



HIS MAJESTY GREETES PRESIDENT OF POLAND

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq has sent a cable of greetings to President Dr Andrzej Duda of the Republic of Poland, on the occasion of him being re-elected as a president of his country for a new presidential term.

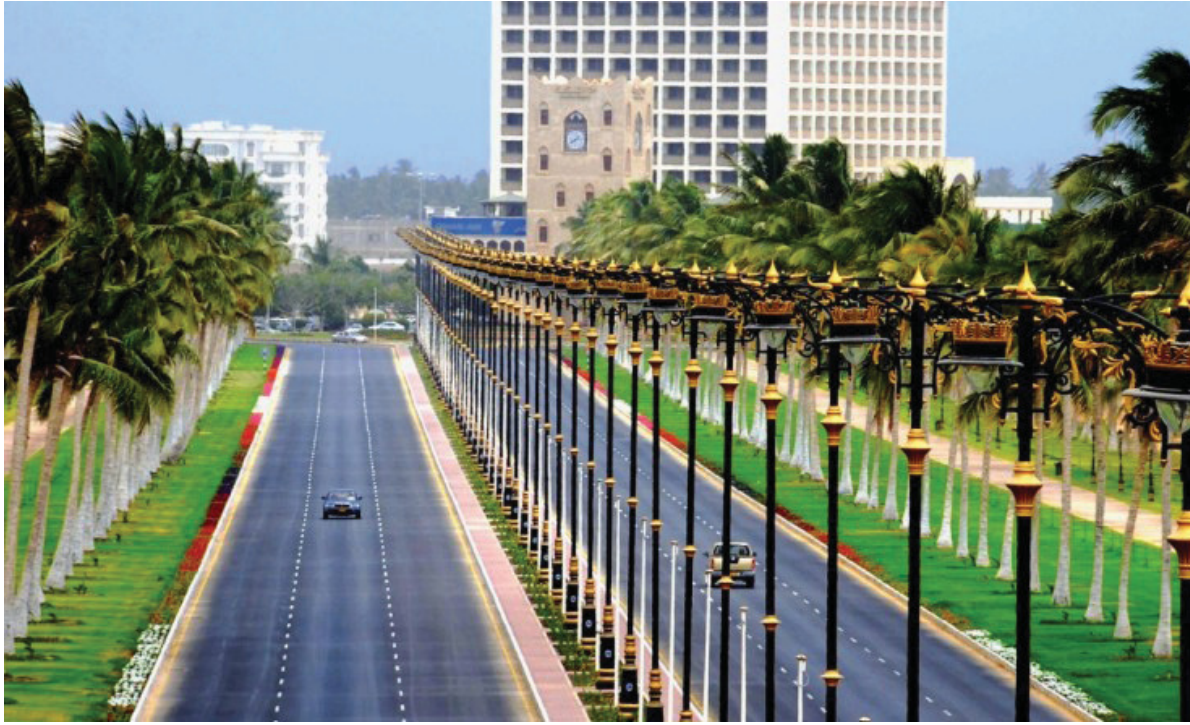
In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere greetings along with his best wishes of success to President Duda to lead the friendly people of Poland towards further progress and prosperity, wishing the good relations between the two countries further growth and development. — **ONA**

CONDITIONAL TRAVEL OF CITIZENS ABROAD ALLOWED

DHOFAR AND MASIRAH LOCKDOWN STAYS

MUSCAT: The Supreme Committee tasked with tackling developments resulting from coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on Tuesday held a meeting at the Interior Ministry under the chairmanship of Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal al Busaidy, Minister of Interior, to follow up updates on the pandemic and prevention measures set to curb the spread of the virus.

The committee took note of the considerable increase in number of deaths and the surge in infection cases, particularly among Omani women as a result of increased social mingling and exchange of visits - as indicated by epidemiological



94% AMONG INFECTED IN DHOFAR ARE MEN

SALALAH: The number of COVID-19 positive cases among men is very high compared to women in Dhofar Governorate. Among the infected, 94 per cent are men while the rest are women. As of Tuesday, there are 2,052 positive cases in Dhofar, including 85 new cases. **DETAILS ON P2**

investigation data.

While it expresses deep dismay at this increase, the committee urged all citizens and residents to exercise extreme care and caution and stick to precautionary measures to halt the rise in infection and mortality cases.

