

## HIS MAJESTY SENDS CABLES OF GREETINGS TO LEADERS

**MUSCAT:** His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to Shaikh Tamim bin Hamad bin Khalifa al Thani, Emir of the State of Qatar, on the occasion of him assuming power.

In his cable, His Majesty expressed his sincere greetings along with his best wishes of good health, well-being and long life to Shaikh Tamim, praying to the Almighty Allah for the return of

this and similar occasions on him to achieve further aspirations of progress and prosperity for the brotherly people of Qatar. His Majesty has also sent a cable of greetings to President Borut Pahor of the Republic of Slovenia, on the occasion of his country's Independence Anniversary.

In his cable, His Majesty expressed his sincere greetings and best wishes

to President Pahor and the Slovenian friendly people. His Majesty has also sent a cable of greetings to President Zoran Milanovic of the Republic of Croatia, on the occasion of his country's National Day. His Majesty has sent a cable of greetings to President Filipe Nyusi of the Republic of Mozambique, on the occasion of his country's Independence Anniversary. — ONA

### MILKY WAY



A beautiful view of the Milky Way in khareef Salalah.  
PHOTO BY DR SACHIN SINGH

## Visa, passport and emigration services open from July 1

KABEER YOUSUF

**MUSCAT:** All services of the Royal Oman Police (ROP), which were stopped after the COVID-19 outbreak, will begin from July 1, the ROP sources told the Observer. "We will begin all services from July 1. They were stopped as a precautionary measure after many cases were reported in the country", a senior spokesperson of the ROP has said.

All the services at the Directorate General of Passport and Residence including civil status, visa issuance, visa stamping and resident card services were suspended on March 19 after several cases of the pandemic were reported in the country.

The closure of the services

**MALLS REOPEN AFTER 3 MONTHS**

Malls and commercial complexes reopened on Wednesday after nearly three months, with Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) as part of the preventive measures to limit the spread of COVID-19.

had affected the entry of the public to ROP facilities at traffic, passport and residence and civil status departments.

To meet the needs of the public, the ROP has kept many self-service kiosks for renewal of vehicle registration.

## REVENUES STAND AT MORE THAN RO 3 BILLION BY APRIL

**MUSCAT:** The financial data of government monthly accounts until the end of April 2020 showed that government total revenues stood at RO 3,829,000 (RO 3.82 billion), less by RO 47 million from

the figures of the corresponding period in 2019. A statement issued by the Ministry of Finance indicated that the stability of government revenues during the first four months this year was due to crude

sale prices, which averaged \$63.36 by the end of April (which is the average of trading prices from October 2019 to January 2020). The stability of revenues was also due to the reception of returns from the partial

privatisation of Oman Power Transmission Company, the operation by virtue of which 49 per cent of the firm's shares were privatised, generating a sum of RO 365 million. — ONA



# 1,142 new COVID-19 cases and 3 deaths

STAFF REPORTER

**MUSCAT:** The Ministry of Health (MoH) on Wednesday reported 1,142 new cases of COVID-19 in the Sultanate, including 671 Omanis and 471 residents, bringing the total number of positive cases to 33,536.

According to MoH, a total of 3,585 people were tested in the last 24 hours.

Three deaths were reported due to COVID-19 on Wednesday, taking the total toll to 142.

With 693 patients

recovering during the same period, the total recoveries from the disease has risen to 17,792.

A total of 63 people were admitted to the hospital on Wednesday, taking the number of people in hospitals to 417, including 100 in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU).

Of the total deaths reported, 89 of them are residents and 53 Omanis.

Of the total deaths reported, 77 of them are in the 15-69 age group, 65 in the 60+ group.

Of the total deaths reported, 120 of them are males and 22 are females.

Of the total 140 deaths, Muscat topped the list with 104, followed by South Al Batinah 13, North Al Batinah 10, Al Dakhiliyah 5, South Al Sharqiyah 4, North Al Sharqiyah 1, Dhofar 2, Al Dhahirah 1 and Al Buraimi 2.

Muscat reported 390 new cases on Wednesday of which 142 were in Seeb, followed by 120 in Al Wusta, 68 in Al Dakhiliyah and 37 in Dhofar.

## NEC REVIEWS EMPLOYMENT EFFORTS

**MUSCAT:** The Board of Directors of the National Employment Centre (NEC) held its second meeting for this year under the Chairmanship of Shaikh Abdullah bin Nasser al Bakri, Minister of Manpower and Deputy Chairman of NEC board. The board members reviewed the executive situation of the employment process since the inception of the NEC in January this year. Stemming from the principle of transparency, the board decided to go ahead with the publication of the names of job-seekers who landed jobs in the public and private sectors as well as those under work-related training.

### TENDERS ANNOUNCEMENT

THE MAZOOON ELECTRICITY COMPANY (MZEC) INVITES THE FOLLOWING TENDERS:

| Tender No    | Description                              | Last Date of Purchasing | Last Date for Submission | Tender Board Grade | Type of Participation | Tender Price R.O |
|--------------|------------------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|------------------|
| 14/MZEC/2020 | CUSTOMER SELF-SERVICE MOBILE APP PROJECT | 29/06/2020              | 28/07/2020               | SPECIALIST         | LOCAL                 | 120              |

| Tender No                                                       | Description                                                                                                                 | Last Date of Purchasing | Last Date for Submission | DCRP Grade | Type of Participation | Tender Price R.O |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|------------|-----------------------|------------------|
| 16/MZEC/2020                                                    | CONSTRUCTION OF 2X20 MVA PSS (NIZWA ACADEMY ROP) WITH 33KV FEEDERS FROM JIBREEN GRID AT NIZWA IN AL DHAKHILIYAH GOVERNORATE | 29/06/2020              | 28/07/2020               | A          | LOCAL                 | 1320             |
| THE SITE VISIT WILL BE ON 30/06/2020 AT 9:00 AM IN NIZWA OFFICE |                                                                                                                             |                         |                          |            |                       |                  |

- Interested companies registered with DCRP and Tender Board and having a valid Registrations may obtain tenders documents through [scm.tenders@mzec.co.om](mailto:scm.tenders@mzec.co.om).
- Value of each tender document copy is non-refundable.
- The offers and related documents should be submitted in a sealed with red wax envelope addressed to the chairman of the (Internal Tender Committee).
- On the top of the envelopes bidder should write the tender number and the subject only and no other marks or any reference thereto should be written outside the envelopes.
- The tenderer should enclose a bank guarantee issued by any bank in the sultanate of Oman for the value of 1% of tender price valid (90) days as a bid bond and addressed to the chairperson of the (Internal Tender Committee) of Mazoon Electricity Company S.A.O.C and **any offer is not including the bond will be rejected immediately**.
- The completed tenders should be deposited in the tender box at main head office building in Al Saih Al Hmer - BidBid before 10:00 am on the assigned closing date for submission of the tender.
- The priority of the awarding will be given to those bidders who assure recruitment of the maximum numbers of Omani staff and utilizing Omani products.
- The related parties only are invited to attend the tender opining meeting based on the assigned date.
- All Clarifications are to be sent to the email address: [MZEC-Clarification@mzec.co.om](mailto:MZEC-Clarification@mzec.co.om). and the Last date for receiving vendor's clarifications 15/07/2020.**
- Mazoon Electricity Company S.A.O.C. is not bound to accept the lowest tender.

(WE LIGHT...WE CARE)

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## RAFO CONDUCTS MEDICAL EVACUATION



**MUSCAT:** A transport aircraft of the Royal Air Force of Oman (RAFO) carried out medical evacuation of a number of citizens with critical health condition from Sultan Qaboos Hospital in Salalah to hospitals in Muscat Governorate, to receive medical attention. The operation comes as part of the humanitarian services provided to citizens and expats by the Sultan's Armed Forces and the other departments of the Ministry of Defence alongside other state departments. — ONA

## 369 DROWNING INCIDENTS OCCURRED LAST YEAR

**MUSCAT:** The Public Authority for Civil Defence and Ambulance (PACDA) dealt with 369 drowning incidents in 2019, up from 255 in 2018. PACDA statistics showed that the majority of drowning incidents occurred in wadis, ponds, wells, steams, dams, uncovered water tanks and flash floods during and after rainfall. The reasons behind drowning deaths are attributed to the lack of swimming ability, swimming in an undesignated area such as dams, water channels and water-logged areas, random rescue operations which can result in multiple deaths, leaving children unattended near water surfaces, crossing running wadis and neglecting the safety instructions.



# TENDER BOARD AWARDS OVER RO 315M WORTH PROJECTS

**MUSCAT:** The Tender Board on Wednesday held its fourth meeting for 2020 under the chairmanship of Dr Rasheed bin al Safi al Huraibi, Chairman of the Tender Board.

