowns. "If a community or a state or region doesn't go by those guidelines and

reopens... the consequences could be really serious," he said. "There is a real risk that you will trigger an outbreak that you may not be able to control."

THE STARK WORDS FROM ANTHONY FAUCI CAME AS MUCH OF THE UNITED STATES AND EUROPE PRESS AHEAD WITH EASING CURBS THAT HAVE CONFINED BILLIONS TO THEIR HOMES TO STEM THE SPREAD OF THE DISEASE.

Fauci said the true number killed by the epidemic in the US is likely higher than the official toll of over 82,000 — the world's highest.

On Tuesday the US registered 1,894 coronavirus deaths in 24

hours, a steep rise after daily tolls fell below 1,000 on Sunday and Monday.

The expert's cautionary message stands at odds with rhetoric from President Donald Trump, who has pressed for rapid steps to rekindle the devastated US economy before a November election.

Trump has sought to shift focus onto the role of China, where the virus first emerged in December.

The lifting of lockdowns gathered pace across Europe on Tuesday, with France beginning to reopen primary schools and nurseries.

Teachers wore face masks and desks were separated as children filed back into classrooms.

Russia began easing lockdown rules even as infections surged past 232,000 — now the second most cases in the world after the US. — AFP

Egypt presses on with new capital in the desert

CAIRO: While Egypt's economy has stumbled due to the coronavirus outbreak, construction at a new capital taking shape east of Cairo is continuing at full throttle after a short pause to adjust working practices, officials say.

The level of activity at the desert site — where trucks rumble down newly built roads and cranes swing over unfinished apartment blocks — reflects the new city's political importance even as the government grapples with the pandemic.

Known as the New Administrative Capital, it is the biggest of a series of mega-projects championed by President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi as a source of growth and jobs.

Soon after coronavirus began to spread, Sisi postponed moving the first civil servants to the new city and moved back the opening of a national museum adjoining the pyramids to next year.

Productivity dipped as companies adapted to health guidelines and some labourers stayed home.

— AFP



A woman uses her phone to scan a Wuhan city health code before entering a residential compound in Wuhan, China's central Hubei province. — AFP

China's mobile app ticket to everywhere

HECTOR RETAMAL

To enter many offices, restaurants, parks or malls in China nowadays, people must show their status on an app that determines whether they are a coronavirus threat. There is often a moment of tension before opening the app on arriving at a location. A green light lets you in anywhere. A yellow light could send you into home confinement. The dreaded red light throws a person into a strict two-week quarantine at a hotel. Such controversial use of technology has raised alarm in Europe as countries including Britain, France and Switzerland look into launching their own apps to trace infections. But use has mushroomed across China, where the government keeps a close eye on the population and collects troves of personal data. Many Chinese people say they are

happy to cooperate for the greater good. "We are in a special context with this epidemic, so divulging my movements doesn't bother me," said Debora Lu, a 30-year-old Shanghai resident. "Human life is more important." There is more than one tracking app in China. An app by the State Council, China's cabinet, uses GPS locations shared by telecommunications companies. It allows authorities to look back at someone's travel history in the previous 14 days and see if they visited areas considered high risk or were exposed to anyone with COVID-19. The app appears to have had some glitches. The health code of many foreigners in China inexplicably turned yellow one day in April. When an AFP reporter encountered a similar issue more recently, the app turned green again after he turned it off and on several times.

— AFP

Strange behaviours



ALI AL MATANI

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The government is taking drastic steps to deal with COVID-19. Some measures are alien to our social behaviour and are not positive for the Omani society which believes in coexistence, tolerance, brotherhood, and love for God as its core value. In any circumstances or under any slogans we do not allow any form of hate, hatred, or dislike to each other grow in our society. We acknowledge that the government is taking certain measures under carefully studied plans and frameworks to protect the state's public financial position and to adapt to the unavoidable changes, which has already marred many countries. The government is going to limit the public spending, including, of course, reducing the number of workers in the government to curb expenditure. The government is also taking certain measures so that it can continue to offer public services with minimum manpower. This is also to ensure social distancing to curb coronavirus. However, while taking hard decisions the privacy of the individual lives should be respected, and nobody should

be allowed to dig into anybody's personal lives. The messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him) has said that it was nothing but the harvest of their tongues which would put the people in the fire of hell. This is what Almighty Allah has said in the Holy Quran in verse 12 chapter 49: "O ye who believe! Avoid suspicion as much (as possible): for suspicion in some cases is a sin: And spy not on each other behind their backs. Would any of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? Nay, ye would abhor it... But fear Allah. For Allah is Oft-Returning, Most Merciful." The criticism of the standard of work and performance of organisations and institutions are required. While doing so one should not be cynical or offensive and avoid ugly behaviour which is alien to our Arab society. There is also a flip side of the story which also should not be ignored. Many organisations and institutions might feel compelled to maintain secrecy and remain silent about their work and their system of protecting their leaders. This will be against the very idea of transparency which have to be followed as there is no way out.

FEATURE

Looking forward to spending time with nature again

MAZOUN AL GHAILANI

Can you imagine dangling more than 100 feet high on the side of the mountain unable to move down because the rope you were clinging to was short and doesn't hit the ground and unable to move up because your tools and equipment weigh you down? What would you have done?

It was a fatal mistake, one that adventurer and windsurfing national coach Sultan al Balushi will never forget which constantly reminds him of the importance of checking his equipment as well as anticipating challenges being in the wild.

"I have to find rocks on the edge of the cliff I can step on. I have to stick my hands in nooks and crannies so that I can have something to hold on to. I was hanging on that mountainside for 45 minutes looking for a way to get me out of there," he said.