The committee also reviewed epidemiological data on Governorate of Dhofar and the Wilayat of Masirah and decided to continue the lockdown of the two areas till further notice. The committee also discussed the demands of citizens seeking to travel

abroad and agreed to facilitate their travel, on condition that they abide, on their return home, by existing precautionary procedures and any decisions/procedures that might be issued in future by the departments concerned. — **ONA**

CHANGES IN TAX LAWS TO SPUR GROWTH OF SMES

LONDON: Oxford Business Group (OBG) has commended the Sultanate's support to small and medium enterprises (SMEs), an action described by OBG as a measure to foster economic diversification.

In its recent 2020 report, OBG quoted the example of Oman's support to start-ups. In this direction, the British economic research institution said that the Omani government set up entrepreneurship financing instruments

like Al Rafd Fund, which lends support to SMEs alongside the Public Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises (Riyada), which proved to have played a significant role in enhancing small businesses and supplementing economic growth. The British research institution also noted amendments made to the Tax Law in the Sultanate as a means of alleviating financial burdens on SMEs, which, it said, will eventually enhance economic growth.

TURN TO P3

More cases in North Batinah compared to Muscat

VINOD NAIR

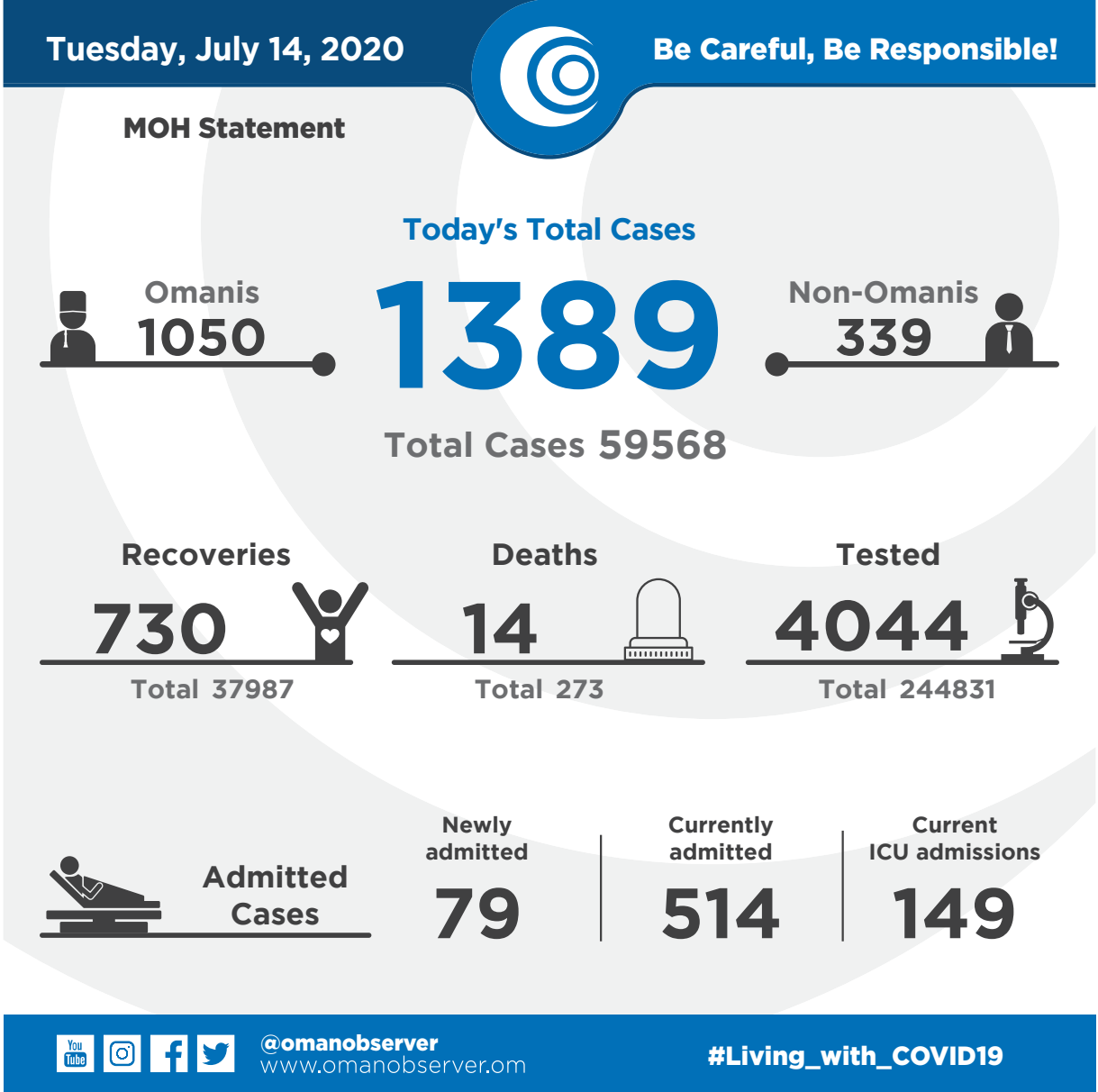
MUSCAT: Supreme Committee on Tuesday raised concern over the notable increase in death and infection cases as the country reported 14 cases of COVID-19 deaths within 24 hours.