The Board approved RO 315,539,477 worth tenders and additional works for the following development projects:

- 1. Part 3 of Adam-Thamrait dual-carriageway for a length of 133 km at a cost of RO 73,999,505.
- 2. Part 4 of Adam-Thamrait dual-carriageway for a length of 135 km at a cost of RO 115,045,774.
- 3. Part 5 of Adam-Thamrait dual-carriageway for a length of 133 km at a cost of RO 62,434,363.
- 4. Construction of protection dam at Wadi Adonab in the Wilayat of Salalah in the Governorate of Dhofar at a cost of RO 23,903,015.
- 5. Construction of protection dam at Wadi An'aar and side protection at Salalah Port in the Governorate of Dhofar at a cost of RO 22,924,940.
- 6. Renewal of lease contract of the building of the Directorate-General of Educational Assessment of the Ministry of Education at a cost of RO 434,310.
- 7. Renewal of lease con-



tract of the building of the Specialised Centre for Professional Training of Teachers of the Ministry of Education at a cost of RO 438,300.

- 8. Renewal of lease contract of the building of the general diwan of the Ministry of Social Development at a cost of RO 360,000.
- 9. Provision of radio and TV broadcast services for the Public Authority for Radio and Television at a cost of RO 10,582,290.
- 10. Renewal of lease contract of the building of the Public Authority for Consumer Protection at a cost of RO 387,000.
- 11. Support and development for tax systems of Tax Institution at a cost of RO

2,317,014.

- 12. Renewal of lease contract of the building of the National Recruitment Centre in the Wilayat of Bausher at a cost of RO 289,161.
- 13. Renewal of lease contract of the building of the Public Authority for Mining at a cost of RO 291,600.
- 14. Renewal of lease contract of the building of the Public Prosecution Department in Al Khuwair at a cost of RO 199,236.
- 15. Renewal of lease contract of the temporary building of the Institute of Public Administration at a cost of RO 113,400.
- 16. Additional works of the tender on construction of 300 residential units for citizens at Hamran Plain in

the Wilayat of Salalah in the Governorate of Dhofar at a cost of RO 1,100,000.

- 17. Additional works for management of the National Museum facilities at a cost of RO 719,567. — **ONA**

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# Malls reopen after three months, with conditions



VINOD NAIR

**MUSCAT:** Malls and commercial complexes reopened on Wednesday after nearly three months, with Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) as part of the preventive measures to limit the spread of the COVID-19. Mall of Muscat has announced that daily timings will be between 12 and 9 pm until further notice. All visitors will undergo a temperature test before entering the mall. Timings are the same for all malls and commercial centres with no entry for

elderly aged 60 years and above and children below 12 years. All visitors will undergo a temperature test before entering the mall to ensure the safety of all. As per the guidelines, all the malls shall remove seats from common areas, while prayer hall will remain closed until further notice. Parking occupancy should not exceed 50 per cent and the same should be manned by security personnel and operations staff. Hand dryers in all the restrooms to be switched

off and sealed for customer usage. Mall management will carry out routine inspection inside retailers' stores to ensure effective and frequent disinfection and sanitisation is being carried out by all outlets. Retailers must not transfer an employee from one branch to another. Staff should be positioned inside the mall to monitor whether customers are wearing face masks to prevent the gathering of customers at the same place. They should prevent the entry of customers in case of crowding inside the mall.

## Follow safety measures or face action: Muscat Municipality

KABEER YOUSUF

**MUSCAT:** Muscat Municipality has warned all outlets providing goods and services, which were allowed to resume operations from Wednesday, to follow safety norms or face action. Commercial activities like tailoring, fish mongering, shopping malls, laundries, etc have been urged to follow the standard safety mandate prescribed by the Ministry of Health or face action including fines and suspension of licence. They are supposed to maintain standard safety and hygiene COVID-19 protocols announced time and again for all the commercial activities. Commercial activities in Hamriya, Muttrah and Wadi Kabir, however, are spared from the Supreme Committee's order to open from Wednesday and they should remain closed till further notice.

## SHOPPERS HESITANT AND CAUTIOUS

SAMUEL KUTTY

**MUSCAT:** Malls opened to a lukewarm response on the first day of reopening on Wednesday without the presence of the otherwise bustling crowd. "It is clear that people are still a bit hesitant to head out. They are clearly very cautious about coming out to shop. We knew it would be difficult and expect that

the trend will continue for some more time," said Faizal Ahmed at a mall in Al Khuwair. Most shops in the malls wore a dreary look with restrictions still on place for entry of people en masse. Even as some stores opened for a trial, all inside wore a face mask. Prayer rooms, leisure and entertainment outlets and other attractions remained closed.

The Supreme Committee dealing with the COVID-19 situation in Oman allowed reopening shopping malls from June 24 as part of easing restrictions that were imposed almost three months back. According to the guidelines, those under the age of 12 and adults over the age of 60 will not be allowed to enter the malls. An official at a mall in Qurum confirmed to

Observer that the customer turnout was less than 50 per cent as per the guidelines on parking restrictions. Visitors to the malls were greeted by security personnel with temperature scanners and sanitisers and almost all shops had signs on floors indicating where to stand while queuing for payment to maintain safe distance.



# IPA BOARD ANALYSES WORK, POLICIES AMID PANDEMIC

**MUSCAT:** The Board of Directors of the Institute of Public Administration (IPA) held its second meeting for this year, headed by Shaikh Khalid bin Omar al Marhoon, Minister of Civil Service, Chairman of the Board of Directors.

The members reviewed the proposed procedural guide to the institute's human resources policies, which was developed in line with the nature of the institute's scientific work and its activities set out as per the Royal Decree No 28/2016, in addition to the requirements to attract, operate and develop its human resources in general and its scientific staff in particular.

They also discussed the principles of preparing the guide and its compatibility with the strategic plans of the Oman Human Development Vision 2040 and the institute's strategy for managing its human resources and the systems and regulations applied in the state's administrative



apparatus. The Board of Directors appreciated the Institute's approach to adopting human resources policies that guarantee attracting and selecting the best scientific competencies, developing them and investing their knowledge and expertise, in a rational way.

During the meeting, the Board went through the Institute's annual report for the year 2019. It also looked into the developments of the Institute's work in light

of the COVID-19 pandemic and the measures taken to ensure smoothness of work. It discussed the possibility of applying remote training for some of the programmes included in the 2020 plan, and the adoption of virtual training at the Institute in parallel with "real" training in the halls in the Institute's upcoming plans.

The Board also discussed the institute's initiative to launch a series of future

outlook reports; management after the pandemic, to be directed at decision makers and all those interested in the administrative apparatus of the country and outside it. These reports focus on setting features for the future of some important administrative issues through analysing its current position, reading its dimensions and presenting international and regional practices.

## COUNCIL TECH PANEL REVIEWS FUNCTIONING

**MUSCAT:** The Technology and Innovation Committee of the State Council on Wednesday held tinaits 15th meeting of the first annual session of the seventh term, headed by Dr Maryam bint Abdullah al Awadiyah, Committee Head, and attended by the committee members and General Secretariat employees.

The committee reviewed its work plan for the second annual session of the seventh term, the follow-up and evaluation of the work of the sub-committees emanating from the committee was completed, followed by conclusion of discussions on the draft law on the protection of personal data.



## TEMPERATURES TO DROP IN COMING DAYS

**MUSCAT:** The southeasterly winds are active during the next three days in most of the Sultanate's governorates, which will lead to a relative decrease in temperatures, especially coastal areas. There are also possibilities of fog/low clouds at night and early morning in the coastal areas.

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Companies specialized in the field of this Tender may obtain tender documents for the following tenders, on any working day between 8:00 a.m. and 1:00 Noon, from **Quantity Surveying & Contracts Office, Suhar Municipality** on payment of non-refundable tender fee as noted below:

| Tender No. | Description of Work                 | Tender Fee (non refundable) | Start Date for Selling Tender | Last Date for Selling Tender | Site Visit Date   | Last Date for Queries | Return Date       |
|------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| PRS/20/004 | Re-Location of Electrical Utilities | R.O. 25                     | Sunday 28/06/2020             | Thursday 16/07/2020          | Sunday 19/07/2020 | Monday 20/07/2020     | Monday 27/07/2020 |
| PRS/20/006 | Re-Location of Water Line           | R.O. 25                     | Sunday 28/06/2020             | Thursday 16/07/2020          | Sunday 19/07/2020 | Monday 20/07/2020     | Monday 27/07/2020 |

The **Form of Tender** (in small envelope) under wax sealed cover shall be placed in the tender box location in our **Quantity Surveying & Contracts Office**, by **10.00 a.m.** All envelopes are to be clearly marked with the name of the Tender being presented and no other marks.

The Tenderers shall submit with Form of the Tender (**Financial Offer**) a **Certified Cheque or Tender Bond** in the sum of **2%** of the tender value valid for **90 days**, issued by a locally registered bank in the Sultanate of Oman. Tenders without such bond shall be rejected.