"The lesson I learned from that experience is to always make sure that I use longer ropes and do safety checks on my equipment when I go for such adventures," he said.

Just 26 years old, Sultan loves pushing himself out of his comfort zone. His goal is to visit places that no one has visited before. His passion and love for nature were innate. While he grew up far from the sea or mountain, they call to him.

"Dr. Khaled Abdul Malek's book 'Explore 12 wadis in Oman' helped me in my wadi adventures and guided me on the correct path," Sultan shared.

Sultan also relished being alone in nature.

"Being alone offers an oppor-

tunity to clarify thoughts, hopes, dreams, and desires. It provides time and space for people to step back, evaluate their lives, and learn from their experiences. Spending time this way prepares them to re-engage with their community relationships and full work schedules", he explained.

"My nature trips extend from three days to a month. Isolation in nature offers more options and improves mental skills. There are beneficial skills one learns from the experience like fishing," he said.

Sultan believes that the necessity is the mother of invention. "I was on an island one time and it was very cold. I have no sleeping blanket. I dug a hole to warm and cover my body. I learn how to make tools from stones so I can cut the fish. There was also a time I have to drive a sailing boat with my legs for two hours until the boat rudder got repaired," he said.

"Adventures are an important part of life. In the past, people used to live in this atmosphere of not knowing what one will face while out in nature," he said.

Sultan wants to relearn some of the skills humanity forgot because of the lifestyle we live today. While he has done many challenging outdoor activities, he looks forward to trying Wingsuit flying, free jumping, and crossing some islands in the Atlantic Ocean by a sailing boat.

While everyone is in quarantine, Sultan, like many other adventurers like himself, looks forward to the day when the world would open up again, and he can go out and just travel. He is excited about the things he would learn along the way when he travels again.



Bon Ramadhan: A new generation celebration from France

RAY PETERSEN

ASSEL AND OLZHAS, are a young Muslim couple, originally from Kazakhstan, now living in the Auvergne-Rhones-Alpes region of France famed for its ski-fields and gastronomie, where they live with their three young children. In fact, Assel, a Research Biologist, is still breastfeeding the youngest child so she is not keeping Ramadhan in terms of the fast, while her husband Olzas, a Research Engineer, will be.

Ramadhan for them is generally a private celebration, though this year of course, under quarantine is more so. "This is a special opportunity for us, and we should value this time." However, Assel explained that they see this as, "Maybe a more deeply spiritual and family-focused celebration. We give the children gifts each day of Ramadhan, but they are not expensive gifts, more like an advent calendar, with small gifts, tasks, or messages that relate to the key elements of this time. We will help them learn of our faith and spirituality, but as importantly about the practicalities of life in which the religion offers so much support

and guidance. We want them to understand that this month is not one during which you lose anything, but that there is so much to gain spiritually and In creating this perspective, we are always ourselves thinking and reflecting on our faith."

"We will read, invest in conversations and spiritual discussions, to reflect on what we do, how we live, our lifestyle, are we living as we should? Our responsibilities, are we fulfilling our spiritual and social responsibilities? Our charitable perspective, not just in terms of the zakat, but are we living with a charitable mindset, with enough kindness and thought, and are we profoundly grateful for all that we have? After all the Prophet wrote that even a smile is a kindness, and we want our children to understand that philosophy. These are the sort of reflective thoughts and conversations that are deep within the Ramadhan perspective, and how we see Islam." said Assel. The couple believe that their private worship is a blessing, and that their Ummah, is strong as, "The world is one large mosque, isn't it, and we can reach Allah from anywhere?"

Olzas and Assel will share the food prepara-



This is a young couple, with a growing family of their own, are living far from their wider families. However, their knowing that others of the family and faith are sharing this month of reflection and spiritual rejuvenation, comforts and sustains them

tion this year, and they are making a conscious decision to put the accent on healthy foods, no junk food at all, mainly fresh fruits

and vegetables, dried fruits, and with his preparation Olzas will also focus on the arrangement and presentation of their Suhour and Iftar. A benefit of the healthy food options says Assel is that "We will sleep better, not with a heavy stomach, so we will get quality sleep, and function better during the day." They usually do the intellectual 'things' in the mornings and focus on the physical type activities in the afternoons "To keep us sane," Assel laughed.

This is a young couple, with a growing family of their own, are living far from their wider families. However, their knowing that others of the family and faith are sharing this month of reflection and spiritual rejuvenation, comforts and sustains them.

BUSINESS

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STRATEGIC ASSET

Cost-cutting helps Oman Aviation Group slash 2020 spend



CONRAD PRABHU

CRISIS MANAGEMENT BOARD HELPS GROUP ACHIEVE 42 PER CENT SAVING IN PLANNED INVESTMENT AND OPERATIONAL EXPENDITURE.

MUSCAT: Oman Aviation Group, the flagship of the Sultanate's aviation sector, has announced sizable savings in its planned investment and operational expenditures for 2020.

It comes on the back of sweeping measures, including substantial employee layoffs, wage reductions, and other cost curtailments across the group. The announcement came in a circular issued by Group CEO Mustafa Mohammed al Hinai to employees explaining the Group's strategy to weather the

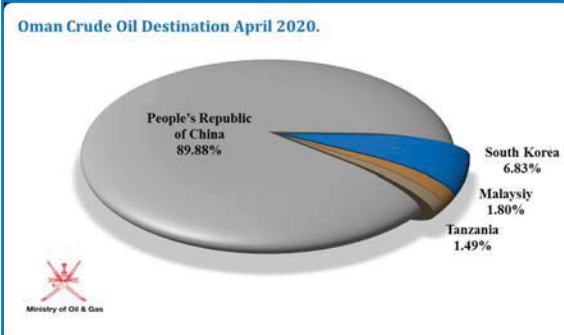
current crisis. The painful measures, he said, were necessary to safeguard the integrity of Oman's aviation sector, given its importance as a strategically important national asset.