Expressing concern over the increase in death and infection cases, the Supreme Committee called on all citizens and expatriates to take maximum precaution and comply with the preventive measures.

The Ministry of Health on Tuesday announced that 14 people died of COVID-19, taking the total death toll in Oman to 273.

With this, more Omanis (138) have now died due to COVID-19 compared to 135 residents. Of the total deaths so far, 162 were from Muscat, 35 from North Batinah and 39 from South Batinah.

The MoH also announced 1,389 new cases, including 1,050 Omanis and 339



residents, which brought the total a number of positive cases to 59, 568.

According to the MoH, a total of 4, 044 people were tested in the last 24 hours, taking the total number of tests conducted in Oman to 244, 831.

The MoH also reported that 730 new patients recovered from COVID-19 during the past 24 hours, taking the total recoveries

TOTAL DEATH TOLL: 138

OMANIS, 135

RESIDENTS

SUPREME PANEL CONCERNED AT RISING CASES, DEATHS

from the disease to 37, 987 in Oman.

A total of 79 people were admitted to hospital on Tuesday, taking the number of people in hospitals to 514, including 149 in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU).

On Tuesday, Muscat reported 405 cases, which was behind North Batinah (419) with 153 from Suhar. South Batinah (+103 in Barka) and Dhakilyah reported 220 and 123 cases, respectively.

94PC OF INFECTED ARE MEN IN DHOFAR

KAUSHALENDRA SINGH

SALALAH: The number of COVID-19 positive cases among men is very high compared to women in Dhofar Governorate. Among the infected, 94 per cent are men and six per cent are women.

As of Tuesday, there are 2,052 positive cases in Dhofar, including 85 new cases. There are 636 recoveries and 6 deaths. Among the wilayats of the governorate, Salalah is leading with 1,728 cases.

There were 145 new cases in Dhofar on Monday. Among them, 24 were Omanis and 121 expatriates. The number sick as on July 13 was 1,224 with 441 in hospital.

According to the Directorate of Health in the governorate, all possible preventive measures are being taken



and teams have been formed to monitor the situation.

“Massive awareness drive has been launched by all the government and private hospitals in the governorate. The health workers have been trained on how to handle COVID-19 patients based on their symptoms,” it said.

The directorate has formed a team of health workers to supervise the training of medical and administrative cadres in government and private health institutions to raise awareness about ways to prevent the infection.

There has been stress on raising awareness on general hygiene, with a focus on the cleaning of hands and social distancing.

The directorate has also conducted several virtual meetings to update the health workers about the latest developments and ways to handle the situation.

OMAN

OMSB, Oman LNG foundation ink agreement on exam centre

MUSCAT: Oman Medical Specialty Board (OMSB) and Oman LNG Development Foundation signed a pivotal agreement to equip the Standardised Examination Centre for OMSB. The virtually signed agreement took place on Tuesday.

The agreement reflects OMSB's plan to keep abreast of the developments in the methods of hosting medical examinations which are currently being held online.

This comes within the framework of the Board's ambitious vision to reach international standards with the services provided, and as an advanced step to complement Oman's 2040 vision towards electronic transformation.

Examinations of health practitioners are of the core deliverables of OMSB and therefore, establishing an examination centre is a priority.

It aims to provide a reliable and safe environment for computerised exams,



as well as creating a high standard centre that stands as a testament in the field of assessment and evaluation.

The centre aims to offer local and international examinations of both medical and non-medical specialties alike. This comes in cooperation and accreditation of local and interna-

tional institutions. In addition, OMSB's exams such as mandatory and admission exams will also be held at the centre.

Among the main functionalities of this centre is allowing various local institutions, whether government-owned or private, to host exams in the centre. The centre will ensure that

professional competencies are met prior to applying for jobs in the Sultanate.

The agreement was signed by Dr Hilal bin Ali al Sabti, Executive President of OMSB, and Dr Amor bin Nasser al Matani, Chief Executive Officer of Oman LNG Development Foundation. — **ONA**



GFOW holds virtual workshop on collective bargaining

MUSCAT: The General Federation of Oman Workers (GFOW) on Tuesday concluded a training workshop on social dialogue and collective bargaining.

