



HM Royal Decree sets up Cyber Defence Centre

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik has issued a Royal Decree No. 64/2020 on Wednesday establishing the Cyber Defence Centre and promulgating its system. Article (1) stipulates that a centre to be named “The Cyber Defence Centre” shall be set up. The centre shall report

to the Internal Security Service and be governed by provisions of the system attached to this decree. Article (2) says that the Head of the Internal Security Service shall issue the bylaws and decisions necessary for the implementation of provisions of the attached system.

Article (3) cancels all that contradicts this decree and the attached system or contravenes with their provisions. Article (4) says that this decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from the day following its date of publishing. — **ONA**

Fahd praises Supreme Committee’s work

MUSCAT: His Highness Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmood al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers, presided over a meeting of the Supreme Committee for tackling the COVID-19 pandemic on Wednesday



HH Sayyid Fahd thanked the Supreme Committee for the constant efforts in curbing the impact of the pandemic resulting in health, economic and social implications. HH Sayyid Fahd also expressed the government's appreciation for the efforts undertaken by all the state sectors particularly the Sultan's Armed Forces, Royal Oman Police and the other security services as well as the crucial humanitarian role being made by the healthcare sector.

TURN TO P2

Masks could stop COVID-19 second waves

LONDON: Population-wide face mask use could push COVID-19 transmission down to controllable levels for national epidemics, and could prevent further waves of the pandemic disease when combined with lockdowns, according to a British study on Wednesday. The research, led by scientists at Britain's Cambridge and Greenwich Universities, suggests lockdowns alone will not stop the resurgence of the new SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus, but that even homemade masks can dramatically reduce transmission rates if enough

people wear them in public. “Our analyses support the immediate and universal adoption of face masks by the public,” said Richard Stutt, who co-led the study at Cambridge. He said combining widespread mask use with social distancing and some lockdown measures, could be “an acceptable way of managing the pandemic and re-opening economic activity” before the development of an effective vaccine against COVID-19, the respiratory illness caused by the coronavirus. The study's findings were published in the “Proceedings of



the Royal Society A” scientific journal. At the onset of the pandemic, scientific evidence on the effectiveness of face masks in slowing transmission of respiratory diseases was limited, and there was no data on COVID-19 since it was a previously unknown disease. But, prompted by some new research in recent weeks, the World Health Organization said on Friday it now recommends that everyone wear fabric face masks in public to try to reduce disease spread.

— Reuters

OMAN

Follow safety measures or face action, civic body tells outlets

KABEER YOUSUF

MUSCAT: Muscat Municipality has cautioned the retail commercial outlets falling under 118 categories that have been allowed to operate from June 9 after the Supreme Committee decision.

Accordingly, all the outlets from manufacturing to shoe repair, computers to quarries, exchange houses, fodder and many others falling under the goods and services sector have been urged to follow the safety mandate to the core or face punitive action including fines and suspension of licence, etc.

All the outlets have been asked to register visiting hours of customers, their 'in' and 'out' time to assess the amount of time they spend inside the premises.

"A registry has been introduced to record the appointment system for customers to help reduce time spent in the outlet and to keep track on time allowed to them," a spokesperson at the health division of the Muscat Municipality said.

There should be a mechanism to assess the body temperature of the employees and customers according to

The other precautionary measures against COVID-19 are still valid



Avoid touching the eyes, mouth, and nose with unclean hands or after touching contaminated surfaces.

Ensure proper ventilation within the premises.

Provide a suitable residence for the workers with standard physical distance limits.



Intensified cleaning process must be practised at the workplace and the workers' residence using the recommended cleaning liquids.

Ensure continuous disinfection, especially for frequently contacted surfaces such as drawer handles and doors is in place.



Make sure to cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or use your elbow when coughing or sneezing.

respiratory symptoms on a daily basis before entering into the outlet and not allowing those who have Covid-19 symptoms to enter the premises.

No shaking hands, no hugging is allowed and all the workers appointed inside the shops must wash their hands frequently with soap and water, or sterilise them using alcohol-based sterilisers and wear PPE throughout.

"Remember, the personal protective equipment such as helmets, gloves, and face masks shouldn't be shared between two people," he added.

Transparent barriers depending on the risk rate of infection should be established within the premises and at least two metres' physical distance between an employee and the customer should be maintained.

Electronic means and digital documents should be used to minimise human contact. Employees shouldn't be transferred from one branch to another.

"All common devices and equipment such as telephones, tablets, mobile ATMs, and others used by the employees must be sterilised," he added.

More flights added to Vande Bharat phase 2++

KABEER YOUSUF

MUSCAT: The first flight from Salalah carrying Indian expatriates to their home country as part of the Phase 2++ of the Vande Bharat Mission took off from Salalah International Airport on Wednesday.

IX1350 carried passengers from Muscat to Kozhikode while IX 1446 picked passengers from Salalah to Kochi.

Meanwhile, 5 more flights have been added to the 14 services from Muscat and Salalah to various Indian destinations making it 19 in all.



"The government of India has added five more services to the subcontinent with more flights for South Indian destinations as people from this region constitute the major share of the diaspora", an embassy official has clarified.

The Muscat - Delhi flight will take off on Thursday (June 11) from Muscat International Airport and will be followed by Muscat - Trivandrum (June 12), Muscat - Coimbatore (June 13), Muscat - Kannur (June 14), Muscat - Lucknow (June 15), and Muscat - Mumbai (June 16).

Fahd praises Supreme Committee's work

FROM PAGE 1

He also praised the role of the public and private sector's establishments noting that the media is putting in a prominent and esteemed effort in this regard.

He added that all these efforts combined have contributed to achieving positive results hence avoiding large-scale risk seen in some countries.

HH Sayyid Fahd noted that the Omani society's response to and cooperation with the decisions of the Supreme Committee have limited the impact of the pandemic, praying to Allah the Almighty to safeguard the country and its leaders from harm and to grant us all success.

— ONA

OMANISATION RISES
IN MEDICAL JOBS

MUSCAT: Khalid bin Abdullah al Mandheri, Director-General of Administrative Affairs at the Ministry of Health, Head of the Follow-up Committee for the Omanisation Policy Implementation at the ministry, affirmed the rise of Omanisation percentage of medical and medical assistant jobs until the end of 2019 as the rate ranged between 80 per cent and 94 per cent, and reached 100 per cent in some specialties according to statistical information.

Al Mandheri said that the percentage of Omanisation among medical consultants accounted for 72 per cent, as 39 per cent in doctors, 65 per cent in nursing and medical laboratory jobs, 94 per cent in pharmacy jobs, and 74 per cent in medical assistant jobs.

He said: "The health sector is one of the vital sectors in providing job opportunities for citizens. The ministry is working according to its strategic plans for employment, to gradually raise the current Omanisation percentages in various medical and medical assistant specialisations. The ministry seeks to achieve the desired goal of Omanisation of all jobs in the future by up to 90 per cent while ensuring that new employees receive appropriate training and benefit from the long experience of senior employees." — **ONA**

Minister reviews steps
against COVID-19 at
Khoula Hospital

MUSCAT: Dr Ahmed bin Mohammed al Saeedi, Minister of Health, visited Khoula Hospital on Tuesday to review the preventive measures followed by the hospital to tackle COVID-19.

The minister toured the ICUs, Emergency and Accidents Unit, Medical Laboratories and the isolation section for COVID-19 patients, besides other departments.

During the visit, Dr Al Saeedi met the administrators and health workers in the hospital during which he listened to their suggestions on improving the quality of services provided to the patients, urging everyone to spare no effort in this critical period.

The minister thanked all health workers and praised their significant efforts in providing the required healthcare for all patients in general and COVID-19 patients in particular. He also conveyed the thanks of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to all



DR AHMED AL
SAEEDI MET THE
ADMINISTRATORS
AND HEALTH
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SERVICES

health workers and His Majesty's follow-up of the epidemiological situation.