"To protect their national assets, aviation companies globally have been forced to make difficult decisions and enact precautionary measures. The aviation sector in Oman is not immune from such exceptional circumstances. As a national asset which

underpins the economy and enables several adjacent sectors across the country, our survival as a sector is a strategic responsibility that cannot be taken lightly," Al Hinai noted.

A Crisis Management Board comprising the chairpersons of the group's three core business units – Oman Air, Oman Airports, and Oman Aviation Services – is helping steer the group through the current crisis, according to the CEO. **TURN TO P13**

China is top market for Oman crude in April



JOMAR MENDOZA

MUSCAT: China accounted for 89.88 per cent of Oman's total crude exports of 894,139 barrels in April 2020, up 2.32 per cent from the previous month, the Ministry of Oil and Gas said in a report. South Korea was the next leading market with a share of 6.83 per cent, followed by Malaysia (1.80 per cent) and Tanzania (1.49 per cent).

Omani crude production during April 2020 averaged 946,968 barrels per day. The average price of Oman's Crude Oil Futures Contract on the Dubai Mercantile Exchange slumped 32.1 per cent in April compared to March.

The monthly official selling price for Oman Crude oil for June 2020 delivery (traded April 2020) averaged \$23.65 a barrel, which was lower by \$11.19 compared to the May 2020 selling price. The daily trading price ranged between \$16.82 per barrel and \$29.54 per barrel.

Oil prices of all reference crude oil grades around the world declined during trading in April 2020 (for June 2020 delivery) compared with trading trends in March 2020.

The average price of West Texas Intermediate Crude Oil on the New York Mercantile Exchange settled at \$22.47 per barrel, a drop of \$8.20, while the average price of North Sea Oil (Brent) on the Intl Exchange in London reached \$26.65 per barrel, declined by \$7.07 compared with trends in March 2020.

Mega project to strengthen Oman's pharmaceutical security



STRATEGIC VENTURE: INTEGRATED PHARMA COMPLEX UNDER CONSTRUCTION IN SALALAH FREE ZONE SET TO BECOME A 'VALUE ADDED SERVICES' HUB FOR THE REGIONAL PHARMACEUTICAL INDUSTRY, SAYS ISFU.

CONRAD PRABHU

MUSCAT: An integrated pharmaceuticals complex currently under construction in Salalah Free Zone (SFZ) has the potential to evolve into the first value added services (VAS) hub for the regional pharmaceutical industry, according to a high-powered government committee overseeing the delivery of strategic projects and initiatives designed to accelerate Oman's economic diversification.

The Implementation Support & Follow-Up Unit (ISFU), a panel set up under the auspices of the

Diwan of Royal Court, said Philex Pharmaceuticals – a mega project backed by Qatari and international investors – will also help boost Oman's pharmaceutical security over the long term.

Construction work on the complex is well under way on a 110,000 sq metre site in the Adhan area of Salalah Free Zone. The foundation stone for the project was laid in March 2018 in the presence of officials representing the principal shareholders Abela International and Arab Group for Investment. Total investment in the venture is estimated at RO 140 mil-

lion over multiple phases.

According to ISFU, which was instrumental in speeding up the approvals process with the support of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and Ministry of Health, Phase 1 is being developed with an initial investment of RO 10 million. The centerpiece is a pharmaceuticals factory with three production lines churning out generics of as many as 100 different types of formulations in tablet, capsule, syrup and other forms. Product manufacturing will commence in early 2022.

A three-stage operational strategy envisages the

production of tablets and capsules, as well as creams and ointments in the first phase, followed by injections and inhaled respiratory system medications in Phase 2.

In the third phase, cancer treatment pills and injections will be added to the plant's portfolio, according to ISFU.

Philex Pharmaceuticals will also invest in secondary packaging capabilities designed to cater to the packaging requirements of the international pharmaceutical industry. Conceived as a comprehensive, one-stop packaging solution, the complex will be equipped for tablet/capsule filling, blister packaging, and liquid filling. Its packaging capabilities are designed to cater to manufacturers of prescription and over-the-counter medications, dietary supplements, animal health products, medical devices, and other consumer products.

Cost-cutting helps Oman Aviation Group slash 2020 spend

FROM PAGE 12

"The Board has implemented several measures to cut costs to safeguard the aviation sector's strategic interests and ensure a quick response to this crisis. To date, these measures have resulted in a saving of 42 per cent on our pre-approved 2020 operations

and capital expenditure investments budget," said Al Hinai.

In the circular, the CEO also announced a "temporary salary reduction for all employees across the Group companies for a period of three months (May, June & July)". The cuts are the highest for those in leadership positions and de-

crease progressively for those in lower positions.

Airlines and travel companies around the world are among those hammered the most by the pandemic, forcing many to lay off workers en masse, seek bailouts and adopt other measures to avoid bankruptcy.

BUSINESS

When will we see the end of this pandemic?



HAIDER AL LAWATI

haiderdawood@hotmail.com

Is the novel coronavirus continuing to spread across the world while teaching us new lessons daily? Or is it on the verge of disappearing in the coming months? Predicting the answer is very difficult. Experts believe the virus will remain for two years before things return to normal.