In view of the global outbreak of COVID-19 and the measures taken by the Sultanate to contain the spread of the pandemic such as restrictions on holding programmes and activities, the General Federation of Oman Workers has decided to apply the solutions available to implement its programmes and activities by using alternative means and the digital media.

Following the directives of the Supreme Committee for tackling COVID-19 pandemic on the necessity of negotiating with the representatives of the workers unions with the aim of organising and regulating the work system and maintaining the stability

of the private sector establishments and their workers, the General Federation of Oman Workers organised a virtual training workshop on July 13-14 during which issues related to social dialogue and collective bargaining were debated.

The workshop was presented by Ahmed al Jahdhami, Secretary of the Board of Directors of the General Federation of Oman Workers, and Khoula al Hainaia, Chairperson of the Women's Committee. During the workshop, more than 60 representatives of trade unions and members of the working women committees in trade unions identified the legal basics of collective bargaining and negotiation both at the local and international levels, and were acquainted with the related knowledge.

COLOUR FESTIVAL STRIVES FOR EXCELLENCE AMONG THE DISABLED

KAUSHALENDRA SINGH

SALALAH: At a time when the whole world is battling with the COVID-19 pandemic, some groups are not shying away from the responsibility of working for those who need extra care. People with disabilities saw their representation at the second edition of the international Colour Festival in which the Sultanate also took part remotely.

The theme of this edition's festival is 'Excellence' that befits with the idea of empowering the people with special needs with skills in their respective areas to make them able to manage day-to-day needs and highlight inherent skills that every special need person is gifted with.

"This year the event host is Qatar, a joint effort of the Doha International Center for Special Needs, the Regional Network of Social Responsibility, the Bevol International Volunteer Platform, the Qatar Unified Awareness Team and the Arab Creators Forum in Turkey. This is the first virtual exhibition of 'excellent' works of people with special needs," said Mohammed al Sahri of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), Salalah.

Several specialists, consultants, and researchers from across the



THE PICTURE IS FOR ILLUSTRATION ONLY

Arab countries took part in the festival that focused on sign language, translation, the mathematics of people with disabilities, their experiences, and tools. "All these areas need a constant upgrade for people with disabilities and their development. It is meant also for media personnel working in this field."

"Some participants from the Sultanate shared personal experiences and challenges of living with a disability. They called for self-motivation to achieve their goals and not

to give in to disability. They made points for using the disability as an agent of catalyst to achieve desired goals," said Al Sahri.

The event comprised competitions supervised by a group of artists and specialists in the field of disability. A special committee chaired by Dr Hala Al Saeed, owner, and director of the Doha International Center for Special Needs, gave valuable suggestions to help improve the status of the disabled people and set new goals for the upcoming events.

Sultanate takes part in Gulf youth workshop

MUSCAT: The Sultanate, represented by the Ministry of Sports Affairs, participated in the virtual workshop entitled 'Gulf youth during the coronavirus pandemic stage: Challenges and Opportunities'.

The workshop was organised by the GCC General Secretariat with the participation of 21 youths and a number of experts in the youth field from the GCC countries.

The workshop dealt with three main themes, namely 'The distinguished initiatives and successful experiences by GCC youth and sports

ministries to confront the coronavirus,' 'Involvement of youth and their role in the pandemic stage and beyond' and 'Future view to activate the role of youth in facing crises'.

The participants in the workshop recommended to conduct periodic quarterly workshops for the GCC youth to review success stories

and how to overcome challenges, benefit from the experience of virtual meetings of a similar nature and circulate them in the GCC countries to ensure their continuity, as well highlighting best practices in managing crises and raise awareness among youths in the voluntary field. — ONA

The Council of Administrative Affairs for the Judiciary

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

The Administrative Affairs Council of the Judiciary announces its desire to submit the following tender:

Tender No.	Tender Title	Tender Document Sales End Date	Bid Submission Closing	Vendor Grade	Tender Document Fee
12/2020	Supply of Laptops, Desktop, Printer, Scanner, Projector for CAAJ	23/07/2020	23/08/2020	Excellent First Second Third Fourth	RO. 25/-

Where you can buy the tender documents electronically via the link below website :
(<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>)

Bidders should submit their offers electronically via the aforementioned site and attach to each bid an electronic copy of the provisional insurance in the form of a bank guarantee or a certified check from one of the banks operating in the country at a rate of (1%) of the bid value and is valid for a period of (90) days from the date of submission The offers are meant in the name of the Chairman of the Internal Committee for Tenders in the Council of Administrative Affairs for the Judiciary, And based on the Tender Board Circular No. (07/2020), we confirm that the necessity of uploading the soft copy of the bid bond when submitting the tender in a support system while preserving the original bid bond without the need to hand it over to the board until the council is asked to hand over the original one.