Further, Dr Al Saeedi urged all health workers to maintain the safety of their health and their families by wearing the preventive clothes and using the personal protective

equipment as per the instructions issued by the authorities.

Dr Abdullah al Harthy, Director-General of Khoula Hospital, said the visit was a strong motivation for all workers in the hospital.

Dr Al Harthy pointed out that Khoula Hospital has adopted all precautionary measures for COVID-19 and developed an action plan to respond to any emergency situations that may result from this pandemic. He also affirmed that the hospital has the adequate capacity to accommodate the patients in the isolation rooms and ICU beds if necessary. — **ONA**

OMAN DAILY
Observer

For Advertisements

Please Contact with our Team

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

SULTANATE
ATTENDS
ARAB
MEETING ON
PANDEMIC



MUSCAT: The Sultanate took part on Wednesday in the videoconference meeting of the Arab Health Ministers Council to discuss the statement issued by the Economic and Social Council of the Arab League on COVID-19. The Sultanate was rep-

resented in the meeting by Dr Mohammed bin Saif al Hosni, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Health for Health Affairs. The meeting discussed several issues including enhancing the Arab coordination in tackling the health consequences of

the pandemic, taking into account providing the required support for the neediest Arab countries, in addition to strengthening the public health systems giving priority to supporting the Arab countries with the weakest health systems, particu-

larly the countries suffering from human crisis. The meeting touched upon the continuation of the main relief supplies and medical products, if available among the States, and conducting an urgent study of all needs after the pandemic in order to enhance the readiness of the health systems. The coordination between the Arab Health Ministers Council and the World Health Organization on the latest preventive measures to combat COVID-19 was also highlighted during the meeting. — ONA

1,311 RECOVERIES IN OMAN AS
WHO CONCERNED OVER HIGH
NUMBER OF CASES IN REGION

VINOD NAIR

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Health (MoH) on Wednesday reported that 1,311 patients had recovered from COVID-19 during the past 24 hours, taking the total recoveries from the disease to 5,640. Meanwhile, as the number of cases in the Eastern Mediterranean region has gone up significantly over the past three weeks, WHO said it is working with all countries to monitor and respond to the situation. Dr Ahmed al Mandhari, Regional Director for the WHO Eastern Mediterranean, said mitigation measures may lead to a higher number of injuries, and we urge all countries in the region to follow evidence-based risk assessments when lifting restrictions. The MoH announced 689 new positive cases, including 334 Omanis and 355 residents, which brought the total number of positive cases in the Sultanate to 18,887, including 84 deaths. According to the MoH, a total of 2,658 people were tested on Wednesday. One death due to COVID-19 was reported on Tuesday, taking the toll to 84 from 83. A total of 38 people were admitted to hospital on Wednesday, taking the number of people in hospitals to 293, including 85 in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU). As of Monday, 44 of the victims



Dr Ahmed al Mandhari

THE MOH ANNOUNCED
689 NEW POSITIVE CASES,
INCLUDING 334 OMANIS AND
355 RESIDENTS

were in the age group 15-19 and 51 of them were residents. Al Mandhari said that 670,000 cases including 15,000 deaths have been reported in the region until Tuesday. The GCC, meanwhile, has reported 288,581 cases, including 1,515 deaths. "There is no safe and effective medicine to date, several countries

are participating in the experiments to accelerate the pace of research," he said. "Every single person has a role to play in ending this pandemic, and we count on the media as our partners in this fight against COVID-19 to highlight the importance of proper community awareness and healthy behaviour among the public," he said. "No pharmaceutical products have yet proven safe and effective for the treatment of COVID-19. The search continues, with several countries in our region participating in the solidarity trial, including Iran, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Pakistan and Kuwait."

COVID-19 IMPACT ON MARINE LIFE LIKELY TO BE ‘POSITIVE’

KAUSHALENDRA SINGH

SALALAH: Hundreds of fishing vessels are anchored at ports due to the closure of restaurants in big hotels and subsequent low demand of fish in the market. Not much footfall is there in the city eateries, which are allowed to open only for takeaway purposes.

Some active fishermen admit they have never seen such a situation in their life and hope for any solution only after the threat of COVID-19 pandemic is over.

Avid fisherman, diver and owner of a marine tourism company, Yusef al Shanfari, is in the habit of going into the sea daily to catch some fish and come back with loads of them selling some to hotels and distributing the rest among his family and friends.

This was his routine on pre-coronavirus days. Since he can not live without going into the sea, he still goes and comes back with a big catch, but hardly there are buyers due to closure of hotel restaurants. He keeps some of the fish for personal use and frees the rest into the sea, and this he has been doing almost for the past three months.



Asked what changes he finds between pre-corona and post-corona days when he ventures into the sea, and Yousuf quips, “Big changes I can say. The noise in the sea has reduced, I find more fish and I find them more relaxed than before. It is easy now to catch them these days.”

Marine scientists are busy doing researches but yet to reach any conclusion. “It is too early to suggest the changes as the researchers are collecting data and working on them, but it is for sure that so less activity globally into the sea is a rare phenomenon and needs to be studied as to when it happened last,” said a Muscat-based marine researcher.



Sultan Qaboos Comprehensive Cancer Care & Research Center

Auction Advertisement for Leasing Cafeteria (2 Nos) Auction No. (SQCCC/AUC/2 /2020)

The operational committee of Sultan Qaboos Comprehensive Cancer Care & Research Center announces an auction for leasing two cafeterias.

- Cafeteria in the ground floor measuring approximately 188.5 square meters.
- Cafeteria in the first floor measuring approximately 191.50 square meters.

Qualified companies who interested in participating in this auction should collect the auction specification from the date of this advertisement until 21/6/2020 from the following address:

Operational Committee of Sultan Qaboos Comprehensive Cancer Care and Research Center

Knowledge Oasis, Building No4 (KOM4) First Floor.

Note: The Auction Specification Fees are 70 OMR for each.

Biddings that meet the above requirements should be submitted in a sealed envelope with a 1% tender bond valid for 90 days from date of submission by an employee from your company addressed to the head of Purchase Committee in the tender box located at:

Operational Committee of Sultan Qaboos Comprehensive Cancer Care and Research Center

Knowledge Oasis Building No4 (KOM4), First Floor.

No later than 2/7/2020.

Please note:

- Bids without a 1% valid tender bond will be disqualified.
- Bids received after the deadline indicated above, for whatever reason, will not be considered.
- Queries/ clarifications should be submitted immediately, but not later than one week before the date of tender submission.
- For Queries, you may Contact us Tel: 22584133 or 22584132.
- The committee is not obliged to accept the lowest price of the bid or any other bid.

STAY HOME
STAY SAFE



Sultan Qaboos Comprehensive Cancer Care & Research Center

Auction Advertisement for Leasing Flower Shop Auction No. (SQCCC/AUC/1 /2020)

The operational committee of Sultan Qaboos Comprehensive Cancer Care & Research Center announces an auction for leasing a flower shop

Qualified companies interested in participating in this auction should collect the auction specification from the date of this advertisement until 21/6/2020 from the following address:

Operational Committee of Sultan Qaboos Comprehensive Cancer Care and Research Center

Knowledge Oasis, Building No4 (KOM4) First Floor.

Note: The Auction Specification Fees are 70 OMR.

Biddings that meet the above requirements should be submitted in a sealed envelope with a 1% tender bond valid for 90 days from date of submission by an employee from your company addressed to the head of Purchase Committee in the tender box located at:

Operational Committee of Sultan Qaboos Comprehensive Cancer Care and Research Center

Knowledge Oasis Building No4 (KOM4), First Floor.

No later than 2/7/2020.

Please note:

- Bids without a 1% valid tender bond will be disqualified.
- Bids received after the deadline indicated above, for whatever reason, will not be considered.
- Queries/ clarifications should be submitted immediately, but not later than one week before the date of tender submission.
- For Queries, you may Contact us Tel: 22584133 or 22584132.
- The committee is not obliged to accept the lowest price of the bid or any other bid.