The disease will eventually end after taking a heavy toll in human lives and exacting huge material and economic losses around the world. Four months ago, we were unaware of this virus, which today represents a lethal and uncontrollable weapon due to the absence of a vaccine. Because of the disease, the economy has been disrupted, healthcare systems have collapsed, hospitals crowded with the sick and dead, public places for entertainment and restaurants remain empty, and sometimes dead bodies are left in the streets.

All of us have to live in a new atmosphere that we had not experienced before, as if we are in a new world war.

Many health experts had warned about this disease and its consequences. Still, some of the oldest industrialised countries in Europe and America were not ready to face this epidemic. What is the fate then for poor countries that lack the necessary health care infrastructure?

Today, more than four million people have been infected around the world, according to data of Johns Hopkins

University in the US, while the death toll exceeds 278,000. There are also concerns that some countries are not recording infections and deaths due to lack of testing and diagnosis. Notwithstanding these statistics, there are daily voices demanding the easing of restrictions and stay-at-home policies, leaving people to weigh the risk of exposure to the virus or to suffer economic and material losses as a result of the lockdown.

The disease has led various governments to take different measures according to their specific circumstances. In Europe, coronavirus cases now exceed 1.5 million, and I believe that we in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, with over 100,000 cases, are not better off.

The disease has infected many people in the region, with the death toll rising daily as well. Most of the victims are low-income migrant workers who live in cramped areas, in addition to citizens coming from abroad, and those who do not commit to stay at home, not to mention some members of healthcare services. These cases are likely to increase in the event of non-compliance with prevention guidelines.

Life has become unbearable today without wearing face masks and gloves while visiting malls, or to be examined with thermal scanners when going. The big question is: When will we see the end of this pandemic?

donate.om raises RO 500,000 in 18 days

MUSCAT: Contributions received through the Donations Portal for Charitable Organizations, www.donate.om, totaled more than RO 500,000 since the beginning of Ramadhan, while reaching an aggregate of RO 900,000 since the beginning of this year. Donations since the launch of the portal in 2008 now total RO 5 million.

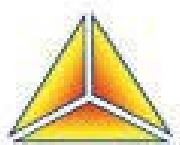
The portal, which is managed by the Ministry of Technology and Communications, covers 31 charitable organizations benefiting causes in support of: motherhood and childhood, environment, zakat and charity, building masjids and Quran schools in addition to social care for people with special needs, orphans, the sick and families with low incomes.

The portal features a number of accounts for some charitable organizations that collect donations to help those affected by the coronavirus pandemic, especially employees and small business owners, whose activities have been suspended temporarily as part of the measures to address the spread of the virus.



BUSINESS ALERT

Mazoon Electricity holds critical thinking workshop



شركة كهرباء مزون ش.م.ع.
Mazoon Electricity Company S.A.O.C

إحدى شركات مجموعة نماء
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WITH an objective to boost employees' ability to make decisions and resolve challenges in the workplace, Mazoon Electricity Company, the

leading electricity provider in Oman, organised an online workshop on critical thinking and decision making.

The workshop, conducted by one of Mazoon Electricity employee Jaffar al Lawati, senior business analyst, aimed to help participants to use critical thinking to improve their decision-making processes.

Essential elements of effective critical thinking, problem-solving and decision making were covered during the workshop. The session combined knowledge based on both theoretical and practical evidence from

many fields and explained in comprehensible terms. The course revealed how critical thinking, problem-solving and decision-making work together perfectly.

Mazoon Electricity organised workshop also emphasised that the ability to think critically and innovatively is a harbinger for growth and key to effectual decision making.

Adopting a continuous improvement model, Mazoon Electricity conducts training sessions for its employees to enhance their expertise, enrich knowledge and raise performance efficiency.

Stocks down on fears over second wave as lockdowns ease

WASHINGTON: While the easing of lockdown measures around the world has lifted hopes for economies, it also raises the possibility of a fresh wave of infections.

Fears of a second wave of coronavirus infections in some parts of the world weighed on equities Tuesday, bringing a dose of hard reality to markets after weeks of rallies fuelled by the easing of lockdown measures and hopes for economic recovery.

As some of the worst-hit countries including Spain, Italy and France take heart from slowing death and infection rates, they are gradually allowing businesses to open up and try to get back to some semblance of normality.

However, after weeks of no new cases, Wuhan, the central Chinese city where the outbreak first emerged, reported six new infections in two days and South Korea announced its biggest spike in new cases for more than a month.

The news jolted confidence on trading floors and weighed on regional markets Tuesday.

Tokyo went into the break 0.2 per cent lower, Hong Kong, Sydney, Singapore, Seoul and Taipei fell more than one per cent, while Shanghai eased 0.1 per cent.

Manila and Jakarta also fell, though Wellington edged up slightly.