**Comments:**

- The Tender Committee, has the right to distribution items or works or quantities thereof between more than one contractor without giving reasons to the bidder.
- The Tender Committee is not obliged to accept the lowest or any tender it may received.

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# Classification of SMEs amended on basis of workforce, revenues

**MUSCAT:** Dr Ali bin Masoud al Sunaidy, Minister of Commerce and Industry, Board Chairman of Riyada, issued a ministerial decision on Wednesday amending the classification of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in accordance with their workforce and revenue. According to the new classification, a micro establishment shall have 1-10 workers and its annual revenues stand at less than RO 150,000; a small establishment shall have 11-50 workers and an annual revenue ranging between RO 150,000 and RO 1,250,000; a medium establishment shall have 51-150

workers an annual revenue ranging between RO1,250,000 and RO5 million. Earlier, the classification was as follows: Micro-establishment 1-5 workers, less than RO 100,000 of revenue; Small establishment had 6-25 workers, RO 100,000- RO 500,000 of revenue; Medium establishment had 26-99 workers, RO 500,000 to less than RO3 million. The amendment of classification takes into account the classification of such establishments in other GCC states and the prospects of growth of this sector in the

Sultanate, which will enhance the role of these establishments in next phase of the national economy. Riyada database shows that the number of small and medium establishments stood at 44,000. As many as 13,000 of these establishments are run by Riyada Card holders (owners who engage in full-time management of their establishments). These are expected to contribute directly to augmenting local product (in the national economy) and to increasing the number of employment opportunities for national job seekers. — **ONA**

# BREAK THE CHAIN TO BE A VIRUS-FREE NATION

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH

**MUSCAT:** The private sector healthcare is part of the Ministry of Health and working in partnership combating COVID-19, but the request is also for cooperation from the general public in breaking the chain. Dr Mazin al Khabouri, Director-General of Private Health Establishments, Ministry of Health, urged, “Let us break the chain of COVID-19 spreading from one person to another. The virus is alive when it is transmitted within 14 days to another person. It gets revived, multiplied, and then the process goes on. So if we break the chain of transmission, then we would be virus-free in no time because the virus has survived until now because it has been able to spread from person to person.” Discouraging people from visiting others’ houses and wearing a mask should become a good habit now, advised Dr Mazin, and said, “Do not defy wearing a mask. It is not macho to show that you are not afraid of a virus.



Let us break the chain of COVID-19 spreading from one person to another. The virus is alive when it is transmitted within 14 days to another person. It gets revived, multiplied, and then the process goes on

**DR MAZIN AL KHABOURI**

A mask should be always in your pocket or purse and it should be worn to protect yourself and others.” So is it a problem while taking a fitness walk? Mask is not a problem, he said, “Wearing a mask is not a major issue. Wear it when you need it and remove it when not needed. Keep it with you and when the situation arises while being in a crowded place or mingling with people in a closed place where there is not good ventilation use it; preferable not to be in that situation. It is always easy to wear a mask and be safe. If you are



wearing a mask and dealing with a possible COVID-19 patient, the amount of virus coming from that person to you can be dramatically reduced and this helps your body to handle the virus.” He also pointed out that it is extremely important to practise physical distancing as there have been many incidents that caused the spread of COVID-19. “If it is a family member who has come to visit and stay with you, then you have to request them to stay in isolation within the house. There have been incidents where we had to break

the news to the host that their guest is COVID-19 positive and so the host would also have to go into isolation. It causes panic and emotional stress. The best thing is to be cautious from the beginning,” explained Dr Mazin. There is also a request for companies as well because there have been incidents when the COVID-19 patients are brought to the hospital late. By then the lungs are already affected and no matter how much the hospitals try to revive the oxygen rate the cases could turn out to be fatal. “More than 100 patients are admitted in the private sector hospitals and about 20 patients are in the private hospital ICUs out of a 100. So the private sector is helping in dealing with the current situation and they are doing a good job and have made sacrifices but they never say no when we ask them to help. I am yet to receive a negative answer when we ask the private healthcare providers to take action against the pandemic.”



# Beware second wave of coronavirus, medics warn Britain



A man wearing a protective face mask and gloves works in a temporary hygiene station in London. — Reuters

**LONDON:** A second coronavirus wave is a real risk for the United Kingdom and local flare-ups are likely, major health bodies said on Wednesday, in one of the strongest warnings yet to Prime Minister Boris Johnson as he eases lockdown to help the economy.

The United Kingdom has one of the world's highest death tolls from COVID-19 but, with infections falling, plans to lift many restrictions from July 4 to help an economy facing the deepest contraction in three centuries.

A major second spike is the nightmare for leaders across the world as they would face blame for more deaths and may have to shutter economies again. Some of Britain's most eminent health leaders, though, want urgent preparations for such a scenario.

"While the future

shape of the pandemic in the UK is hard to predict, the available evidence indicates that local flare-ups are increasingly likely and a second wave a real risk," the medics said in a letter in the *British Medical Journal*.

It was signed by 15 of the most eminent health professional groups and trade unions including the heads of the Royal College of Surgeons, the Royal College of

Physicians, the Royal College of Emergency Medicine and the British Medical Association.

"Many elements of the infrastructure needed to contain the virus are beginning to be put in place, but substantial challenges remain," they wrote.

European nations emerging from painful shutdowns are nervously watching a new outbreak at a meat-packing plant in Germany, where two municipalities have regressed to lockdown.

Announcing that England was emerging from "hibernation", Johnson is letting pubs, restaurants and hotels reopen from July 4. "While we remain vigilant, we do not believe that there is currently a risk of a second peak of infections that might overwhelm the NHS," he said on Tuesday.

— Reuters

## IN BRIEF

### India calls in army to run facilities in Delhi as cases surge

**NEW DELHI:** India reported 16,000 new coronavirus cases on Wednesday, its highest daily increase since the outbreak began, and the government called in the army to manage new treatment centres with thousands of additional hospital beds in New Delhi. At more than 456,000 confirmed coronavirus cases so far, India is the fourth worst hit country in the world, behind the United States, Brazil and Russia, according to a Reuters tally. Cases are expected to keep rising as state governments ease restrictions in place since lockdown was first imposed in late March.

### Thailand plans to allow some foreign travellers from next week

**BANGKOK:** Thailand plans to allow some foreign travellers into the country starting next week, as it eases restrictions imposed to curb the spread of the novel coronavirus, a senior official said on Wednesday. The first group of foreigners that have registered for 14-day state quarantine include those with work permits, investors and business executives, said Taweessin Wisanuyothin, spokesman for the government's Centre for COVID-19 Situation Administration. The new measures will be subject to approval by the government's task force that meets on Monday, he said, adding that medical tourists would also be allowed entry.

### Japan's success in curbing cases hampers search for cures

**TOKYO:** As nations race to develop treatments and vaccines for COVID-19, Japan has become a victim of its own success as slowing new infections has led to a shortage of patients to enroll in clinical trials. Clinical trials are under way for more than a dozen potential vaccines, including at least six in China, but Japan's first human trials are expected to start next month. In development of treatments, Russia and India approved Fujifilm Holdings Corp's Avigan as a COVID-19 therapy, but Japan, whose Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has touted the drug's potential and hoped to approve it in May, won't see a decision until at least July. — Agencies



## WORLD

# Human error caused Pakistan plane crash that killed 97

**ISLAMABAD:** A plane crash which killed 97 people in Pakistan last month was because of human error by the pilots, who were discussing the coronavirus during the landing, according to an initial report released on Wednesday.

The Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) plane came down among houses on May 22 after both engines failed as it approached Karachi airport, killing all but two people on board.

"The pilot as well as the controller didn't follow the standard rules", the country's Aviation Minister Ghulam Sarwar Khan said, announcing the findings in parliament.

The minister added the pilots had been discussing the coronavirus pandemic as they attempted to land the Airbus A320 and had disengaged the craft's autopilot.

"Unfortunately the pilot was overconfident", Khan said, adding that the plane was flying at more than double the altitude it should have been when he approached to land.



The deadly crash of a Pakistan International Airlines plane last month has been blamed on human error in an initial report on the disaster. — AFP

Standard flight operating procedures were then ignored by the pilots and the air traffic controller, resulting in an aborted crash landing that heavily damaged the plane's engines.

The aircraft then went down as it attempted a second landing, crashing into a residential area near the Karachi airport.

The Pakistani investigation team, which included officials from the French

government and the aviation industry, analysed data and voice recorders.

The minister said the plane was "100 per cent fit for flying, there was no technical fault".

— AFP

## European MPs demand halt to Israel's annexation plan

**LONDON:** More than 1,000 European lawmakers from 25 countries urged their leaders on Wednesday to step in and stop Israel's planned annexation of parts of the occupied West Bank. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu intends to kick-start the process next week, after clinching a coalition deal with his former election rival last month. In a letter published in newspapers and sent to European foreign ministers, the 1,080 parliamentarians said they were "deeply worried about the precedent this would set for international relations". "Such a move will be fatal to the prospects of Israeli-Palestinian peace", added the letter.