2 PERSONS HELD FOR STEALING ANTIQUES



MUSCAT: The Police Command of Al Dakhiliyah Governorate arrested two persons in connection with the theft of antiques from a house. Legal action has been initiated against the culprits.



Sultan Qaboos Comprehensive Cancer Care & Research Center

Tender Advertisement for LAUNDRY SERVICES Tender No. (086/2020)

The Operational Committee of Sultan Qaboos Comprehensive Cancer Care & Research Center announces a tender for Laundry Services in accordance with the tender specifications.

Qualified companies interested in participating in this tender shall collect the tender specification from the date of this advertisement until 21/06/2020 from the following address:

Operational Committee of Sultan Qaboos Comprehensive Cancer Care and Research Center

Knowledge Oasis, Building No4 (KOM4) First Floor.

Note: The Tender Specification Fees are 100 OMR.

Biddings that meet the above requirements should be submitted in a sealed envelope with a 1% tender bond valid for 90 days from date of submission by an employee from your company addressed to the head of Purchase Committee in the tender box located at:

Operational Committee of Sultan Qaboos Comprehensive Cancer Care and Research Center

Knowledge Oasis Building No4 (KOM4), First Floor.

No later than 02/07/2020.

Please note:

- Bids without a 1% valid tender bond will be disqualified.
- Bids received after the deadline indicated above, for whatever reason, will not be considered.
- Queries/ clarifications should be submitted immediately, but not later than one week before the date of tender submission.
- For Queries you may Contact on Tel: 22584133 or 22584132.
- The committee is not obliged to accept the lowest price of the bid or any other bid.

Progress of economic projects, initiatives to be highlighted

IMPLEMENTATION SUPPORT AND FOLLOW-UP UNIT TO PUBLISH 2019 ANNUAL REPORT

MUSCAT: Seeking to continuously provide support and follow up the implementation of government programmes and plans to diversify the economy, the Implementation Support and Follow-up Unit (ISFU) will publish its 2019 Annual Report next week, which is the third annual report being published by ISFU.

The report includes updates on the economic projects and initiatives through ISFU's KPI Dashboard, and details on the progress of these projects. The implementation of such projects is followed up and supported by ISFU in cooperation with the relevant government and private entities, in addition to the project owners.

In order to promote the principles of transparency and accountability, publishing the annual report of ISFU is considered as an essential part of its methodology and the communication plan that aims to provide the important details related to every project and initiative,



including achievement percentages, implementation and follow-up phases, the challenges facing these projects, and the efforts exerted by government and private entities along ISFU in following up the implementation of these projects and initiatives.

All of this is part of the government plans towards achieving economic diversification, in addition to new labs and a number of mega strategic projects that ISFU is working on.

The report includes the KPIs and targets of the initiatives, in comparison with what have been actually achieved in every KPI. And to achieve a high level of transparency, ISFU discusses, analyses, and compares data on several levels and phases. Then, it presents them in detail to an independent panel of local and international experts, who provide their recommendations as an independent working group. A brief on these recommendations is then included in the annual

report.

Likewise, ISFU provides these data to an independent third party specialised in verification, and after finalising the verification and approving its outcomes, a brief is also included in the annual report.

This is for the aim of providing a comprehensive picture of ISFU's work and the performance of economic sectors, including the projects and initiatives of the National Program for Enhancing Economic Diversification and other programmes within the KPI dashboard.

ISFU follows up and supports the implementation of projects and initiatives under 9 economic and enabling sectors: Manufacturing, Tourism, Logistics, Labour Market and Employment, Business Environment, Fisheries, Energy, Mining, Information and Communication Technology, in addition to Education, the lab of which was finalised in November 2019.— **ONA**

BLOOD DONATION CAMP HELD

SALALAH: Fulfilling the pressing demand for blood donation in the wake of COVID-19 pandemic, Kairaba Mirbat Resort organised a blood donation camp in association with Sultan Qaboos Hospital on Wednesday.

Joao Vieira, General Manager of the resort said blood donation is the best form of social service which is the minimum one

can do as responsible citizens and residents of the country, especially during the time of COVID-19 pandemic.

He thanked the hotel employees for donating blood, which is a genuine gesture towards friends, families or anyone who needs it in difficult times. The blood donation camp received support from all employees of the hotel.



Dr Mohammed Ahmed Morgan of Sultan Qaboos Hospital said, blood donation has various health benefits for the donor. It controls LDL (bad cholesterol), reduces the risk of myocardial infarction

(also known as a heart attack) by 88 per cent, it also reduces the risk of cerebral infarction or stroke by 33 per cent. He advised to go for blood donation once in three months.



RENEWABLES NOT ENOUGH TO MEET CLIMATE TARGETS

PARIS: The world added 12 per cent more clean power capacity in 2019 than the year before, but new renewable energy planned over the next decade falls far short of what is needed to forestall dangerous global warming, the UN warned on Wednesday.

An additional 184 gigawatts (GW) of renewable power — mostly solar and wind — came on line last year, according to the Annual Global Trends in Renewable Energy Investment report, jointly issued by the UN Environment Programme and Bloomberg New Energy Finance (BNEF).

Total investment in renewables in 2019 was \$282.2 billion, led by China (\$83.4 bn), the

United States (\$55.5 bn), Europe (\$54.6 bn), Japan (\$16.5 bn) and India \$9.3 bn), with a record 21 countries each spending at least \$2 billion.

Developing nations — not including China and India — poured an unprecedented \$59.5 billion into clean energy.

The rapidly falling cost of solar and wind power — less expensive in most electricity markets than coal — means more bang for the buck, the report showed.

Investment in 2019 was the same as the year before, but yielded an additional 20 GW of installed capacity.

But measured against the Paris climate treaty target of capping global warming at “well below” two degrees Celsius

above pre-industrial levels, the transition to clean energy is not happening nearly fast enough, the report said.

The 826 GW of new renewables planned by 2030 — at a cost of about \$1 trillion — is only a quarter of the roughly 3,000 GW required to keep us on track for a 2C world, it concluded.

Investment is lagging as well — more than \$2.7 trillion were committed to renewables during the last decade. When the current health crisis eases, he added, governments must not only boost renewable power, but the decarbonisation of transport, buildings and industry.

— AFP

IN BRIEF

Burundi mourns president

BUJUMBURA: Burundians were in shock on Wednesday after the sudden death of veteran President Pierre Nkurunziza, with condolences pouring in from across Africa as the troubled country grappled with the complex legacy of his 15-year rule.

Flags in Burundi were lowered to half mast after the death of the 55-year-old leader, who according to the government died on Monday of a heart attack after feeling unwell for two days.

Nkurunziza, a fit sports enthusiast and evangelical who believed he was chosen by God to lead the East African nation, leaves behind a country in political and economic turmoil after his divisive rule.

Sweden ends PM murder probe

STOCKHOLM: Swedish prosecutors on Wednesday named their main suspect in the 1986 killing of prime minister Olof Palme, closing the murder case that has gripped the Scandinavian country for more than three decades.

The suspect was named as Stig Engstrom, a former advertising consultant known for his staunch opposition to Palme's leftwing policies and who is now dead. Palme was gunned down on the evening of February 28, 1986, after leaving a Stockholm cinema with his wife, having dismissed his bodyguards for the evening. — AFP

US dictionary to change its definition of racism

NEW YORK: The American reference dictionary Merriam-Webster will change its definition of the word racism at the suggestion of a young black woman, who wanted it to better reflect the oppression of people of colour.

Kennedy Mitchum, a recent graduate of Drake University in Iowa, contacted Merriam-Webster, which has published its dictionaries since 1847, to

propose updating the term.

“I basically told them that they need to include that there’s a systematic oppression upon a group of people,” she told the local CBS affiliate KMOV. “It’s not just, ‘Oh, I don’t like someone.’”