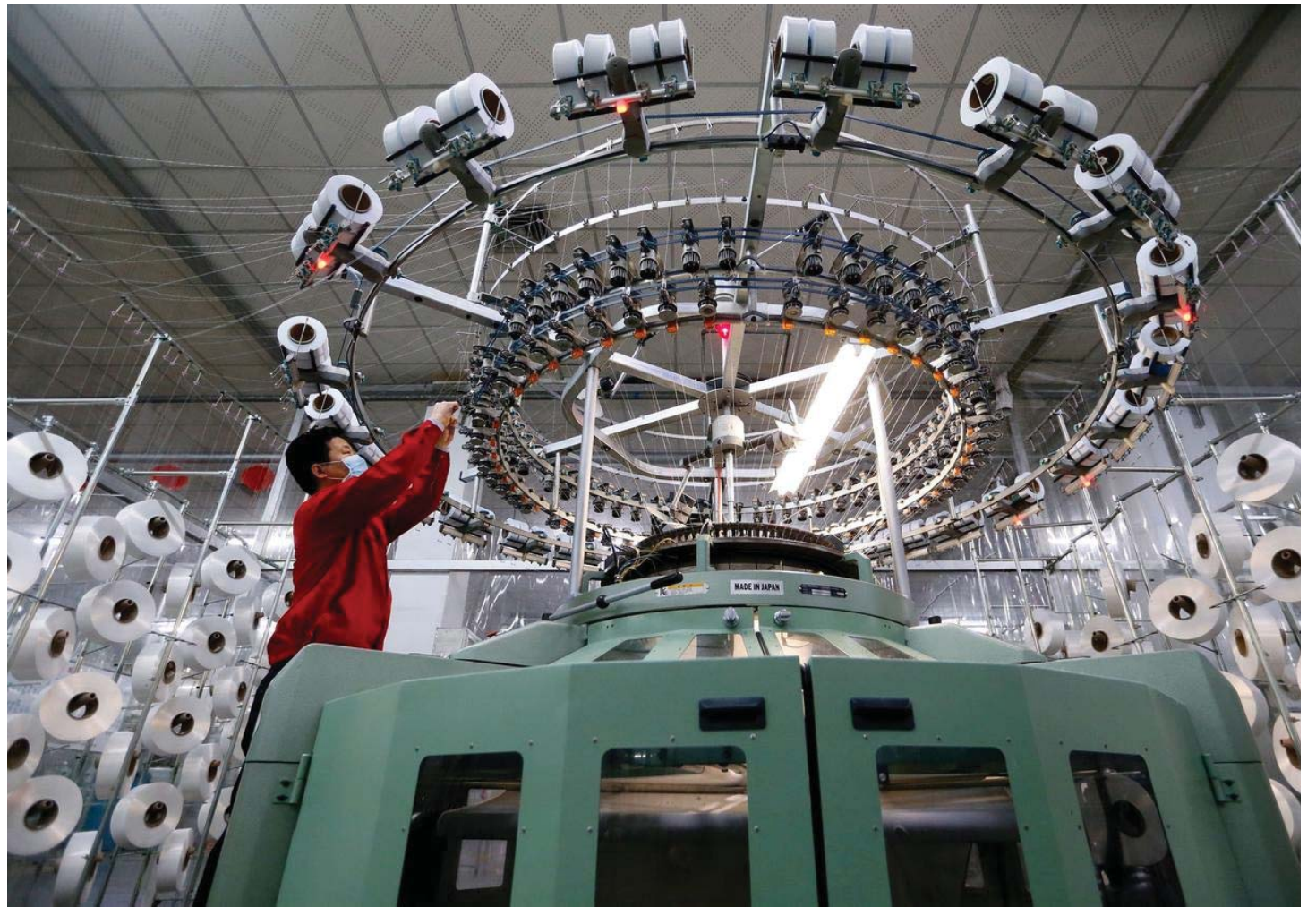
"Indications abound that increased mobility will lead to re-occurrences of the virus, which will change the slope of the recovery," said AxiCorp's Stephen Innes, noting that news reports had generally emphasised the negative elements of reopening.

"While markets may eventually desensitise to mini-cluster outbreaks, provided death statistics remain static... at this stage, it does not lessen fears of a significant secondary spreader, which will undoubtedly weigh on consumer sentiment and hurt the rebound." He added that investors would have to expect such uncertainty until a vaccine is available. — **AFP**



A man wearing a face mask walks past a mural depicting the coronavirus COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic, in Gaza City. — **AFP**

China factory prices plunge as virus hammers demand



A textile worker is seen on a fabric production line at a factory in Qingdao, Shandong province, China. — **Reuters**

BEIJING: China's factory-gate prices fell to a four-year low, official data showed Tuesday, with firms suffering from the economic devastation unleashed by the coronavirus on the global economy.

The producer price index (PPI) — which reflects what factories charge wholesalers — dropped again, fuelling concern among analysts about the post-pandemic recovery in the world's second-largest economy.

The PPI plunged 3.1 per cent on-year in April — a 1.3 per cent monthly drop compared with March — according to China's National Bureau of Statistics.

Julian Evans-Pritchard of Capital Economics noted that the slump in PPI was its "steepest monthly drop since the Global Financial Crisis" of 2007-08.

The pandemic has hammered the world economy, which is facing its most severe downturn since the Great Depression, with businesses shuttered and huge spikes in unemployment.

The economic shock has depressed demand across the planet, with companies forced to charge less for their products.

That, in turn, hurts profits and

the ability to grow, and could also drain momentum from the economy at large.

The Chinese PPI drop "is consistent with broader evidence that demand remains very weak and is recovering more slowly than output," Evans-Pritchard added. Analysts also pointed to reduced prices of raw materials and manufactured goods, as well as plummeting global oil prices, to explain the drop in Chinese factory prices.

The April drop was more severe than the 2.5 per cent fall forecast by analysts, highlighting the continued stress on industries as they resume production after the economy was almost completely shut down at the height of the outbreak in China.

The consumer price index (CPI), on the other hand, grew 3.3 per cent in April, but less than the 3.7 per cent forecast in a Bloomberg poll of analysts.