## Iran says ready for talks if US apologises over N-pact

**TEHRAN:** Iran would be open to talks with the United States if Washington apologises for exiting a 2015 nuclear deal and compensates Tehran, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said on Wednesday, cautioning that US calls for discussions were insincere. The confrontation between arch foes Tehran and Washington has worsened since 2018, when US President Donald Trump withdrew from Iran's 2015 nuclear deal with major powers and reimposed sanctions that have crippled Iran's economy. Iran has refused to hold any talks with the United States, which is trying to force Tehran to negotiate a new deal, unless Washington lifts sanctions on Tehran and returns to the original agreement.

## North Korea suspends military action plans against South

**SEOUL:** North Korea has decided to suspend military action plans against South Korea, the official KCNA news agency reported on Wednesday, as a report suggested North Korean troops were taking down loudspeakers recently reinstalled at the fortified border. Political tensions between the rival Koreas had been rising over Pyongyang's objections to plans by defector-led groups in the South to send propaganda leaflets into the North. Stalled negotiations regarding economic sanctions imposed because of the North's nuclear weapons programme had also fuelled tensions. It was not immediately clear why North Korea had softened its position, which came after it blew up a liaison office last week and cut off communication hotlines with the South. — Agencies





In early March, Poorva Dixit rushed to buy a ticket to India from the United States, her home for more than a decade. — Reuters

# Families separated by new Trump visa order frantic for answers

MICA ROSENBERG

In early March, Poorva Dixit rushed to buy a ticket to India from the United States, her home for more than a decade, after she learned her 72-year-old mother had fallen from her bed and was in critical condition.

She decided to leave her two young children and husband in California because of the risks of the novel coronavirus spreading around the world. Dixit and her husband are both Indian nationals while their children are US citizens. A software developer with a temporary permit to work in the United States, Dixit knew that to return home she would have to go to the US consulate in Mumbai to get a new visa stamped in her passport, a requirement for some visa holders when they travel abroad.

On March 16, a day before her visa appointment, the consulate

shut down due to coronavirus restrictions. Eight days later her mother passed away.

Now a new immigration order issued by President Donald Trump on Monday that bars the entry of holders of certain temporary work visas, could leave Dixit trapped in India, far from her children, until at least the end of the year.

“I’ve already lost my mother and I am being kept away from my motherhood as well,” Dixit, who is staying with relatives in the outskirts of Mumbai, said. “At this point my brain is just a fog.”

Dixit is one of nearly 1,000 people in India trapped in similar situations who joined a private group on the messaging app Telegram. Many like her have lived and worked in the United States legally for years but were in India when Trump made his announcement on Monday. They are confused and worried about their options for return, the administrators of the group said. — Reuters

## Managing changes and achieving goals



ALI AL MATANI  
ali.matani2@gmail.com

Change is part of the lives of people and nations. It breaks the monotony of life, reinvigorates working muscles of the countries, crystallises thought process of generations after generations and helps in its management. Change is there always and everywhere. What we require is adaptation according to it. We must understand what is required to continue as it is in our lives and what can change. It is also necessary to learn what should change to make our lives better as individuals, societies and states. It is also worthwhile to know what changes states bring in a situation and its importance as requirements of coping with it. We also need to learn the significance of changes in policies, approaches and planning to manage and administer a state with modern day requirements.

However, these intended changes from one situation to the other and new approach regarding it should be clear in everybody’s minds, so that every individual is fully prepared to be part of these changes and plays an active role in the process.

Perhaps making everything clear to the society and encouraging it to debate it is part of the process of bringing changes. It helps in ensuring that there are no conflicts and contradictions in it as well as there are no hindrance in its way.

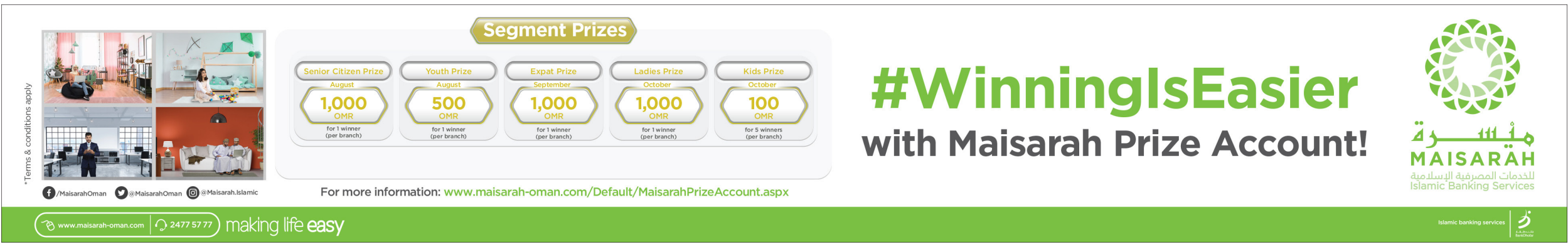
Therefore, opening the windows of dialogue between who’s who of the state and all segments of society is one of the most important requirements for the changes itself. It is always positive to have wider interactions with the people.

There is no doubt that the changes have become inevitable today and year after year. This is by virtue of sequence of developments which has taken place in the world. These developments want from us to keep pace with them in all walks of our lives. The coming phases of these inevitable changes have in store lots of challenges along with hopes and aspirations. People and nations must be ready to deal with these changes which are in thought, culture and behaviour. They will reflect in our social practices in which every individual would play his or her role. Everybody must accept it in a positive manner and should not oppose it.

If we will not change according to the current requirements, we would not be able to be the part of the world which is treading the part of progress, development and modernisation confidently. Countries of the world have made every individual a partner of change by inculcating his or her faith in the foundations and rules governing this process of modernisation and development.



# BUSINESS



**Segment Prizes**

| Senior Citizen Prize                                    | Youth Prize                                           | Expat Prize                                                | Ladies Prize                                             | Kids Prize                                             |
|---------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| August<br><b>1,000 OMR</b><br>for 1 winner (per branch) | August<br><b>500 OMR</b><br>for 1 winner (per branch) | September<br><b>1,000 OMR</b><br>for 1 winner (per branch) | October<br><b>1,000 OMR</b><br>for 1 winner (per branch) | October<br><b>100 OMR</b><br>for 1 winner (per branch) |

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# PRIVATE SECTOR URGED TO BOOST INVESTMENT IN COVID-19 CARE

CONRAD PRABHU

**MUSCAT:** The Sultanate's Ministry of Health has urged private health establishments to ramp up their investments and capabilities in the management of COVID-19 patients, given the likelihood that the novel coronavirus will remain part of Oman's – and indeed the wider world's – disease burden for the foreseeable future.

A top official of the Ministry, while welcoming initial efforts by private hospitals to ease the burden on the government in the handling and treatment of COVID-19 infections, underlined the urgent need for the private sector to build new capacity to help deal with a continuous stream of cases expected over the coming years.

"We commend the private healthcare sector for the steps it has taken in shouldering part of the burden on the government in the treatment of COVID-19 patients.

But these measures are short-term and not adequate to address demand for COVID care from private patients – Omani or expatriate – going forward. We are urging the private sector to think strategically and start investing in new COVID-specific capacity, be it in the form of dedicated Intensive Care Units (ICUs), equipment, and suitably trained healthcare staff," said Dr Mazin al Khabori, Director-General of Private



**DR MAZIN AL KHABORI,**  
Director-General of Private Health Establishments

Health Establishments.

COVID care in the Sultanate was until recently handled almost exclusively by government and public sector hospitals, but a strong uptick in the infection trend, particularly among expatriates, has since prompted authorities to rope in private hospitals in shouldering some of the burden.

"Accordingly, we began a series of meeting with private hospitals and began engaging with them on the need to make their facili-



We began discussions with the Capital Market Authority (CMA) with the goal of bringing on board insurance firms in extending their coverage to COVID-19 patients.

ties COVID-compliant," Dr Al Khabori explained.

"New guidelines were issued to ensure that patients turning up for non-COVID care were not exposed to the infection. Teams were sent out to hospitals in the capital area, as well as in the governorate, to train private healthcare staff in, for example, the proper use of personal protective equipment (PPE), disinfection procedures, and pathways for the handling of any COVID-19 cases arriving at

**INVESTMENT POTENTIAL:**  
Private hospitals account for only around 50 ICU beds in Muscat Governorate – a woefully inadequate number, according to the Ministry of Health.

their facilities.

At the same time, we began discussions with the Capital Market Authority (CMA) with the goal of bringing on board insurance firms in extending their coverage to COVID-19 patients. After extensive deliberations, and with the Ministry of Health as mediator, we reached an agreement. The tariff system formulated by the Ministry was broadly welcomed by all stakeholders as relatively fair in the recovery of costs, although not perfect," he further stated.