Merriam-Webster’s editorial manager Peter Sokolowski confirmed to AFP that the definition would be modified after Mitchum’s request.

The dictionary currently offers three definitions of racism, and Sokolowski said that the second definition touches on Mitchum’s point — but that “we will make that even more clear in our next release”.

In the current version of the second definition, racism is “a doctrine or political programme based on the assumption of racism and designed to execute

its principles,” and “a political or social system founded on racism.”

The Merriam-Webster site, where the definitions are available for free, had nearly 50 million unique visitors in May, according to the SimilarWeb site.

Merriam-Webster’s Twitter account has also become a viral hit in recent years, with BuzzFeed calling it “the sassiest dictionary on Twitter”. — AFP

WORLD

JUSTICE FOR
GEORGE FLOYD



Philonise Floyd, brother of George Floyd, gives his opening statement during a House Judiciary Committee hearing to discuss police brutality and racial profiling on Capitol Hill in Washington,DC, on Wednesday. — AFP

WASHINGTON: A brother of George Floyd, whose killing in Minneapolis sparked protests around the world, asked the US Congress on Wednesday to stop the pain of black people caused by police violence.

“I’m here to ask you to make it stop. Stop the pain,” a tearful Philonise Floyd, 42, said in testimony before the House of Representatives Judiciary Committee. “George called for help and he was ignored. Please listen to the call I’m making to you now, to the calls of our family and the calls ringing on the streets of all the world.”

George Floyd’s death on May 25 after a policeman knelt on his neck for almost nine minutes was the latest in a string of killings of African-American men and women by police that have sparked anger on America’s streets and fresh calls for reforms.

“Justice for George,” Philonise Floyd told reporters on his way into the hearing venue.

The Judiciary Committee is prepar-

ing to shepherd a sweeping package of legislation, aimed at combating police violence and racial injustice, to the House floor by July 4, and is expected to hold further hearings next week to prepare the bill for a full House vote.

“The nation demands and deserves meaningful change,” Judiciary Committee Jerrold Nadler said at the start of the hearing in the US Capitol.

Representative Jim Jordan, the committee’s top Republican, said “the American people understand it’s time for a real discussion, real debate, real solutions about police treatment of African-Americans.” He also praised President Donald Trump’s efforts in response to Floyd’s death and subsequent protests.

Lawmakers also heard urgent pleas from civil rights advocates for strong reforms and more funding for social services in minority communities, as well as vocal support for police from three witnesses called by Republicans.

— Reuters

Brazil deforested 10,000 sq km of rainforest in 2019

BRASILIA: Deforestation of Brazil’s Amazon rainforest was worse than previously reported in 2019, revised government data showed on Tuesday, during the first year of President Jair Bolsonaro, who is keen to develop the forest crucial to curbing global warming.

Brazil’s space research agency INPE recorded 10,129 square kilometres of deforestation for its

benchmark annual period from August 2018 to July 2019. That’s an area about the size of Lebanon and a 34.4 per cent rise from the same period a year earlier.

The revision is higher than INPE’s initial report of 9,762 square kilometres of forest destroyed during that period, an increase of 29.5 per cent.

— Reuters

Carbon levy on airfare

ZURICH: Consumers in Switzerland face higher air fares and petrol prices after the lower house of parliament on Wednesday approved measures aimed at cutting emissions that cause global warming.

Temperatures in landlocked Switzerland are rising twice as fast as the European average, prompting the government to push for more ambitious action on Carbon dioxide emissions.

As the aviation industry battles the biggest downturn in its history due to coronavirus pandemic, air fares in Switzerland will face a surcharge of as much as 120 Swiss francs (\$127), broadcaster SRF said. Petrol prices could rise by as much as 12 Swiss cents per litre, it added. — AFP

Columbus statue dumped in lake

RICHMOND: Anti-racism protesters in Virginia tore down a statue of Christopher Columbus on Tuesday night in Byrd park in Richmond, then draped it in a burning flag and dumped it in a lake, images of the incident posted on social media showed.

A wave of demonstrations has swept across the United States and Europe following the death of George Floyd. Some of the civil action has focused on monuments glorifying countries’ imperialist past, which some people see as offensive in today’s multi-ethnic society. Protesters have torn down statues linked to empire and the slave trade.

US eyes troop cuts in Germany

BERLIN: The German government on Wednesday confirmed that the Trump administration has informed Berlin it is considering cutting the number of US troops in Germany, a move critics say could undermine the NATO alliance.

The Wall Street Journal reported last week that President Donald Trump wants to withdraw some 9,500 troops from the 34,500 currently permanently based in Germany.

Germany hosts more US troops than any other country in Europe, a legacy of the Allied occupation after World War II.



Locusts flying around the minaret of a mosque in Multan. — AFP file photo

Locusts turn chicken feed

KANEEZ FATIMA

Chickens in Pakistan have been feasting on captured locusts under an initiative to combat swarms of the insects that are threatening food supplies in the impoverished country.

Prime Minister Imran Khan has endorsed plans to expand a pilot project in the bread-basket province of Punjab, where villagers earned cash to gather locusts that were then dried out, shredded and added into poultry feed.

Farmers are struggling as the worst locust plague in 25 years wipes out entire harvests in Pakistan's agricultural heartlands, leaving people scrambling for income.

Muhammad Khurshid from Pakistan's food ministry and biotechnologist Johar Ali set up the programme, drawing on efforts in war-ravaged Yemen, where authorities have encouraged people to eat the protein-rich locusts amid famine.

One farmer who lost all her

crops to the insects said she and her son earned 1,600 rupees (\$10) during a single locust-gathering outing, helping to offset the financial damage.

At night the creatures cluster on trees and plants, making them easy to scoop up as they lie motionless in the cooler temperatures until the sun begins to rise. With 20 tonnes of captured locusts, authorities ran out of money to pay the collectors and the programme was paused.

The harvested locusts went to Hi-Tech Feeds — Pakistan's largest animal-feed producer — which substituted 10 per cent of the soybean in its chicken food with the insects.

While the project is not a solution to the devastation caused to crops, it can provide hard-hit farmers with a fresh revenue stream and relieve pressure on authorities struggling to distribute locust-beating pesticides.

Locust swarms have gnawed their way through crops across East Africa, the Arabian Peninsula and parts of India this year, and experts fear their numbers will explode as monsoon rains arrive this month. — AFP

Living with coronavirus



ALI AL MATANI
ali.matani2@gmail.com

The world is slowly returning to normalcy even as coronavirus cases continue to rise and there is no sign of a vaccine. Adjusting our life to precautions like social distancing, wearing face masks and frequent hand washing has become the new normal.

Lockdowns cannot continue for an indefinite period to avoid any economic hardships, which may weaken us further.

The pandemic and the lockdown have already incurred heavy losses and massive layoffs across sectors in all countries.

The key to fight against COVID-19 is health awareness among the people everywhere in the world. Now, the only way out is to create balance between the protection of health and the continuation of economic activities.

Now, the responsibility of prevention has shifted from the governments to the individuals. Recent months have seen intensive awareness campaigns. It was so hard to miss the talk about coronavirus in normal conversations. It is our responsibility to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. We must adhere to social distancing strictly as well as follow other

NOW, THE RESPONSIBILITY OF PREVENTION HAS SHIFTED FROM THE GOVERNMENTS TO THE INDIVIDUALS. IT IS OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO PREVENT THE SPREAD OF THE CORONAVIRUS. WE MUST ADHERE TO SOCIAL DISTANCING STRICTLY AS WELL AS FOLLOW WEAR MASK IN PUBLIC

rules, which will reduce the chances of infection and transmission.

Life with coronavirus has become an unavoidable reality till it is eliminated in future. Scientists are working in almost all countries to find a cure for it.