This was the slowest pace since last September when inflation rose three per cent, and NBS senior statistician Dong Lijuan attributed the easing pace in part to an increased supply of fresh vegetables and fluctuations in global oil prices. — **AFP**

BUSINESS

US reports \$738 billion budget deficit in April

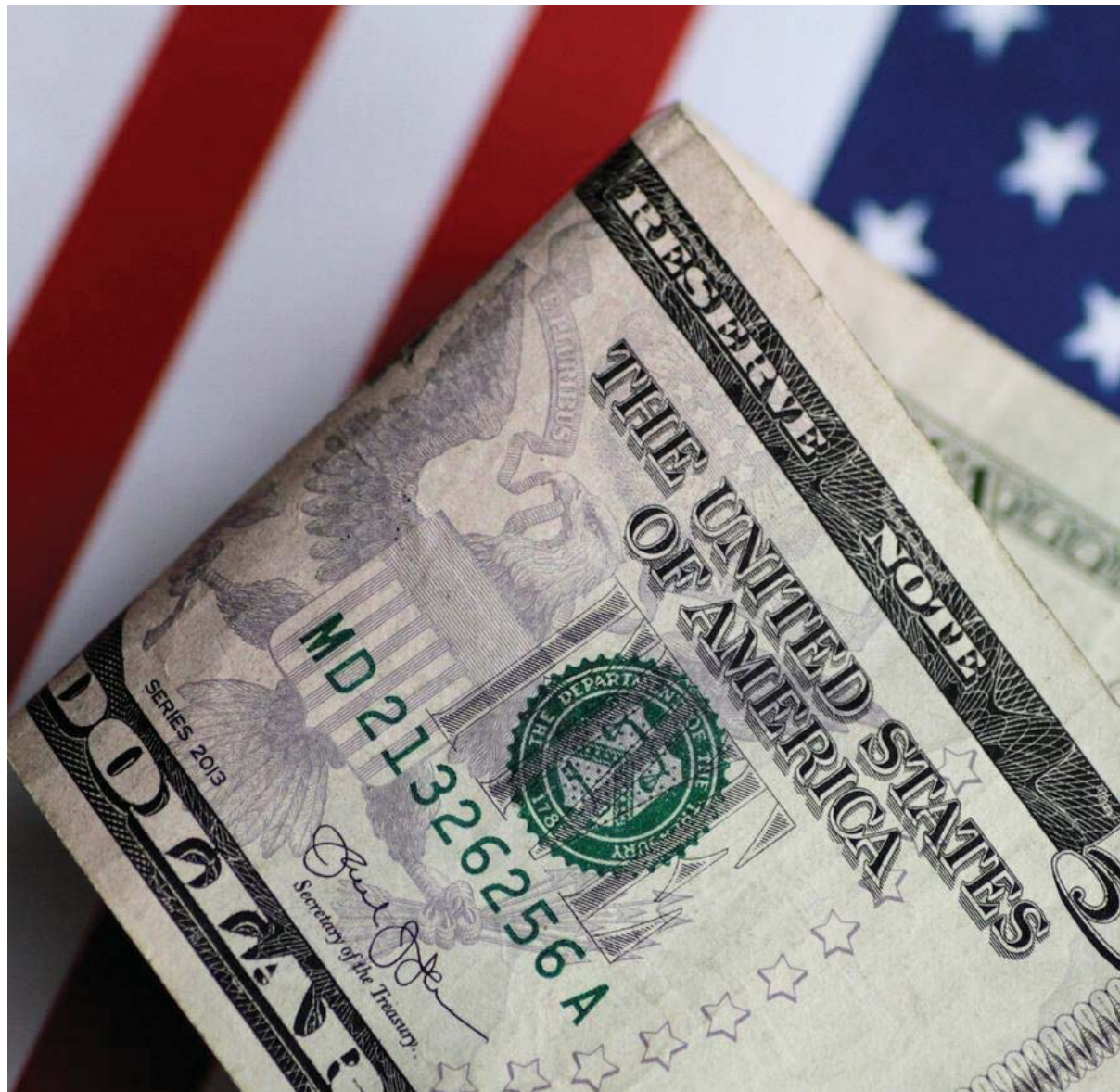
WASHINGTON: The United States on Tuesday reported a record \$738 billion budget deficit in April as an explosion in government spending and a shrinking of revenues amid the novel coronavirus pandemic pushed it deeply into the red.

The Treasury Department said the budget deficit in April was the first to reflect the enormity of government spending that has been authorised to try to mitigate the economic impact of the crisis. The previous record budget deficit for any month was \$235 billion in February 2020.

Until recently, most of the country was under strict lockdown orders and many businesses were shuttered to try to contain the spread of the virus, which has killed more than 80,000 people in the United States.

"They really are striking numbers that I didn't think I would ever see," a senior US Treasury official told reporters when asked about the monthly budget figures.

The fiscal year-to-date deficit surged to \$1.48 trillion compared to a \$531 billion deficit in the compara-



A US five-dollar note is seen in this illustration photo. — Reuters

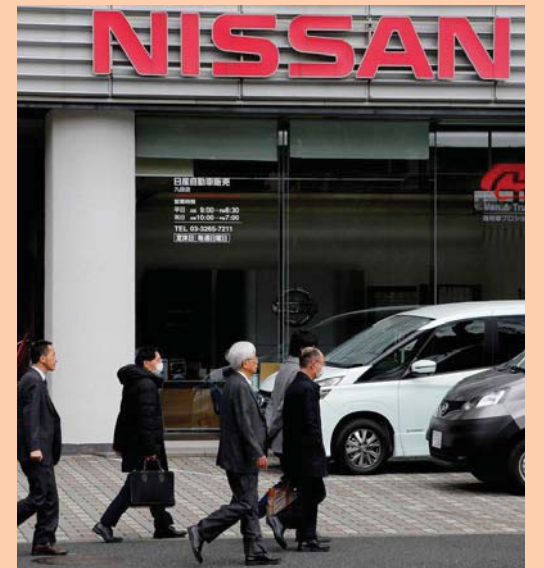
ble period in 2019, blasting past the previous monthly deficit record of \$870 billion in April 2011.