1. For inquiries and clarifications on the tender:
Submit inquiries related to the project electronically through the website of the electronic tender system (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>).

2. For inquiries and clarifications on the electronic bidding system:
Submit inquiries regarding technical support for the electronic bidding system via e-mail and the phone number shown below:
Phone: +968 24166670
Email: etenderhd@ita.gov.om

CPD PROVIDERS READY FOR POST COVID-19 TRAINING

RAY PETERSEN

Although traditional education in the basic, secondary, and higher education sectors were greatly affected by the pandemic, they were able to diversify their delivery streams through live online courses and e-learning, with something of a 'captive audience.'

However, the workplace education providers responsible for workplace learning were not only improving the English language, and the development and enhancement of professional knowledge, skills, and understanding required in the workplace, but ensuring the documentation and recording of formal and informal development an employee experiences, learns from and then applies

in their work.

Local training and qualification providers have reported, not just a downturn in business, but an absolute halt to their course provision. Not only have classroom-based and workplace training stopped due to social distancing and workplace shutdowns, but employers have stopped sourcing training opportunities for their employees due to the uncertainties across the entire employer sector.

Said bin Saif al Harthy, of Tanfidh Management Consultants, recently commented that from a position of strong demand and sustained service provision, "the office phones have stopped ringing, and the email box is empty! We are aware that when the economy contracts, consultancy and training are the first two budgets to suffer, but even with the return to work, and



Said bin Saif al Harthy, of Tanfidh Management Consultants

the economy beginning to re-open, there has been no positive sector response."

Al Harthy explained that the resumption of government, key NGO, and 'mega-project,' training budget is essential to kick-start their operations, but sees that

resumption as a genuine opportunity for them to prioritise local Omani consultants and service providers, pointing out that, "We provide global quality at local prices," and demonstrated, despite the challenges they are facing currently, a refined sense of humour, observing, "We just don't have the dark suit, tie, and briefcase, of the expatriate companies."

Local boutique training providers are unanimous that they can respond effectively to a resumption of training opportunities. They are adamant that the Sultanate's employer groups recognise the substantial benefits of CPD and empower their workforces, one training provider saying, "It is the most cost-effective way for employers and employees to get ahead, stay ahead, and to improve their performance, income, and reputation."

STATE COUNCIL PANEL REVIEWS OCCI PLANS TO DEVELOP RESEARCH



MUSCAT: The Education and Research Committee of the State Council on Tuesday hosted officials of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry(OCCI), as part of its study titled 'The reality of scientific research and the role of private sector companies in supporting and developing it'.

The committee's 18th meeting of the first annual session of the seventh term was headed by Mohammad bin Hamdan al Toobi, head of the committee, and attended

by committee members, General Secretariat employees and OCCI delegation.

The discussions focused on several topics including: Challenges facing scientific research, the contribution of the private sector in supporting scientific research, the availability of the basic infrastructure for scientific research and its ability to deal with qualitative research, proposals and mechanisms to assist in developing the system of scientific research support, as well as

the role of OCCI in finding alternative funding sources for research.

The OCCI delegation included Dr Ahmed bin Abdul Karim al Houti, Chairman of the Economic Committee, Shaikh Ahmed bin Saeed al Balushi, Chairman of the Education Committee, Dr Hussein bin Sulaiman al Salmi, Vice Chairman of the Education Committee, and Badr bin Saif al Aufi, Economic Adviser at OCCI.

The study aims to determine the reality of local,

regional and global policies and legislation regulating the process of the private sector's contribution to scientific research and raising its efficiency, and identify its role in this regard, and suggest legislation and mechanisms that regulate the contribution of the private sector and international companies operating in the Sultanate in scientific research, in addition to proposing mechanisms to help settle technical expertise at all levels.

US pushes Taliban to reduce violence as deal enters ‘next phase’

KABUL: The United States said its landmark deal with the Taliban has entered the “next phase” while urging the militants to reduce rising violence even as the insurgents accused US forces of violating the accord on Tuesday.

The two sides signed an agreement in February that saw Washington pledge to withdraw all troops from Afghanistan by the middle of next year, in return for the insurgents promising to hold negotiations with the Afghan government to end the long-running conflict.

Under phase one, the US said it would reduce troops to 8,600 within 135 days, while completely removing forces from five military bases.

On the 135th day, US special representative on Afghanistan, Zalmay Khalilzad, who negotiated the deal for Washington, tweeted that both sides had reached a “key milestone”.