When the lockdown was declared, there was no cure of the disease in sight. This made life more difficult. The debacle of the economy of which the health sector is also an important part is the thing which we cannot afford.

There is a slogan 'stay home, stay safe,' we believe in it. We should not go out except for essential purposes. The return of 50 per cent of employees to work is a promising beginning. Let us hope that opening economic activities will set the wheels of production in motion.

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

FEATURES

A beginner's guide to growing superfoods at home

MARY OOMMEN

Microgreens are the new superfoods. They are shoots of plants that are harvested just after the first three or four leaves develop. The time to harvest depends on the variety of seed planted, but generally most microgreens will be ready to eat in a short two or three weeks. Although they are small, microgreens have delicate textures, distinctive flavours, and are very rich in nutrients.

Researchers at the USDA Agricultural Research Centre have revealed that microgreens are rich in vitamin C, vitamin E, vitamin K and beta-carotene. Studies have also shown that microgreens have considerably higher levels of these vitamins, about five times greater than their mature plant counterparts. They can be used as a garnish, or to add texture and flavour to salads and meals.

Given that people are confined to their homes with plenty of time to spare, microgreens are quickly gaining popularity with urban gardeners for all the right reasons. They are economical, require minimal effort and can be easily grown even by those with limited space. All you will need are containers, seeds, a medium/layer for growing the microgreens and a spray bottle.

To start, soak the seeds in water for a few hours and prepare the container by punching small holes in the bottom. Any type of container can be used for this purpose, even the plastic ones from takeout orders will do. Line the container with a growing medium

– you could use a layer of cotton or thick paper-towels, or even fine peat moss. Sprinkle a handful of the soaked seeds into the prepared containers and lightly mist the soil with water using the spray bottle. Finally, cover the seeds with a moist paper-towel and place the container near a source of light, taking care to avoid direct sunlight. Remember to mist the seeds regularly so that the growing medium is always moist. When the seeds begin to sprout remove the layer covering the seeds and allow the shoots to grow. The microgreens will be ready to harvest in two to three weeks. Harvest the microgreens by snipping them just above the roots and rinse well before use.

Growing microgreens started as a cautious experiment for Azaelya Ali Badr, a customer service leader, who with the corona virus lockdown, was getting bored with all the time she had to spare. Sharing her experience, she says, “after being confined to my home for more than four weeks, I was really missing fresh greens for my salads. Given the potential dangers of making frequent visits to the supermarket for my weekly stock of greens, I began to see if I could grow them at home. I soaked some coriander and mustard seeds and planted them in small containers. Within days, I was able to harvest a whole bunch of tender shoots. The whole process of growing microgreens has been really simple and therapeutic during these difficult times and has given me an immense sense of satisfaction and happiness.”



FEATURES

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Dutch protesters demand end to fur farming



MORE THAN 100 people calling for an end to fur farming protested in front of the Dutch parliament on Monday following an outbreak of coronavirus on mink farms that has led to a cull of tens of thousands of the animals.

The protesters, many wearing face masks with animal rights slogans, held images of mink in cages and called on the government to move a 2024 ban on fur farms forward and close them

immediately.

Coronavirus has been found on 10 of the 140 remaining Dutch mink farms.

The government last week ordered mink on all infected farms to be killed over fears they could act as a long-term reservoir of the disease for humans.

Last month, the government identified two cases in which humans were infected by mink, the only animal-to-human transmissions

known since the global outbreak began in China.

The outbreak on Dutch farms originated with handlers and was first identified in April.

Farms where no infection has been found intend to continue operations.

The Netherlands exports an estimated 90 million euros (\$101 million) worth of mink fur annually. Other major mink fur producers include Denmark, Poland and China.—**Reuters**

Sick of lockdown: Panda escapes confinement in Copenhagen zoo



HUMANS ARE NOT the only ones tiring of confinement during the coronavirus pandemic — a panda escaped from his enclosure at Copenhagen Zoo on Monday.

Xing Er, a six-year-old male panda — soon to be seven -- then took a tour of the zoo, which was closed at the time.

He was spotted on a surveillance video “leaving his enclosure, slipping under an electric fence”, zoo spokesman Jacob Munkholm Hoeck said.

The animal wandered around the zoo until an employee noticed it and called a security team.

“The veterinarian of the zoo anaesthetised the panda and he was brought back to the enclosure,” Hoeck said.

“There he was given an antidote and woke up a couple of minutes later.”

Xing Er was not harmed and there were no human injuries.

Bengt Holst, the zoo’s chief scientist, said in a statement that security around the enclosure will be “carefully examined” to “make sure (it) doesn’t happen again”.

Xing Er and his female mate Mao Sun — who did not take part in his escape — arrived in Denmark in April 2019, on loan from the Chinese city of Chengdu.

They are a part of the “panda diplomacy” programme set up by China which consists of lending pandas in order to foster relations with trading partners. —**AFP**

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PRIVATE INVESTMENT SOUGHT IN SUR SHIPYARD COMPLEX



BUSINESS REPORTER

MUSCAT: The Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn) has invited the private sector to avail itself of investment opportunities linked to the establishment, management and operation of a Shipyard Complex in Sur Industrial City for a period of 30 years.

The project stems from increasing demand for factories supporting small and medium scale fishing vessels. It is also in line with the government's drive to open the way for the private sector to invest in infrastructure facilities, as the Ministry of

The project is aimed at increasing the number of factories supporting small and medium scale fishing vessels. It is also in line with the government's drive to open the way for the private sector to invest in infrastructure facilities, as the Ministry of

Agriculture and Fisheries issued a decision to stop granting new licenses to traditional fishing vessels and introduced a programme to support fishermen to switch to modern fishing vessels due to the steady growth in the fisheries sector during the past years.

Recognised as the first of its kind in the Sultanate, the shipyard complex project is expected to attract a significant number of investors from the private sector especially with the incentives and facilities offered by Madayn to the investors and business owners.

A role for the private sector is in line with the gov-

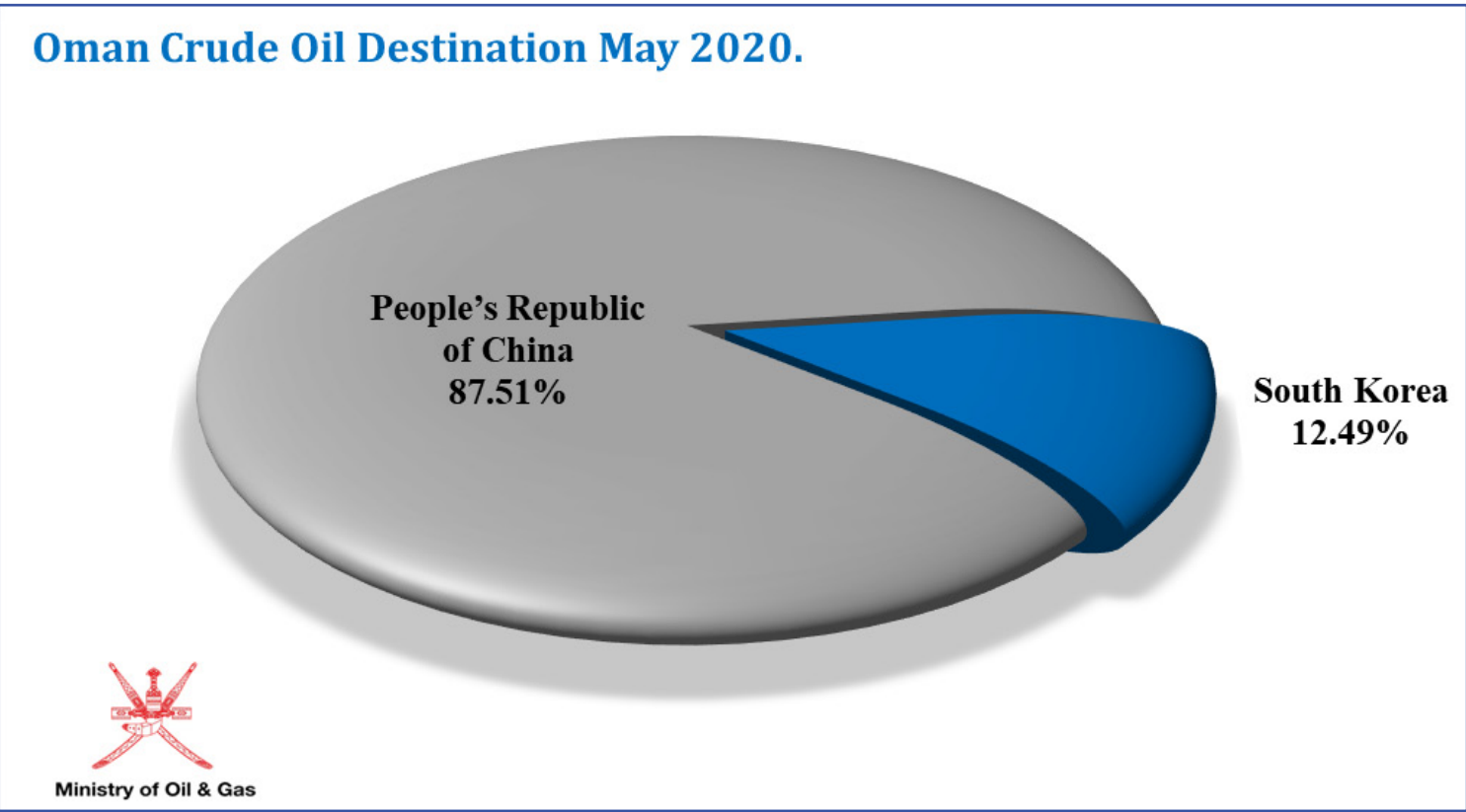
ernment objectives to strengthen cooperation and partnership with the private sector to support its role and contribution to comprehensive and sustainable economic and social development in the Sultanate.