The US Congress approved a \$2.3 trillion rescue package to deal with the crisis on March 27 and has since added to it, taking total emergency relief spending to help insulate individuals, families, businesses and state and local govern-

ments to around \$3 trillion.

April marked the first month some of those stimulus programs were begun to be paid. Roughly \$600 billion in outlays for April were attributable to government spending on coronavirus relief measures, while receipts were reduced by about \$300 billion by the crisis, the senior Treasury official estimated. — Reuters

Nissan plans \$2.8 billion in cuts as part of restructuring plan



People walk past a dealer shop of Nissan Motor in Tokyo, Japan. — Reuters

TOKYO: Nissan Motor Co plans to cut \$2.8 billion in annual fixed costs as part of its restructuring plan, Bloomberg News reported, as it braces for a drop in sales that could complicate its recovery from years of poor profitability.

Following a three-year spell of tumbling profits, Nissan will announce its restructuring plan on May 28, its latest attempt to slash costs after a strategy of aggressive selling to chase market share has pummelled its bottom line. — Reuters

More than 300 lawmakers urge IMF and World Bank to cancel poor countries' debt



Democratic US presidential candidate Senator Bernie Sanders speaks during the 11th Democratic candidates debate of the 2020 US presidential campaign, in Washington. — Reuters

WASHINGTON: Over 300 lawmakers from around the world on Wednesday urged the International Monetary Fund and World Bank to cancel the debt of the poorest countries in response to the coronavirus pandemic, and to boost funding to avert a global economic meltdown.

The initiative, led by former US presidential candidate Senator Bernie Sanders and Representative Ilham Omar, a Democrat from Minnesota, comes amid growing concern that developing countries and emerging economies will be devastated by the pandemic.

The virus has infected more than 4.2

million people globally and killed 287,349, a Reuters tally showed.

Widespread shutdowns aimed at containing the virus are taking a huge toll on the global economy, and especially poor countries with weak health systems, high debt levels and few resources to manage the dual health and economic crises.

IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva on Tuesday said the Fund was "very likely" to revise downward its forecast that global output would shrink by 3 per cent in 2020, and said developing countries would need more than \$2.5 trillion in financing to weather the storm. — Reuters



Strategic planning at sports entities hit by weak resources, board changes

ADIL AL BALUSHI

MUSCAT: Planning is a significant step for any project as it will be the reference for your work to achieve the desired objectives and goals.

Many of the domestic sports organisations including associations and committees lack proper strategic planning.

Dr Suleiman al Balushi had presented a detailed paper during Oman Sports Conference in April 2018 on real strategic planning at the sports entities.

The former executive chief of Oman Olympic Committee (OOC) shared his views with *Oman Daily Observer*.

“The current planning methods at sports organisations including the associations, committees and clubs lack implementation of

scientific ways on strategic planning. Also, there is no right follow-up and continuous evaluation for the ongoing plans. Sometimes, we see many sports entities exaggerate future goals with weak resources to monitor the plans. The frequent changes on the board of directors impacted negatively on continuity of the ongoing plans and strategies”, he said.

The official from Musannah listed the existing main difficulties and challenges of planning at sports organisations.

“There is no proper data available to build on it for future, negative approaches for



planning, incorrect predictions and implementation of wrong mythology on planning are some points.

Other issues are not involving the main stakeholders during planning phases in any top projects and there are no updates on the plans with the latest international rules and regulations”, Dr Sulieman added.

The former OOC official referred in his paper to some studies in similar topics done by Mohammed al Amri and Hamood al Hashmi.

He mentioned some other challenges as well including procrastination in the

decisions due to setting strategic planning.

“Formation of some new associations and committees came without setting their goals and objectives. Absence of proper plans and ideas for development also affect reaching the desired goals”.

The paper presented at the fifth edition of Oman Sports Conference discussed some other parts of strategic planning. “The paper featured many aspects including introduction on strategic planning, the importance of strategic planning at sports organisations, the real statistics of strategic planning at domestic sports entities, main challenges on strategic planning and the recommendations for development”, Dr Suleiman said.

SPORTS



Park proud to see S Korea lead way

SEOUL: With golf finally resuming when South Korea hosts the Korea Ladies Professional Golf Association (KLPGA) Championship, world number three Park Sung-Hyun says she feels a sense of pride that her country is “leading the way” in a return for sport.

The 42nd KLPGA Championship, which begins on Thursday, will be the tour's first event since the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the calendar. It will be played at the Lakewood Country Club in Yangju without spectators.

“Due to the coronavirus outbreaks, the US hasn’t started its games yet, but I am pleased and also proud of the fact that South Korea is leading the way for the resumption of sports”, Park told reporters on Wednesday.

However, Park will be without her



Due to the coronavirus outbreaks, the US hasn’t started its games yet, but I am pleased and also proud of the fact that South Korea is leading the way for the resumption of sports.

PARK SUNG-HYUN

trusted caddie, David Jones, who was unable to travel to Korea because of the lockdown and restrictions on air travel.

“My caddie is Irish and the situation is not very good over there. They can’t leave their house, they’re with their kids”, the 26-year-old Park said. “So I just asked a friend of mine in Korea in a

hurry (to be my caddie)”. Defending champion Choi Hye-Jin said she “can’t wait” to return to the greens, although she said playing without fans would be a surreal experience.

“It hit me the most when I heard the news that the games would have no spectators”, Choi said. “It feels a little awkward when I think about how quiet the game is going to be since it’s just us players. It’ll feel like it’s not a competition”.

Kim Sei-Young, who has 10 wins on the LPGA Tour, said she is still trying to figure out how to “reset” her goals after the Tokyo Olympics were pushed back by a year but is looking forward to competing on the LPGA Tour when it resumes.