“The US has worked hard to carry out first phase of



An Afghan man wearing a protective face mask walks past a wall painted with photo of Zalmay Khalilzad, and Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, the leader of the Taliban delegation, in Kabul. — Reuters

its commitments under the agreement, including to reduce troops and depart five bases,” he said on Monday.

As the deal entered its “next phase”, Washington’s approach would be based on certain conditions, Khalilzad warned.

“We will press for completion of prisoner releases, reduction of violence... and

start of and progress in intra-Afghan negotiations,” he said.

The Taliban on Tuesday welcomed the cut in US forces, but claimed that American troops had frequently carried out bombings in non-combat zones and “offensives” in support of the Kabul government.

It also accused US pilots

of carrying out air strikes against civilians, the Taliban and public infrastructure in the past 10 days.

“These all are blatant violations of the agreement and deliberate attempt at provoking the fighters towards large-scale attacks,” the Taliban said.

Since the deal, the Taliban have stepped up attacks killing hundreds, officials say.

Khalilzad condemned the attacks, saying “large numbers” of Afghans continued to die without a reason, while acknowledging that no American had been killed since the deal.

“Violence has been high, especially in recent days and weeks,” Khalilzad said, condemning a Taliban attack on Monday on a rural office of Afghanistan’s intelligence agency that killed 11 security personnel.

“The Taliban’s attack... contradicts their commitment to reduce violence until a permanent ceasefire is reached in intra-Afghan talks.” — AFP

IN BRIEF

Maldives ex-vice president cleared of graft charges

MALE: A Maldives court on Tuesday cleared former vice president Ahmed Adeeb of embezzling \$128 million to lease islets for tourism development, officially ending the high-profile legal saga. The main criminal court dismissed seven charges including embezzlement, money laundering and abuse of his position as tourism minister between 2014 and 2015. “The court refused to accept a confession he allegedly made about his role in leasing nearly 60 islets to private companies,” a court official said. The transactions were carried out when the now 38-year-old was tourism minister and before he became vice president under strongman ruler Abdulla Yameen. Adeeb later fell out with Yameen, who accused him of trying to assassinate him following a September 2015 explosion aboard the presidential yacht.

Floods in Bangladesh affect nearly 1.5 million people

DHAKA: Flooding has submerged a vast area in northern Bangladesh, leaving close to 1.5 million people either marooned or moved into shelters, officials said on Tuesday. The country’s Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre said the situation could worsen, with the major Ganges-Padma and Brahmaputra-Jamuna rivers set to rise further in the coming days. The flooding has so far affected nearly 1.5 million people in 17 out of a total of 64 administrative districts, State Minister for Disaster Management Enamur Rahman told an online news conference. The deluge could submerge six further districts in central parts of Bangladesh as major rivers continue to swell their banks, he added.

Humanoid clerk helps to cut red tape in Russia

MOSCOW: A human-like robot designed to look and act like a female clerk has started providing services to the public at a government office in Siberia. The humanoid, with long blond hair and brown eyes, is serving customers in Perm, a city 1,100 km east of Moscow. So far it only helps with issuing certificates to testify that people have a clean criminal record and no record of drug use, documents required in Russia to complete various legal transactions. The robot has been designed to look like an average Russian woman, the company behind the project Promobot said. Its facial features were generated by artificial intelligence based on analysing the appearance of several thousand females. — Agencies

WORLD

WORLD CAN WIN WAR AGAINST VIRUS IF LEADERS DO THEIR PART

NEW YORK: The coronavirus pandemic is worsening, due largely to failures outside of Europe and parts of Asia. But World Health Organization Director Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus says it's not too late to get in the fight.

Without calling out anyone or any place by name, Ghebreyesus said some countries were responsible in their handling of the outbreak and are getting back to business safely. He also said several countries are going in the wrong direction. There are different scenarios playing out worldwide, the WHO director said at a press conference in London.

"The first situation is countries that were alert and aware," Ghebreyesus said. "They prepared and responded rapidly and effectively to the first cases."

He said the Mekong region, the Pacific, the Caribbean and parts of Africa fell into that category. The doctor also credited much of Europe, where "strong leadership" following an initial outbreak helped manage a situation that could have been worse. Then there were the other two categories.



World Health Organization Director Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus says it's not too late to get in the fight. — AFP

Another situation playing out is in countries that initially reacted to the outbreak then began pushing to reopen too soon.

A final situation is "those countries that are in the intense transmission phase of their outbreak," he said. "We're seeing those across the Americas, South Asia and several countries in Africa."