The Public-Private Partnership (PPP) approach is also adopted by Madayn in the field of developing, managing and operating the industrial

cities and specialised economic zones in accordance with Royal Decree 32/2015. The Royal Decree assigns the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Mada'yn) to develop and operate the industrial cities in the Sultanate, and attract industrial investments and provide continued support to this sector through regionally and globally competitive strategies.

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Investment Manager Report <i>For the 3 Month Period ending 31st March 2020</i> The first quarter of 2020 played out quite dramatically as global equity markets obliged with a rally during the first 6 weeks of the quarter before radically changing directions and marking one of the most abrupt corrections in the history of financial markets. The COVID-19 pandemic and its ripple effect on all scopes of economic activity jolted the markets in spectacular fashion and exhibited the frailty of a very long lasting global equity rally. The 10-year US treasury yield dropped substantially, closing the quarter at 0.70%, significantly lower than the beginning of year level of 1.92%, reflecting a sharp risk off and de-rating of growth expectations. As economic activity came to a halt, demand for crude barrel by an estimated 20% to 30%, the barrel of Brent closed the quarter at USD 26, USD 40 lower than the beginning of the year. While contraction in demand explains some of the price weakness, OPEC and allied oil producing countries' failure to agree on further production cuts explains the other portion of volatility. After posting healthy returns during the previous year, regional equity markets (as measured by the S&P GCC Large and Mid-Cap Index) corrected -24.81% during the first quarter. Saudi Arabia shed 23%, Kuwait shed 27%, Qatar shed 18.90%, UAE 29%, Bahrain 20% and Oman 13.4%. During the first quarter, the Fund shed 22.04%, faring better than the benchmark's -24.81% return. On an absolute basis, all sectors posted negative returns, although telecommunication and healthcare performed better. On a relative basis, the Fund did benefit from its underweight in Financials and Materials while it was negatively impacted by its exposure to consumer discretionary and real estate. As of quarter end, the Fund has substantially increased its cash position and made sizeable allocation to short duration investment grade sovereign bonds in order to de-risk the portfolio and preserve capital. In the face of economic uncertainties and further expected volatility, we will be looking for deeper discounts and more opportunities to re-deploy capital down the road.	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="4">UNAUDITED INTERIM STATMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 31 MARCH 2020</th> </tr> <tr> <th></th><th>31 March 2020 RO</th><th>31 March 2019 RO</th><th>31 December 2019 RO</th></tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Assets</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr> <td>Financial assets at fair value through profit or loss</td><td>6,143,346</td><td>10,274,816</td><td>9,271,089</td></tr> <tr> <td>Cash and cash equivalents</td><td>1,916,099</td><td>55,947</td><td>808,280</td></tr> <tr> <td>Dividend receivable</td><td>18,326</td><td>97,017</td><td>-</td></tr> <tr> <td>Interest receivable</td><td>12,019</td><td>2,621</td><td>-</td></tr> <tr> <td>Total assets</td><td>8,089,790</td><td>10,430,401</td><td>10,079,369</td></tr> <tr> <td>Liabilities</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr> 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Note: The complete accounts, in Arabic or English as requested, will be sent by mail to any shareholder within 7 days of a written request addressed to the Administrator, Investment Banking Operations, National Bank of Oman, P.O.Box 751, PC 112, Ruwi, Sultanate of Oman. Tel: 24778864, Fax: 24778993 Email: GCCFund@nbo.co.om																																																																																																																																																					

CHINA, S KOREA TOP MARKETS FOR OMAN CRUDE EXPORTS



JOMAR MENDOZA

MUSCAT: China and South Korea were the only destinations for Oman Export Blend in May this year, with the former 87.51 per cent of total exports of 737,258 barrels per day (bpd) during the month, the Ministry of Oil and Gas said in its latest monthly report.

South Korea's share increased 5.66 percentage points to 12.49 per cent of the total.

Total production of crude reached 679,334 bpd in May 2020. Exports were down 17.55 per cent compared to the previous month's average, the Ministry said.

The average price of Oman's Crude Oil futures contract on the Dubai Mercantile Exchange (DME) rose 42.4 per cent compared to the previous month.

The monthly official selling price for Oman Crude oil for July 2020 delivery — traded during

May 2020 — was \$33.68 per barrel, an increase of \$10.03 compared with the June 2020 official selling price.

The daily trading marker price ranged between \$28.27 per barrel and \$37.61 per barrel.

"Crude oil prices experienced an optimistic outlook during the trading of May 2020 due to several factors, which had direct and positive impact on prices.

The main factors that supported positive trading sentiments were mainly caused by the Opec+ production cut agreement that came into effect on May 1, and the relaxing of the lockdown by many countries due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

These two main factors increased the global demand for crude oil and petroleum products. In addition, the decline in global stock markets, as well as the subsequently decrease in US crude oil commercial inventories also positively affected oil prices further," the Ministry stated.

Bank Muscat closes \$150m loan facility with China bank

BUSINESS REPORTER

MUSCAT: Bank Muscat has successfully completed an unsecured bilateral loan facility of \$150 million, which has a 5-year tenor, with the prestigious China Development Bank (CDB), a development finance institution of the People's Republic of China.

Abdullah Zahran al Hinai (pictured), Chief Wholesale Banking and Strategic Growth Officer, said: "The successful closure of the \$150 million bilateral loan follows the closure of a Club Loan for \$650 million recently from a consortium of 20 relationship banks from around the globe. This is due to the strong confidence of our partners in Bank Muscat and in the country.

The Bank enjoys excellent support from the international banking community and we look forward to enhancing strategic relationships in the future. The existing healthy linkages between Oman and Asia are further enhanced with this landmark transaction. The loan from CDB opens a new chapter in the bank's continuous efforts to widen its international partnerships."

The loan facility was closed at favourable financing terms showing a good appetite for the bank's fundraising activities.