In calling for heightened investment in private healthcare, the official also cited sizable disparities in the allocation of hospital beds for expatriates. In Muscat Governorate, the bed allocation ratio stands at a dismal 7.8 beds per 10,000 people, which slumps further to 5.02 beds / 10,000 nationally. For Omanis, the ratio is 44.6 beds / 10,000 in the capital region versus 22.36 beds / 10,000 nationally.

Private hospitals in Muscat Governorate offer a total of around 840 beds, which includes around 50 for intensive care – a woefully inadequate number, according to Dr Al Khabori.



# MODEST FISCAL SURPLUS BUOYS OUTLOOK FOR OMAN'S PUBLIC FINANCES

CONRAD PRABHU

**MUSCAT:** A relatively small, but symbolically significant, fiscal surplus achieved by Oman for the first four months of this year – the outcome of austerity measures adopted by the government in response to weak oil prices and the pandemic -- has lifted the outlook for the Sultanate's public finances for the remainder of the year.

Figures published by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) earlier this week indicate that Oman registered a surplus of RO 134.2 million for the January – April period of 2020. This compares with a deficit of RO 132.2 million for the corresponding period of 2019.

The uptick has been attributed not only to gradually improving oil prices, but also to a slate of measures implemented by the government to offset the effects of the burgeoning global economic downturn on its finances.

"The overall improvement and resultant surplus was largely because of increase in oil revenue, cost controls adopted in civil and defense ministries and also because of privatisation proceeds," said Loai Bataineh (**pictured**), Chief Executive Officer - Ubhar Capital SAOC, a local investment firm.

After sliding to multi-year lows, Oman's crude oil benchmark has remained on the uptrend along with major international benchmarks since May when a global oil production cut, strongly supported by



## CHANGING FORTUNES:

The Sultanate registered a surplus of RO 134.2 million for the January – April period of 2020, compared with a deficit of RO 132.2 million for the corresponding period of 2019.

non-Opec Oman, came into effect. Oman Crude Oil Futures Contract settled at \$42.99 a barrel in trading on the Dubai Mercantile Exchange (DME) on Wednesday.

Net oil revenues were marginal up 3.2 per cent to RO 2.133 billion for the Jan – Apr period, up from RO 2.068 billion for the same period of last year. But gas revenues were down a hefty 22.7 per cent to RO 483.8 million this year, down from RO 625.6 million for the corresponding period of 2019.

On the expenditure side, defence and security establishments reported a 17.2 per cent decline in

spending during the period, while investment expenditure fell 24.5 per cent. Development expenditure by civil ministers was also nearly halved to RO 171.2 million.

"Indeed, cost cutting has helped a great deal in reducing the expenditure, which has aided in reporting a surplus over the last couple of months," said Bataineh. "As per the government's earlier announcements, we expect such cost rationalisation to continue in the coming period, which will aid in reporting better numbers in the coming period."

But the interest burden on debt racked up by the

government to help balance budgets in recent years will continue to weigh negatively on public finances, he warned. "Debt raised locally and internationally by the Sultanate in the last couple of years has resulted in an increase in interest on loans. It is estimated to remain higher in the coming 1-2 years but as soon as the loan taken on a higher rate matures and is replaced with a lower rate, we will see a gradual decline in interest," he explained.

Interest on loans surged 62.7 per cent to RO 309.6 million during the Jan – Apr period of this year, up from RO 190.3 million for the same period of 2019.

"However, interest rates globally are expected to remain lower because of COVID-19 and the economic stimulus and quantitative easing measures. This will aid the Sultanate in lowering their cost of borrowings," the banker added.





## BUSINESS

## Omani lubricants brand enters Rwandan market

**MUSCAT:** Lotus Oil Lubricants has added Rwanda to its burgeoning portfolio of export destinations. The Buraimi-based manufacturer recently shipped 20 tons of engine oil valued at \$28,000 from the Port of Sohar to Rwanda.



Commenting on the shipment, Hamdan Rashid al Eisaei, owner of Lotus Oil Lubricants said: "Africa is the world's second fastest-growing region, experiencing average annual GDP growth of 4.6

per cent, it's this rapid growth that caught our eye and that's why we participated in January's OPEX Trade show in Kigali. The event introduced us to any number of opportunities in the Rwandan market and we hope this initial shipment of engine oil to Kigali will be the beginning of a long-term trade relationship. We're excited about what the future holds for the company on the international front."

With a steadily growing population heading towards 2 billion, Africa's 1.1 billion workforce will be the world's largest by 2040. Equally, with \$1.4 trillion of consumer spending, many in Oman's business community see the opportunities the continent's 500 million new middle class consumers' presents.

Saif al Mamari, Assistant Director General of Exports at Ithraa, Oman's investment promotion and export development agency said: "Ithraa is delighted to have been of assistance to Lotus Oil Lubricants as they grow their export reach. My team is passionate about helping Oman's private sector harness economic growth wherever in the world it's taking place."

## HEAVY PROJECT CARGO DELIVERED TO DUQM REFINERY SITE



**MUSCAT:** Mammoet, a global leader in engineered heavy lifting recently completed the delivery of two key packages of heavy project cargo to the site of the multibillion dollar Duqm Refinery complex at the Special Economic Zone (SEZ) in Duqm.

The first contract came from a local manufacturer, comprising the inland and sea transport of nine LPG storage tanks (bullets) for EPC-2 Offsite and Utilities scope of the project.

The second contract was awarded by Agility Global Logistics and involved receiving and transport of various reactors.

Each 780-ton bullet fabricated at a local fab-

rication facility in Suhar, measured 72m long, 11m high and 8m wide, was loaded-out by 44 axle lines of self-propelled modular trailers (SPMT) onto a barge provided by Mammoet in Suhar, bound for the Port of Duqm.

Precision positioning of the RoRo ramps, an accurate ballasting plan, expert mooring and sea fastening ensured successful load-outs.

On arrival at the Port of Duqm, the bullets were safely loaded-in, staged in the port's laydown area and transported 25km to the project site. Once at the refinery, the bullets were successfully positioned onto their foundations by 1,600-ton and 1,250-ton capacity

crawler cranes working in tandem. By managing the complete logistics chain from the fabrication yard to the Duqm refinery, Mammoet was able to ensure timely and safe delivery of the bullets.

The Agility contract was an essential component of the Tecnicas Reunidas' Process Unit scope of the project.

This included handling a 1,130-ton reactor measuring 33m long, 8.7m wide and 7.3m high, which was the heaviest cargo ever loaded-in at the Port of Duqm.

All the reactors Agility handled have been received successfully and safely delivered to the project site using 54 axle lines of SPMT.

## MUC partners with SAP

**MUSCAT:** Majan University College (MUC) recently signed an agreement with the German technology group SAP, through which it has become a member of the SAP University Alliances and SAP Next-Gen community.

Under the agreement, MUC becomes eligible to use SAP software products for research and other academic purposes. MUC will be using SAP software through the SAP University Competence Centre and will be able to provide state of the art technological solutions in areas such as oil and gas

business processes, IoT solutions, ERP operations, and banking services.

According to MUC's Dean Dr Maha Kobeil, this academic partnership will play a major role in developing in MUC graduates the technological skills needed as Oman strives to transform itself into a leading-edge knowledge economy.

In Dr Kobeil's view, the agreement constitutes a major milestone in the growth and significance of Majan and will serve as a catalyst for collaborative research involving academia and industry."



# SHARAKAH SUPPORTS 220 SMES

**MUSCAT:** Sharakah held its Virtual Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) and the Annual General Meeting (AGM) for the financial year ended December 31, 2019 earlier this week. The meeting was held via a platform set by Muscat Clearing and Depository (MCD) and presided by Hani bin Mohammed al Zubair, Chairman of the Board of Directors.

Over the last two decades, Sharakah has financially supported around 220 SMEs with investment of approximately RO 6.7 million. Despite the challenges the world has faced, as an outcome of our sincere efforts, 2019 was a promising year for Sharakah.

“As stated in the Chairman's Report of 2018, we have upheld our commitments resulting in substantial growth in our income and balance sheet. Sharakah's Strategy for the next 5 years (2020-2024) has been reworked to meet the current market demand and aligned with Oman's Vision 2040. We remain committed



to the mandate given for supporting the SME community and thus helping the economy,” said the Chairman

The existing Board Members were re-elected unanimously. The name of the Board Members for 2020–22 are: Hani Mohammed al Zubair, Said Salim al Sahib, Nasser Mohammed al Hajiri, Pankaj Khimji, Hani Habib Abdul Nabi Macki, Rashad Jaffar al Shaikh and Qais Mahmood al Khanji.

## Ahli Bank opens Ghubra branch

**MUSCAT:** As part of its vision to offer the best in banking services, Ahli Bank has opened a branch in Ghubra to cater to the needs of the customers in and around the Wilayat of Bausher.