He called the Americas the

"epicenter of the virus," noting that more than half of the world's cases have been discovered.

According to Ghebreyesus, the Western Hemisphere should look east for guidance.

"We know from the first two situations that it is never too late to bring the virus under control, even if there has been explosive transmission," he said.

WHO believes that even in places where numbers are spiking, putting reopening restrictions back in place will help combat the deadly virus.

Ghebreyesus made clear that WHO is "committed to working with all countries" to end the global scourge that has infected nearly 13 million people worldwide, according to Johns Hopkins University.

— dpa

Japan rollercoaster virus guide wins hearts

TOKYO: It might be the unlikeliest instructional video ever, but footage of two Japanese amusement park executives demonstrating how to "scream inside your heart" to avoid spreading COVID-19 while on a rollercoaster has been a roaring success. "Now our customers stay silent while riding on rollercoasters," a spokeswoman for amusement park operator Fujiyuko said, after the video on riding etiquette for the coronavirus era went viral. The video features the executives, one in a full suit and tie, the other in a shirt and bowtie, sitting stiffbacked and straightfaced in silence, with only the only sounds coming from the whipping of the wind and the grinding of the rollercoaster.

Australia tightens restrictions as cases top 10,000

SYDNEY: Australian states on Tuesday tightened restrictions on movement as authorities struggle to contain a fresh outbreak of COVID-19 in the country's southeast that has pushed the national tally of cases beyond 10,000. With growing fears of a second coronavirus wave nationally, two states extended border restrictions and Australia's most populous state imposed limits on the number of people allowed in large pubs.

The changes come as scores of new cases were uncovered in Victoria, the country's COVID-19 hotspot, despite a return to lockdown last week for nearly 5 million people in state capital Melbourne.

Moderna expects to start late-stage vaccine trial on July 27

NEW YORK: Moderna Inc said on Tuesday it plans to start a late stage clinical trial for its COVID-19 vaccine candidate on or around July 27, according to its listing for the phase 3 study at clinicaltrials.gov. Moderna said it will conduct the trial at 87 study locations, all in the United States. The experimental vaccine will be tested in 30 states and Washington, DC. Around half of the study locations are in hard-hit states like Texas, California, Florida, Georgia, Arizona and North and South Carolina.

The United States has reported record numbers of new coronavirus cases in recent days, with much of the surge coming from those states.

— Agencies

ANALYSIS



Macron defends record as Bastille Day honours health workers

President Emmanuel Macron on Tuesday defended his record during his first three years in office, as Bastille Day celebrations, slimmed down due to health precautions, paid tribute to health workers who fought the coronavirus epidemic.

In a rare television interview, the centrist president said he was determined to carry on his reform programme, claiming victories such as a lowered unemployment rate before the pandemic hit and the halving of class sizes in the poorest areas.

But Macron, who has suffered from low public approval figures since the early stages of his presidency, admitted that he had “not succeeded” in persuading the public about his reforms, several of which have led to mass protests.

Reforms to the labour market, state railways, the pension system and schools were intended to make France stronger and ensure equal opportunities for all, he insisted.

“This president who wanted to

reform everything so that only the best could succeed, so that France could adapt to globalisation - that is not my project,” he insisted.

Macron also sought to explain why he had replaced Prime Minister Edouard Philippe, a centre-right provincial mayor who had gained popularity for his steady handling of the epidemic, with another centre-right former provincial mayor, Jean Castex.

The president said he wanted Castex’s new government to ensure more social dialogue and wider participation in decision making during the final two years of his mandate.

Macron said he was “not obsessed” with immediately pushing ahead with the pensions reform, which brought huge crowds out in protests late last year, but reform to the system could not be avoided.

The most urgent issue was employment, however, with studies showing that the virus crisis could lead to an extra 800,000 to 1 million jobless people by next spring. — dpa

VIRUS UPENDS YOUNG LIVES



Samuel Kutty

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COVID-19 has wrecked the lives of people across ages especially the youth in aspects of education, employment, mental health and income. They are increasingly anxious about the shape of the future.

While the World Health Organization evidence suggests that young people are less at risk of developing severe coronavirus symptoms than their elders, the former is more likely to face the brunt of the pandemic.

According to the United Nations, the closure of schools and universities has affected more than 1.5 billion children and youth worldwide and has significantly changed how they would live and learn during the pandemic.

In May, the International Labour Organization warned that economic fallout from the pandemic could “leave many young people behind”, permanently excluding them from the job market.

Not only that the pandemic has denied jobs for youths, but it also affected their employability in the medium and long term, since both technical and

vocational education, as well as on-the-job training.