It was facilitated through the bank's Wholesale Banking Group (WBG) which specialises in fund raising for the Bank (conventional and Islamic) as well as other financial institutions across emerging markets. The WBG team brings a focused approach to fund raising, delivering tailored funding solutions for the benefit of its clients.

Bank Muscat, which has the largest banking network in Oman covering retail, corporate, wholesale and Islamic banking operations, has been a keen participant in the growth and development of the Sultanate over the last three decades. It has consistently demonstrated strength and stability in financials, ownership and management and is presently the only Domestic Systemically Important Bank (D-SIB) in the country. The loan from CDB will be utilised for the bank's financing operations in the country.



BUSINESS

FOOD PROJECTS BACKED BY OFIC TOP \$1 BILLION IN OMAN

CONRAD PRABHU

MUSCAT: New investments in projects spearheaded by Oman Food Investment Holding Company (OFIC), the government's food sector investment and development flagship, total around \$1 billion, underscoring the robust attention according to the nation's food security goals.

OFIC, which was formally brought under the auspices of the newly created Oman Investment Authority (OIA) last week, currently has stakes in as many as 11 food related ventures and enterprises. The lists includes: Oman Flour Mills Company, Oman Fisheries Company, Oman National Livestock Development Co and Oman Food International, which are partly government owned.

Having successfully launched its first food security project under the OFIC umbrella – the \$259 million Mazoon Dairy Company in Al Buraimi Governorate – last year, the holding company is now advancing a string of equally strategic ventures in various locations



ROBUST GROWTH:
STATE-OWNED FOOD SECTOR INVESTMENT AND DEVELOPMENT FLAGSHIP NOW SUPPORTS 11 FOOD-SECURITY RELATED INITIATIVES AND COMPANIES

around the Sultanate. Slated for commercial operation this year are: Al Murooj Dairy, a \$49 million first-of-its-kind milk collection scheme under implementation in Dhofar Governorate; and the \$96 million Bashayer Meat Company, located in Thamrait Wilayat also in Dhofar Governorate. In Ibri Wilayat (Al Dhahirah Governorate),

OFIC is on track to the country's biggest poultry project – the \$259 million A'Namaa Poultry Company – in 2021. Also set to be operational next year is Oman Dates Production and Packaging, a \$72 million venture located in Barka. Lined up for launch in 2022 is a first-of-its-kind initiative that will herald Oman's foray into veteri-

nary pharmaceuticals. National Veterinary Vaccines Co is proposed to be set up with an investment of \$46 million. Also due to come on stream that year is Oman Oilseeds Crushing Co, a project under construction in Sohar Port with an investment of around \$98 million. Rounding off the list of investments under OFIC's current portfolio of projects is International Seafood Company, a \$109 million venture to be located in Duqm in Al Wusta Governorate.

Nissan Oman reopens showrooms

MUSCAT: As per Oman's Supreme Committee guidelines, Nissan Oman, from the house of Suhail Bahwan Automobiles (SBA), has reopened its showroom with special safety measures in place to protect against the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19). The precautionary measures and guidelines in place include: Regular disinfecting of common surfaces; Mandatory wear-



ing of mask and gloves while in showroom; Temperature checks of all employees; Social distancing will be in effect inside

the showroom; and Consultation on prior appointment. Customers would have to book appointment to visit the showroom through the toll-free number 800 50011 to avoid a long wait. A spokesperson for Nissan Oman said, "We are pleased to welcome back our customers and are ready to serve them. We want to reassure them that we are taking every

precautionary measure possible. Safety measures we are implementing include providing temperature checks for employees and others entering the showroom as well as regularly disinfecting surfaces and introducing measures to ensure six feet distance between all. We urge customers to book an appointment before visiting the showroom."

CHINA MOBILE PARTNERS WITH OMANTEL

MUSCAT: Deepening its collaboration within the Middle East, China Mobile International (CMI) has joined hands with Omantel to establish its third Point of Presence (PoP) in the region in the Sultanate of Oman.

The new partnership leverages Oman's strategic location and the complementary strengths of CMI and Omantel to enable closer ties between the Middle East, Africa, Asia and Europe.

The new PoP will leverage Omantel's vast subsea network to provide latency improvement, prevent single point failure and connect with other CMI PoPs for resilient connectivity in the Middle East to support increased global connectivity for multinational busi-



nesses.

Omantel has invested in 20 subsea cable systems covering 120 locations around the world.

It is also the first and only carrier within the six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries to land a submarine cable in Europe.

The Oman PoP connects to the Dubai, Fujairah and

Djibouti PoPs through CMI's SMW-5 and AAE-1 cable system, and connect to other APAC cable systems in Singapore, such as SJC and APG going to Hong Kong.

In the future, more new cables will be linked to the Muscat PoP to strengthen CMI's connectivity and provide an alternative path

through the Middle East.

Sohail Qadir, Vice President, Wholesale, Omantel said, "With the globalization of the telecommunications sector, we are looking at an exciting future of our partnerships and expansion with CMI.

Omantel became the preferred choice to help CMI take its strategies forward in part because of the Sultanate of Oman's geographical location, policies that feel the pulse of a digital future, and an infrastructure network that enables us to reach further.

Forming the backbone of this partnership will be Omantel's robust infrastructure, subsea network, professional facilities management and access to power."

Aster Al Raffah Hospital launches free mobile testing

MUSCAT: Aster Al Raffah Hospitals and Clinics, one of the most prominent and largest private hospital establishments in Oman, the GCC and India, has launched Aster Volunteers Mobile Medical Services in collaboration with Oman's Ministry of Health.

The initiative aims to provide free medical consultations and testing to residents of Wilayat Muttrah — a province of Muscat that has been hit particularly badly by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The initiative is aimed at providing the highest standards of care to residents whose access to medical services may have been disrupted due to the ongoing pandemic and subsequent restrictions to movement. The highly accessible service enables residents to consult expert medical professionals and share their COVID-19 related health concerns without having to visit a busy hospital.

Dr Ashendu Kumar Pandey, CEO of Aster Al Raffah Hospitals and Clinics, Oman said, "As one of the largest private hospital chains in the region, Aster is dedicated to offering its full support to assist the Oman Government in its ongoing fight against COVID-19. Our number one priority is to ensure the continued health of communities across Oman by delivering best-in-class healthcare services to those who need it most."

Sohar International to host UK official on Viewpoints

MUSCAT: As part of its value proposition, Sohar International is planning its 6th edition of 'Viewpoints — Sohar International Chairman's Forum,' that will be conducted in a webinar style setting and streamed live via the bank's YouTube channel on June 15, 2020 starting at 7:30pm.

The 6th edition of Viewpoints will host Lord Grimstone of Boscobel Kt, Minister for Investment jointly at the Department for International Trade and the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, The United Kingdom.

As the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic continues to reshape societies and economies around the globe, Lord Grimstone will offer a comprehensive picture of expected long-term changes in a post COVID-19 world.

Highlighting the importance of forums such as Viewpoints especially during such challenging times, Mohammed Mahfoudh al Ardhi, Chairman of the Board of Directors at Sohar International said, "With the pandemic impacting economies globally, the entire world is staring at a challenging economic scenario. Viewpoints serves as an ideal platform to provide the local population with valuable insights and thought provoking engagement with eminent international leaders sharing their experiences, knowledge, and ideas on a global perspective.

It's my pleasure to announce Lord Gerry Grimstone, the Minister for Investment, UK, as my guest speaker on the sixth edition of Viewpoints which will be done in a virtual setting for the first time"



Workers are seen on scaffolding at a construction site in Nantong, Jiangsu province, China. — Reuters

World economy to contract at least 6 per cent in 2020: OECD

PARIS: The global economy will contract at least six per cent this year, with the unprecedented loss of income and “extraordinary uncertainty” caused by measures to contain the coronavirus outbreak, the OECD said Wednesday.

In the case of a second wave of contagion later in the year, economic output could shrink by as much as 7.6 per cent, it warned.