The new branch has state of the art infrastructure, well-trained team of banking professionals to attend to the needs of the customers and a spacious waiting area. Ahli Bank is committed to deliver a seamless customer-centric experience. Customers in Ghubra and surrounding areas will have access to the Bank's wide portfolio of services and products and can now enjoy the services of the Bank and interact with the



customer service team for all their banking requirements.

Commenting on the Ghubra branch opening, Muneer al Balushi, AGM – Head of Retail Distribution, said, “We are always keen to provide our customers with access to products and services through our strategic locations. The Ghubra branch will play a pivotal role in addressing their banking needs.”

## Let the games begin with Ooredoo Home Internet

**MUSCAT:** Committed to helping its customers enjoy the internet, Ooredoo's newly-enhanced Home Internet now offers a better ping and a better online gaming experience. With reduced latency and higher speeds, players can rise to the challenge of even the highest intensity games, including Fortnite, Overwatch, F I F A , Call of Duty, Apex and Assassin's Creed. Offering uninterrupted and buffer-free internet and a range of useful benefits, Ooredoo's 5G, Fibre and 4G Home Internet are the ideal way to keep the whole family entertained.

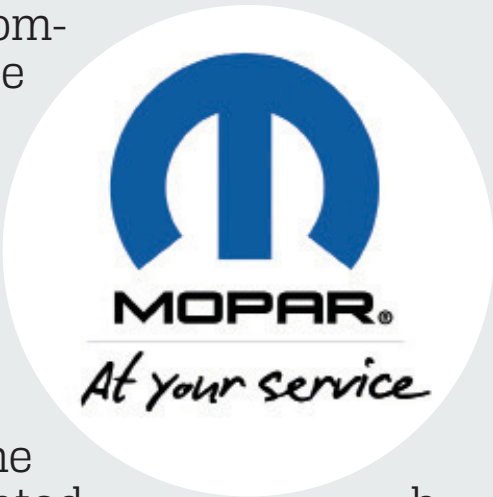


Feras bin Abdullah al Sheikh (pictured), Director of Branding and Communications at Ooredoo, said, “At Ooredoo we aim to provide fantastic connectivity for homes across Oman. Whether an Xbox or PlayStation fan, we're offering the smoothest experience yet, with faster downloads and upgrades on some of the most popular games. With our high-speed network, the whole household can also enjoy faster streaming, surfing, chatting, and more, all at the same time. With a choice of affordable plans, it leaves our customers nothing to worry about but improving their skills.”

With a choice of plans to suit different requirements, 5G, Fibre and 4G Home Internet is available across the Sultanate. As well as a host add-on benefits, the great value packages offer no up-front fees for installation and equipment.

## Dhofar Automotive extends vehicle warranties

**MUSCAT:** In line with its commitment to ensure the safety of its clients and to support them during this unprecedented period, Dhofar Automotive recently announced the extension of its Mopar warranty for a month. The extension is valid on all the car brands represented by Dhofar Automotive in Oman, including Jeep, Dodge, Chrysler, RAM, Fiat and Alfa Romeo, whose customer warranty contracts are about to expire during this time.



Commenting on the extension of the warranty period, Biju Luckose, Marketing Manager at Dhofar Automotive said, “This decision comes from our keenness on ensuring the safety of our clients and to express our solidarity, brought about by the onset of the global pandemic. Due to this, social distancing has been implemented, alongside the mandate of staying at home to mitigate the risk of infection.

Therefore, FCA Middle East has decided to extend the warranty of its customers to enable them to benefit from the complete after sales services provided by Mopar. This is active for a month after the lockdown is lifted and includes all warranty & service contracts that expire during this period.”



## BUSINESS

# German business confidence rebounds at record pace

The German government have launched massive financial support to underpin the European economy's recovery from the economic crisis triggered by the coronavirus.

**BERLIN:** German business confidence rebounded at a record pace in June as hopes rose that Europe's biggest economy was on course to emerge from the recession unleashed by the coronavirus crisis.

The Munich-based Ifo institute said on Wednesday that its closely watched business confidence index rose to 86.2 points this month from a reading of 79.7 points in May — its biggest-ever monthly increase.

"German business sees light at the end of the tunnel," said Ifo President



A worker wears a mask at the Volkswagen assembly line after the automaker restarted Europe's largest car factory following coronavirus shutdown in Wolfsburg, Germany. — Reuters

Clemens Fuest.

Analysts had expected that the index would come in at 85 points in June after it plunged to a record lows in recent months as large tracts of the German economy were shut down to curb the pandemic.

"The ... indicator seems to point to a strong V-shaped upswing," said Commerzbank chief economist Joerg Kraemer, with analysts predicting that the German economy will return to growth during the second half of the year.

Driving this month's index higher was a sharp gain German business executives' expectations of economic conditions six months down the track, which jumped from a May reading of 80.5 to 91.4 in June. — dpa

## UK airports warn 20,000 jobs at risk

**LONDON:** Up to 20,000 jobs could go at Britain's airports, an industry group warned, calling on the government to do more to help an aviation industry that was shut down by the COVID pandemic and is now struggling to restart due to quarantine rules.

The Airport Operators Association (AOA), which represents more than 50 airports, said future passenger numbers at UK airports were expected to be significantly lower, and analysis of its members suggested up to 20,000 jobs were at risk. The government should scrap its quarantine regime, provide relief from business rates, extend a job retention scheme, directly fund the sector



A public health campaign advert is seen as passengers arrive from international flights at the spread of COVID-19 continues, in London, Britain. — Reuters

regulator and suspend air passenger taxes to help save jobs, the AOA said.

"These jobs figures clearly show that a key component

of the UK's infrastructure is on its knees, with no relief to the current crisis expected," said AOA chief executive Karen Dee.

"Government needs to recognise the immense crisis facing the country's airport communities and take action to support UK aviation and protect livelihoods."

UK-based airlines British Airways, Virgin Atlantic and easyJet have already announced close to 20,000 job losses between them. The country's biggest airport Heathrow has also started a voluntary redundancy scheme.

Britain has a 14-day quarantine policy in place for arrivals into the country from abroad, which airlines, airports and the hospitality sector have said is deterring international travel at a time when they had been hoping for it to recover.

— Reuters





# Djokovic mauled over coronavirus ‘horror show’

**PARIS:** World number one Novak Djokovic was widely condemned for hosting a tennis exhibition where he was one of four players to test positive for the coronavirus, a lapse that sent shudders through a sport struggling to get back on its feet.

The Serbian star said on Tuesday that he was “deeply sorry” in an unstinting apology for the now-cancelled Adria Tour, where social distancing was minimal and matches were played in front of thousands of fans.

In the latest repercussion, Serbian NBA player Nikola Jokic has reportedly tested positive for the coronavirus after being pictured with Djokovic at an exhibition basketball event in Belgrade earlier this month.

The player is now in quarantine in Serbia.

In his last tweet before his apology, Djokovic posted a picture of himself playing basketball with a caption challenging Los Angeles Lakers star LeBron James. “Am I ready for a 1:1 @ KingJames?” it asked.

Djokovic, 33, has said he is “so deeply sorry” that the tournament “caused harm”.

MURRAY SAYS ‘POSITIVE RESULTS NOT SURPRISING’

CONCERNS OVER ATTEMPTS TO BEGIN EVENTS IN AUGUST



His wife Jelena has also tested positive.

Among the scathing criticism of Djokovic, there were questions about whether he, or tennis, should be allowed back on any court in the near future.

Many voiced concerns over attempts to restart professional tournaments in August, including the US Open which is scheduled to begin on August 31.

**#DJOKOVID**  
Djokovic, Grigor Dimitrov,

Borna Coric and Viktor Troicki all tested positive after taking part in the Adria Tour, where players embraced across the net, played basketball and even danced in a nightclub.

As the mocking hashtag #Djokovid circulated online, Australia’s Nick Kyrgios, so often in the crosshairs for his own on-court indiscretions, said the incident was pure “stupidity”.

“Don’t @ me for anything I’ve done that has been ‘irresponsible’ or classified as ‘stupidity’ - this takes the cake,” tweeted the world number 40.

Britain’s Andy Murray, a three-time Grand Slam winner who has known Djokovic since their junior days, said: “I don’t think it has been a great look for tennis.”

“In hindsight, it’s not something that should have gone ahead,” Murray said.

“It’s not surprising how many people have tested positive after seeing some

of the images of the players’ party and the kids’ day. There was no social distancing in place.

“Some people have said maybe this has put the US Open in doubt - which it may well do. But the measures and the protocols they have in place at the USTA (United States Tennis Association) are different to Serbia and Croatia. No fans for a start.”

**PR DISASTER**  
COVID-19 has been a public relations disaster for Djokovic.

He was criticised for breaking lockdown rules to train in Spain and raised eyebrows by insisting he wouldn’t be prepared to vaccinate against the coronavirus.

Djokovic also described limits on players’ entourages at the US Open as “extreme” and “impossible”, again putting him at odds with much of public opinion.