“We’ve been told that the LPGA in the US will resume in July, so I want to prepare well for that and show my best”.

— Reuters

Tianjin club collapse a wake-up call for China

SHANGHAI: Tianjin Tianhai's demise this week highlights “fatal flaws” in the financial models of Chinese football clubs and should serve as a warning to other teams, state media said.

The club was once a symbol of Chinese Super League extravagance, hiring Italian legend Fabio Cannavaro as coach in 2016 and luring Brazilian striker Alexandre Pato and Belgian international midfielder Axel Witsel on vast wages.

It was then called Tianjin Quanjian but the founder of the Quanjian Group was arrested in January last year and subsequently jailed, and the club thrust into the hands of the local football association.

The team was renamed Tianjin Tianhai and struggled to pay the players' wages last year, before announcing on Tuesday that it will disband under a mountain of debt.

The swift downfall of Tianjin, who finished third in the Chinese Super League (CSL) in 2017, shows that Chinese football needs to focus on long-term sustainability, Xinhua news agency said in a strongly worded editorial.

It also warned about the dangers of clubs being dependent on a single, wealthy benefactor. — AFP

The club was once a symbol of Chinese Super League extravagance, hiring Italian legend Fabio Cannavaro as coach in 2016 and luring Brazilian striker Alexandre Pato and Belgian international midfielder Axel Witsel on vast wages





MERCEDES MUST CONSIDER VETTEL'S AVAILABILITY: WOLFF

LONDON: Formula One champions Mercedes must consider Sebastian Vettel's situation when deciding their 2021 line-up, team boss Toto Wolff said on Tuesday.

Ferrari announced earlier that the four times world champion would be leaving Maranello when his contract runs out at the end of the season.

"Sebastian is a great driver, a major personality and an asset to any Formula One team," said Wolff, in quotes provided by Mercedes.

The Austrian is currently in negotiations with six times world champion Lewis Hamilton over a new deal.

"When looking to the future, our first loyalty lies with the current Mercedes drivers but naturally we must take this development into consideration."

Hamilton and Finland's Valtteri Bottas are out of contract with Mercedes at the end of the season and Wolff's comments will be noted by both.

Hamilton, 35, has been linked to Ferrari in media speculation, but the Briton has indicated he plans to stay with the team that has won the last six drivers' and constructors' titles.

The mere fact Vettel is available could give Mercedes some useful ammunition when it comes to negotiating salaries at least.

Bottas finished runner-up last year and has been a solid team-mate for Hamilton, who has enjoyed an easy relationship with the 30-year-old.

— Reuters

VERSTAPPEN RULES OUT RICCIARDO MOVE TO FERRARI



Daniel Ricciardo



Carlos Sainz

PARIS: Max Verstappen suggested on Tuesday that Carlos Sainz would replace Sebastian Vettel at Ferrari after saying he didn't think Daniel Ricciardo would move to the Italian Formula One outfit next season.

Ricciardo and Spaniard Sainz are the favourites to move to the 'Scuderia' following Vettel's announcement on Tuesday that he would be leaving at the end of the 2020 campaign.

Italian-speaking, Australia-born Ricciardo is in the last of a lucrative two-year contract with Renault.

Asked by former F1 racer David Coulthard whether the seat would go to an Italian sounding name or a Spanish sounding name, in reference to Ricciardo and McLaren driver Sainz, Verstappen said: "I think it's not going to be the Italian sounding name."

RICCIARDO AND SPANIARD SAINZ ARE THE FAVOURITES TO MOVE TO THE 'SCUDERIA'

"Let's see. At the end of the day, it's just a guess. We'll have to wait and see," he added during the Instagram Q&A.

Ricciardo, 30, has won seven Grand Prixes during his F1 career, while 25-year-old Sainz is yet to win a single race.

Verstappen also ruled himself out of moving to Ferrari, saying that he "definitely" would not be leaving Red Bull at the end of a season whose start has been delayed until July due to the coronavirus.

"I'm at Red Bull. I saw some questions coming along if I was going to Ferrari, but I'm not," he said.

Vettel said in his announcement that there was no longer a "common desire" to work together with Ferrari, who have not announced a replacement for the four-time world champion.

— AFP

SPORTS

FOUR-TIME OLYMPIC GOLD
MEDALLIST GETS MORE TIME FOR
10,000M TITLE DEFENCE

LONDON: Multiple Olympic champion Mo Farah says the postponement of the Tokyo Games to 2021 could work to his advantage as the Briton will now have around 20 months to train for the defence of his 10,000m title having switched his focus back to the track.

The 37-year-old retired from track athletics in 2017 to focus on road marathons but announced in November last year that he was returning for one more tilt at 10,000m gold.

The target then was only a matter of months away but the year's postponement due to the coronavirus pandemic has changed everything.

Farah, who must still qualify, will be 38 by the time of the Games in July and August next year but is looking on the bright side.

"Having postponed it actually helps me a bit

more," he said while training in isolation in London's Richmond Park.

"It gives me a year to do more track races and then go into the Olympics. So in a way I think it works out well for me."

Farah, who is chasing a third successive Olympic gold over 10,000 metres but does not plan to defend his 5,000m title in Tokyo, said everyone was in the same boat and dealing with plenty of uncertainty.

On Tuesday, World Athletics announced details of a truncated season that included the cancellation of July's London Anniversary Games, the latest of a string of Diamond League events to fall foul of the virus.

The changes and travel restrictions have left athletes struggling to find any structure to their season. — **Reuters**

FARAH

TO UTILISE TOKYO DELAY