In both scenarios, recovery will be “slow and uncertain”.

GDP growth should resume in 2021, by 5.2 per cent if the virus is contained, and 2.8 per cent if there is another infection wave, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development said in its latest outlook, entitled “World economy on a Tightrope”.

It warned that by the end of next year, “the loss of income exceeds that of any previous recession over the last 100 years outside wartime, with dire and long-lasting consequences for people, firms and governments.”

As unemployment rises, private debt levels in some countries are “uncomfortably high,” said the report, “and business failure and bankruptcy risks loom large.”

In its previous outlook in March, by when the outbreak had hit China but not yet the world’s other large economies, the OECD slashed its global

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growth forecast by half a per cent-age point to 2.4 per cent, which would have been the worst performance since the 2008 financial crisis.

Things have got considerably worse since then, with commerce and travel shut down as governments scram-

bled to rein in the pandemic by keeping people at home.

The outbreak has nevertheless killed more than 400,000 people worldwide to date.

Economic activity in the OECD’s 37 developed member countries has collapsed, the report said, by as much as 20 or 30 per cent in some cases in what it called “an extraordinary shock”.

As long as there is no vaccine or treatment against the coronavirus, physical distancing to prevent contagion, testing people for the virus, and tracing and isolating those infected, will remain key to fighting the pandemic.

But under such conditions, sectors affected by border closures and those requiring close personal contact, such as tourism, travel, entertainment, restaurants and accommodation, “will not resume as before.”

And even these steps may not even be enough to prevent a second outbreak.

“Global cooperation to tackle the virus with a treatment and vaccine and a broader resumption of multi-lateral dialogue will be key for reducing doubt and unlocking economic momentum,” the OECD said. — AFP

STOKE MANAGER O'NEILL TESTS POSITIVE FOR CORONAVIRUS



Stoke City can confirm that manager Michael O'Neill has tested positive for the Covid-19 virus following the latest round of testing on Monday (June 8).

STOKE CITY STATEMENT

LONDON: A friendly between Manchester United and Stoke was called off at the last minute after the manager of the Championship side, Michael O'Neill, was diagnosed with coronavirus.

Stoke had arrived at United's Carrington training base on Tuesday and were in the academy building when they found out.

"Stoke City can confirm that manager Michael O'Neill has tested positive for the Covid-19 virus following the latest round of testing on Monday (June 8)," read a club statement.

"O'Neill had tested negative in the previous five rounds of testing.

"He will now follow the relevant guidance and undergo a period of isolation, whilst continuing to be in regular virtual contact with his coaching staff and players."

O'Neill's assistant Billy McKinlay will prepare the team for their game with Reading on June 20 when the Championship resumes after being suspended in March due to the pandemic.

Stoke are just three points above the relegation zone with nine games remaining.

— AFP



SPORTS



IT WILL MAKE
BOWLERS ROBOTS,
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IT'S A QUIZZICAL
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WASIM AKRAM,
FORMER PAKISTAN
CAPTAIN

KARACHI: Legendary Pakistan paceman Wasim Akram warned on Wednesday that bowlers would become “robots” after cricket officials temporarily banned shining the ball with saliva as a coronavirus precaution.

Bowlers traditionally get the ball to move or swing in the air by applying shine to one side using sweat or saliva.

The International Cricket Council, however, has temporarily banned the practise over virus transmission fears as teams prepare to return to the pitch in the coming weeks.

Players can still apply sweat to the ball.

“It will make bowlers robots, coming and bowling without swing,” Akram told AFP, saying they would have to be patient and wait for the ball to age naturally.

“It’s a quizzical situation for me as I grew up using saliva to shine the ball and to swing it,” he added.

PAKISTAN’S
AKRAM
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“I am all for precautions in these tough times, so bowlers have to wait for the ball to get old and rough for them to get swing.

Sweat alone was unlikely to generate swing as in some countries it was too cold, said Akram.

“Sweat is just something of an add-on, a top-up. Too much use of sweat will leave the cricket ball too wet,” he said.

Akram, who took 414 Test and 502 one-day international wickets in a storied career, believes artificial substance could potentially

help as he encouraged officials to keep searching for alternatives.

“I believe that they will need to find a reasonable solution. Artificial substances like vaseline could be used to swing the ball but how much of it?

“Let’s see, we have this England versus the West Indies series to judge how it goes, because I have never experienced this thing.”

International cricket resumes with England hosting the West Indies in a Test series later this month .

Akram said suggestions that limited ball-tampering be allowed should also be considered by officials.

“When can you tamper the ball? Right from the first over or after 20-25 overs? They will need to sit down and do brainstorming,” he added.

“The game is already tilted more in favour of the batsmen.” — **AFP**



Oman star Mohsin al Ghassani joins Iran’s Sepahan Isfahan Club

ADIL AL BALUSHI

MUSCAT: Oman’s national football team player, Mohsin al Ghassani, arrived in Iran’s capital city of Tehran late on Tuesday to resume the training sessions with his Iranian team Sepahan Isfahan Club.

With the league restarting, it is expected that many of the new protection measurements will be implemented for all the teams and players due to COVID-19 pandemic including the former player of Al Suwaiq as he will have the COVID-19 test prior to joining his colleagues in the training sessions.

The top Iranian sports officials affirmed recently on resuming the top league in the country before end of June after three months of stopping the sporting activities due to the coronavirus outbreak.

Al Ghassani signed a two-



year contract with the top Iranian club earlier this year. He has played two matches with the team at the domestic league and AFC Champions League.

Sepahan Isfahan Club are currently positioned in the second place with 37 points while Persepolis FC topped

the league by 47 points. At Asian level, the second placed team in Persian league is competing at the AFC Champions League beside the teams: Al Saad (Qatar), Al Nasar (Saudi Arabia) and Al Ain (UAE).

The 22-year-old returned to the Sultanate during the peak

Al Ghassani signed a **two-year contract with the top Iranian club earlier this year. He has played two matches** with the team at the domestic league and AFC Champions League

of COVID-19 pandemic before the end of March.

He spent home quarantine period in his hometown in Al Suwaiq for more than two months during which the cancellation of sporting activities took place in almost all the countries including Iran.

SPORTS



"I plan to take the necessary time to be 100 per cent ready to play at my highest level. I will be missing my fans and the tour dearly but I will look forward to seeing everyone back on tour at the start of the 2021 season."

Roger Federer,
20-time Grand Slam champion

FEDERER OUT OF TENNIS UNTIL 2021 AFTER KNEE SURGERY

LONDON: Twenty-time Grand Slam singles champion Roger Federer said on Wednesday he will be sidelined until 2021 after undergoing his second knee operation in a matter of months.

The 38-year-old Swiss said he underwent follow-up arthroscopic surgery "a few weeks ago" after undergoing a similar keyhole procedure in February.

Federer, whose last Grand Slam win was the 2018 Australian Open, said he

"experienced a setback during (his) initial rehabilitation".

"I plan to take the necessary time to be 100 per cent ready to play at my highest level," he said in a statement on Twitter.

"I will be missing my fans and the tour dearly but I will look forward to seeing everyone back on tour at the start of the 2021 season."

The announcement is likely to renew speculation about retirement for

Federer, who holds the record for men's Grand Slam singles titles and last month topped Forbes' list of the world's highest earning athletes.

Federer, who won his first major trophy in 2003, lies just ahead of his longtime rivals Rafael Nadal (19) and Novak Djokovic (17) on the all-time list.

The biggest title he has yet to win is an Olympic singles gold medal.

The Tokyo Games -- seen as Federer's final

opportunity to complete a career "golden" Grand Slam -- have been postponed until next year because of the pandemic, and Federer will turn 40 on the day of the closing ceremony.

After the initial operation, Federer had originally planned to return for the now cancelled grass-court season this month. His last tournament match was on January 30 in the Australian Open semifinals, where he lost to eventual champion Djokovic. — **AFP**