— AFP



SPORTS

# Milik, Lozano spur Napoli

**MILAN:** Arkadiusz Milik and Hirving Lozano both scored headers as Napoli followed their Italian Cup triumph with a 2-0 win at Hellas Verona in their return to Serie A on Tuesday.

Napoli beat Juventus on penalties in the Italian Cup final last week after eliminating Inter Milan in the semifinals, but this was their first league match since beating Torino on February 29 before the coronavirus lockdown.

Almost four months later, they extended their Serie A winning streak to four games against one of their rivals for a European place, while keeping their slim hopes of Champions League qualification alive by moving to within nine points of fourth-placed Atalanta.

Gennaro Gattuso's side remain sixth, three points behind fifth-placed Roma, who play Sampdoria on Wednesday, and four points ahead of ninth-placed Verona.

"We will not relax, we have to create an identity and fight for goals like the Champions League," said Gattuso, as last year's Serie A runners-up face struggling SPAL on Sunday. "We must continue on this path, believe that work gives us important things, as happened in the Cup."

"I don't know if these 11 games will be enough for us to get into the Champions League, we must already think about the challenge against SPAL."

Polish forward Milik opened the scoring on 36 minutes, nodding in Matteo Politano's corner.

Davide Faraoni thought he had equalised for the hosts after an hour, but his goal was ruled out for a Mattia Zaccagni handball in the build-up.

Lorenzo Insigne missed a chance for a second for

the visitors with 10 minutes remaining by curling a shot over.

But Mexican international Lozano, on as an 84th-minute substitute, rose high to head home a Faouzi Ghoulam cross six minutes later.

Napoli goalkeeper David Ospina denied Samuel Di Carmine and Miguel Veloso as Verona suffered their first defeat since the league returned to action.

## CORNELIUS HAT-TRICK

Insigne credited Gattuso for turning around the team's fortunes since he took over from the sacked Carlo Ancelotti last December.

"The coach has given us the

right determination," said Insigne.

"It can also be seen in the fact that two players who haven't played for a long time, like Ghoulam and Lozano, came on and were ready.

"His (Gattuso's) imprint can be seen and can help us grow further."

In Genoa, Andreas Cornelius scored his second hat-trick of the season as Parma moved seventh with a 4-1 win over the port city side.

Cornelius also teed up Dejan Kulusevski to add a fourth three min-

utes from time.

Iago Falque pulled a goal back for Genoa from the spot after Parma goalkeeper Luigi Sepe had earlier stopped Domenico Criscito's penalty.

Parma are level on points with AC Milan and three points off Napoli, with Genoa just above the relegation zone.

Cagliari, meanwhile, earned their first league win since December 2 with Giovanni Simeone scoring three minutes into injury time for a 1-0 win over SPAL.

The Sardinian side moved up to 10th place with SPAL second from bottom and facing relegation to Serie B next season.

Torino beat direct relegation rivals Udinese 1-0 for

their first win since January 12, moving six points clear of the drop zone.

Torino captain Andrea Belotti rifled in from an angle after quarter of an hour for his 10th league goal this season. — AFP

## SERIE A RESULTS ON TUESDAY

Hellas Verona 0 Napoli 2 (Milik 38, Lozano 90)  
SPAL 0 Cagliari 1 (Simeone 90+3)  
Torino 1 (Belotti 16)  
Udinese 0  
Genoa 1 (Falque 59-pen)  
Parma 4 (Cornelius 18, 33, 53, Kulusevski 87)





SPORTS

# KANE KEEPS SPURS IN CL CHASE

**LONDON:** Harry Kane believes he is as fit as he has ever been after netting his first goal of 2020 as Tottenham kickstarted their challenge for a Champions League place next season with a 2-0 win over West Ham on Tuesday.

The England captain looked far more like his old self after a laboured performance in his first appearance for six months against Manchester United on Friday, and was rewarded with a goal eight minutes from time.

"I'm in good shape. I've been working very hard through my rehab, lockdown and training. I feel as fit as I probably ever have done before," Kane, who had surgery on a hamstring injury prior to the season's shutdown due to coronavirus, told Sky Sports.

"When you have been out for six months it is just getting that feeling back on the pitch.

**ENGLISH  
PREMIER  
LEAGUE  
RESULTS ON  
TUESDAY:**

Leicester 0  
Brighton 0  
Tottenham 2  
(Soucek 64-  
og, Kane 82)  
West Ham 0

You can train as much as you want but being out here is totally different."

Tomas Soucek's own goal had opened the scoring as West Ham remained

precariously poised outside the relegation zone only on goal difference.

But Hammers boss David Moyes was furious the opener was not ruled out for a handball by Davinson Sanchez as he flicked a corner into Soucek's path. — **AFP**





# SPORTS

## BARCA GRIND OUT BILBAO WIN

MESSI'S  
SIDE BACK  
ON TOP,  
3 POINTS  
CLEAR OF  
REAL

**MADRID:** Barcelona limped to a 1-0 win over Athletic Bilbao on Tuesday that sent them back to the top of La Liga, for 24 hours at least, three points ahead of Real Madrid.

Only a goal from substitute Ivan Rakitic in the 71st minute prevented Barca from another stalemate after a draw at Sevilla on Friday had allowed Real to go top on head-to-head.

Madrid will return to the summit if they beat struggling Real Mallorca on Wednesday but Barcelona's victory at least puts the pressure back on Zinedine Zidane's

|                                    |                                                                       |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>La Liga results on Tuesday:</b> |                                                                       |
| Levante 0                          | Atletico Madrid 1<br>(Gonzalez 15-og)                                 |
| Valladolid 1                       | (Unal 45+5-pen)                                                       |
| Getafe 1                           | (Mata 41)                                                             |
| Barcelona 1                        | (Rakitic 71) Athletic<br>Bilbao 0                                     |
| <b>Played Monday</b>               |                                                                       |
| Villarreal 2                       | (Alcacer 18, Pau Torres<br>45+4) Sevilla 2 (Escudero 39,<br>Munir 63) |
| Leganes 0                          | Granada 0                                                             |

side. This Barca performance though was hardly a statement of intent, devoid of chances, lacking zip and tinged with frustration rather than the free-flowing football Quique Setien was appointed to bring in.

"We knew it was going to be complicated", Setien said. "Also because of the situation there is some anxiety because there's less and less margin for error. Lionel Messi looked particularly worn by his team's display. The Argentinian was creator-in-chief again but the dependence on him was high and he remains one away from the 700th goal of his career.

Rakitic is likely to be among a handful of players allowed to leave this summer. He has not been a regular this season and this was his first Barca goal since the Clasico in March last year.

"It's a difficult period but we have to stick together", said Rakitic. "It was an important goal, it was a tough game, it was hard for us to open the game up".

Arthur Melo started, despite reports he could be close to joining Juventus, and struggled.

Sergio Busquets picked up a yellow card and will be suspended against Celta Vigo on Saturday but that should be a simpler assignment than the ones that come after against in-form Atletico Madrid and Villarreal.

Athletic Bilbao stayed 10th after suffering their first defeat since La Liga returned. — AFP



# FEATURES

## THE AL KHATAYM TO AL SAB BALCONY WALK IS A STEP BACK IN TIME

From the seas and beaches, to the highest mountains, from the date palms to the deserts, from the old cities facing ruin or restoration, to its cultural experiences of music, dance, food and hospitality, the Sultanate has always had so very much to offer ... **page 20**



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### WHAT'S INSIDE

**ROHM announces  
reopening of Opera  
Galleria**



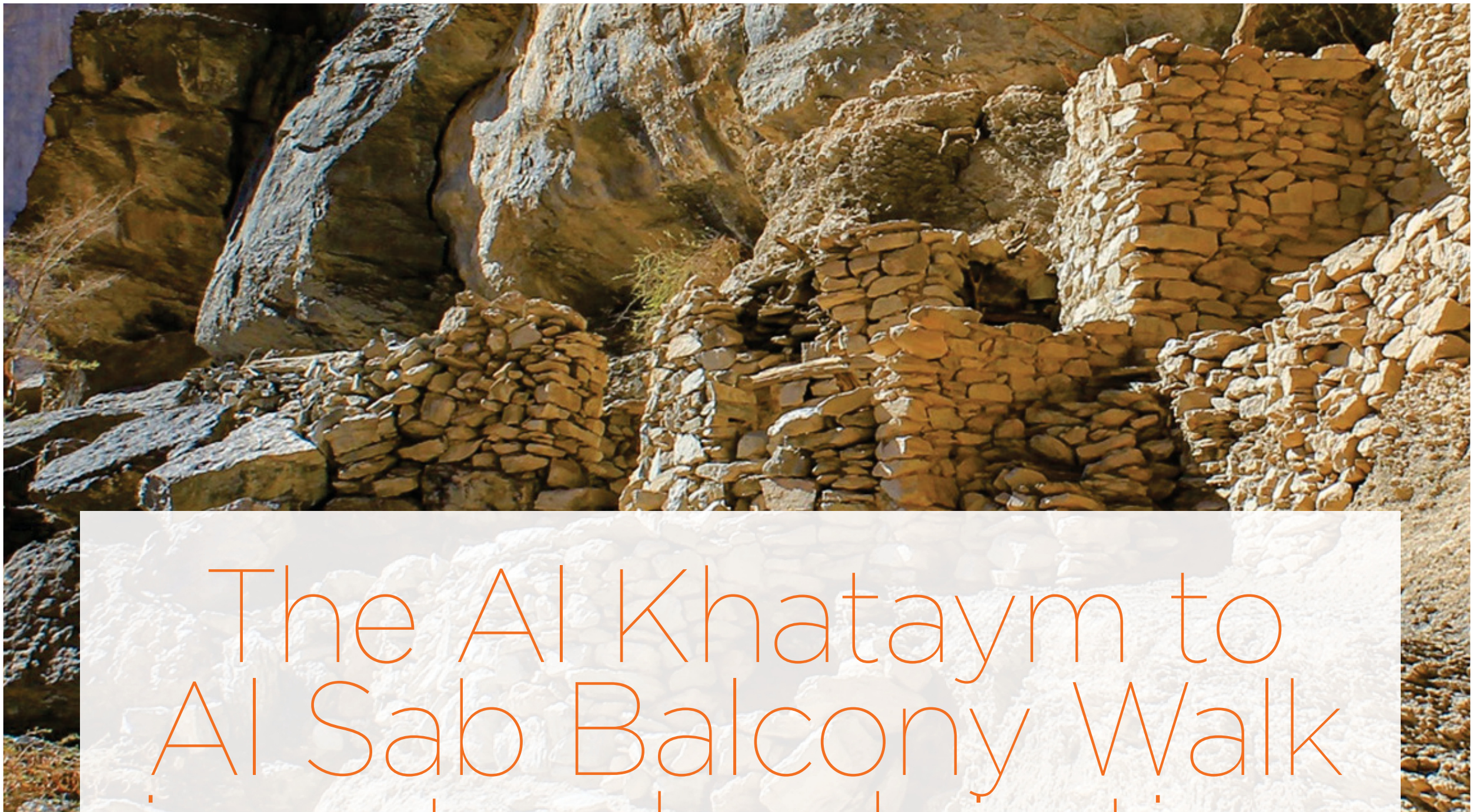
**P21**

**Popular Turkish TV  
drama inspires statues  
in Pakistan**



**P22**





# The Al Khataym to Al Sab Balcony Walk is a step back in time

TEXT BY RAY PETERSEN  
PHOTOS BY LENA PETERSEN

Visitors to Oman are spoiled by the diversity of what they can see, enjoy, and experience when they travel to Oman. Let's face it, when they visit many of the countries where one could see natural and man-made wonders, they are very limited as to where they may venture due to wild animals, security fears, or accessibility. Not so here in the Sultanate.

From the seas and beaches, to the highest mountains, from the date palms to the deserts, from the old cities facing ruin or restoration, to its cultural experiences of music, dance, food and hospitality, the Sultanate has always had so very much to offer in the way of an authentic tourist experience.

Olga Kidik from Kazakhstan, and her daughter Anna have experienced the Jebel Shams 'balcony walk,' along the side of the Grand Canyon near the summit of the Mountain of the Sun, Jebel Shams, describing

it as a "liberating, almost empowering experience, as good as you will experience anywhere in the world."

She and Anna were awestruck as their driver stopped on a few occasions as they drove up Jebel Shams, the gravel road being something different for them, but "the views as they got higher, and the cooler, clear fresh air made the drive worth it," said Anna. "I was glad we went early in the morning, because it was so quiet, and peaceful with the birds calling all that broke the silence. It was beautiful."

Parking at Al Khataym, Ali, their driver, made sure the three, they were accompa-

nied by Lena, had water and some fruit and they set out on the walk to the famous Sab Bani Khamis, or Al Sab village, as it is more commonly known,

built into the wall of the canyon a little over an hour's walk, or about 4 k m s , away. "It was just a little nerve-racking walking the narrow track at times, but Ali was great, and believe me, it was

worth it! To see where these people lived, and the work they did to give themselves somewhere safe and secure to live is incredible."

While Lena busied herself

taking photos, the two relaxed and chatted with Ali about what would bring people to this rugged environment, and why would they leave, but as Anna said, "They were remarkable people, strong, brave, maybe scared, but certainly determined, and the fact that so much of the structures remains reflects so well on them."

The walk back to Al Khataym was a quiet one, as "all of us were thinking about those people, and so it only seemed like ten minutes later when we were back at the car. We bought some wrist bands and hats from the girls," she laughed, "as I guess you are expected to do for the privilege of walking the track, and it was well worth it."

That is one group's experience of an Omani tourism experience, as organic, authentic, and thought provoking as any tourist experience can be, and as Anna commented, "It beats shopping any day of the week!"

The Sultanate has always had so very much to offer in the way of an authentic tourist experience.





# FEATURES

## INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



# Paris’s Orsay museum reopens to smaller crowds with eye on finances



**PARIS:** The Musee d'Orsay in Paris, home of the French Impressionists, reopened to the public on Tuesday, three months after being forced to shut by the COVID-19 pandemic, and its head called for state help to recover from the financial costs of the lockdown.

The museum can usually attract up to 15,000 visitors a day during the summer months, but with France's borders still closed to many foreign tourists and with social distancing in place, its daily capacity has now been cut to 5,000.

"The crisis has hit the

cultural world very hard. Our revenue shortfall will be significant. We are in a complex situation with a very tough period to navigate in 2020-21," said museum head Laurence des Cars.

"We are hoping for special support from the state."

Ticket sales make up 70% of the Orsay's revenue, and foreign tourists account for 70% of all visitors during the summer.

Visitors are now asked to book tickets online, to wear protective face masks and observe social distancing rules.

Orsay, a former rail-

way station on the left bank of the Seine river, houses the world's largest collection of Impressionist and Post-Impressionist masterpieces.

Access to the entrance and exit is signposted, but circulation within the collection and exhibitions remains free.

The French government began easing its lockdown measures from mid-May and cultural venues are slowly reopening. The Palace of Versailles reopened on June 6 and the Louvre museum will welcome back visitors from July 6.

— Reuters

## ROHM announces reopening of Opera Galleria



ROHM has reopened the doors of Opera Galleria with new measures in place to meet the recommended guidelines to ensure the safety and well-being of visitors.

The essential measures should encourage guests to enjoy their shopping. Car parking is available on the ground floor in front of the Opera Galleria, with a monitored capacity of 50% to ensure you are able to maintain safe distancing guidelines. Currently, guests under the age of 12 years or above the age of 60 years cannot visit the mall, in line with government guidelines.

Mall opening hours are 10am til 10pm and a 2-hour limit to each visit will be imposed. Additionally, restaurants will be open for orders and delivery, while dining in the mall is prohibited until further notice. It is recommended that all visitors follow all advice updates from the government, mall and team members, to ensure the safe enjoyment of the mall for everyone.



**FEATURES**

# Popular Turkish TV drama inspires statues in Pakistan

**LAHORE, PAKISTAN:** Residents of the Pakistani city of Lahore have erected statues to commemorate a medieval Turkish leader, a sign of the growing popularity, and cultural impact, of a television series imported from Turkey depicting the origins of the Ottoman Empire.

The series, Ertugrul Gazi, which ran in Turkey until 2019, is loosely based on the story of a 13th century nomadic Turkic tribal leader who confronted Mongols, Crusaders and Byzantine rulers in what are now Syria and Turkey.

Two statues of Ertugrul have been put up in a residential area of the city. Muhammad Shahzad Cheema, the head of a

private housing society, commissioned a likeness of Ertugrul, sword in hand on a rearing horse.

"The statue is a reminder of our love for the Ottoman Sultanate, and the jihad which Ertugrul waged which brought us (Muslims) respect in the whole world," Cheema said.

Pakistani broadcaster PTV began airing Urdu-dubbed episodes of the show during Ramadan a few weeks ago, and it has since become the most watched programme ever aired by the outlet.

No television show has been able to stir Pakistan the way Ertugrul Gazi has, PTV Managing Director Aamer Manzoor told Reuters. "People feel that it is the Turkish play

of Game of Thrones."

More than 58 million people viewed the first episode on PTV's YouTube channel in two months, and the entire show has had more than 250 million views, Manzoor said.

Turkish state television waived royalties for the show.

Cheema told Reuters people were coming "from far and wide" to take selfies with his statue, installed in a square locals plan to rename after Ertugrul.

The show also got a ringing endorsement from Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan, who said it would help combat "vulgarity" from Hollywood and Bollywood and promote family culture. — Reuters

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**The show illustrates how arts organisations across Germany are having to think creatively as they strive to get up and running again in a world where they must coexist with the Covid-19**

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