It is likely that many of these young people may not finish their studies, adding to the number of unskilled in the labour market, worsening the joblessness already existed before the crisis.

According to the OECD, the situation is likely to put the young generation on a much more volatile trajectory in finding and maintaining quality jobs and income. Being unemployed at a young age can have long-lasting “scarring effects” in terms of career paths and future earnings.

The pandemic is making this issue all the more acute for youngsters who have invested in higher education. They are finding it increasingly hard to find work, potentially affecting their future prospects.

The youths are the workforce and the citizens of tomorrow. Our economy depends to a large extent on what happens with them today. So, all those involved including the governments, educational institutions, companies and the young people themselves need to take positive actions.

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

Special Prizes

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NEW INDUSTRIAL CITY UNVEILED IN AL DHAHIRAH GOVERNORATE

MUSCAT: The Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn) has officially begun setting up Ibri Industrial City in the wilayat of Ibri in Al Dhahirah Governorate on a total area of 10 million square metres.

Work is currently underway to develop the masterplan of Ibri Industrial City through the appointed consultancy company. The detailed design work and tender documents for the implementation of phase one is expected to be completed in the coming period.

This will include infrastructure and service works, industrial workshops and basic facilities.

Located on the road leading to the border between the Sultanate and Saudi Arabia, the new industrial city will include a variety of industrial, commercial and service activities such as light and medium industries, commercial area, administrative offices, industrial workshops and warehouses.



INDUSTRIAL CLUSTER:

PHASE 1 OF A 10M SQ METRE DEVELOPMENT BEING
MASTER-PLANNED IN WILAYAT OF IBRI BY MADAYN.

Shaikh Saif bin Hamyar al Malik al Shehhi, Governor of Al Dhahirah, emphasised that Ibri Industrial City comes at an ideal time to create an integrated environment for the industrial sector in Al Dhahirah governorate in particular and the Sultanate in general.

"The Governorate embraces a number of economic activities especially

those related to marble and chrome industries.

Therefore, Ibri Industrial City will play an important role in advancing such activities and support the national economy," Al Shehhi said, adding: "Moreover, the industrial city will generate job opportunities for the national cadres and provide an ideal environment for the pri-

vate sector to carry out various industrial, commercial and service activities in an integrated industrial city."

Hilal bin Hamad al Hasani, CEO of Madayn, stated that the establishment of Ibri Industrial City in Al Dhahirah Governorate comes as a continuation of the Sultanate's government efforts to boost economic development in the various governorates in Oman, and also comes along the lines of the national priorities of Oman 2040 vision.

He added that the new industrial city also aims at achieving the objectives of Madayn, which include attracting foreign investments to the Sultanate and localising the national capital; contributing to stimulating the private sector to achieve sustainable economic and social development; achieving environmental sustainability, and contributing to the creation of new job opportunities for the national cadres.

3 deaths linked to faulty outdoor water coolers last year

CONRAD PRABHU

MUSCAT: Fatal electrocutions blamed on faulty outdoor water-coolers claimed three lives in separate mishaps reported around the Sultanate last year, according to the Authority for Electricity Regulation (AER) Oman.

The tragic incidents, although unrelated to electricity sector activities, prompted a vigorous awareness campaign spearheaded by the regulator and supported by power distri-

bution companies, about the hazards associated with defective electrical appliances.

All three victims were boys who were electrocuted when drinking water from outdoor dispensers, the Authority said. While the first mishap occurred in Salalah in May last year, the second and third incidents were reported in Yanqul and Ibri respectively, in Dhahirah



Governorate.

A public health and safety campaign mounted by the Authority and other utilities is still ongoing. "Working with the sector companies, the campaign raised public awareness about

the risk of electric water coolers and aimed to reduce such unfortunate incidents. Several initiatives were included in the campaign, such as approaching gov-

ernment entities that own water coolers in public areas to inspect the safety of their water coolers and eradicate electrocution risks,” the Authority noted in its newly published 2019 Annual Report.

"Recommendations for communication through channels such as TV and radio, newspapers and social media to advise the public and raise awareness about how to ensure electric water coolers are installed safely were put forward," it further stated.

Oman's oil reserves at 4.84bn barrels, gas at 23.8 TCF

BUSINESS REPORTER

MUSCAT: Reserves of crude oil and condensates in the Sultanate totaled 4842.71 million barrels as of 2019-end, up by 1.1 per cent in comparison with 2018, the Ministry of Oil and Gas announced in its 2019 Annual Report. Majority state-owned Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) accounts for about 67 per cent of total reserves, it said.

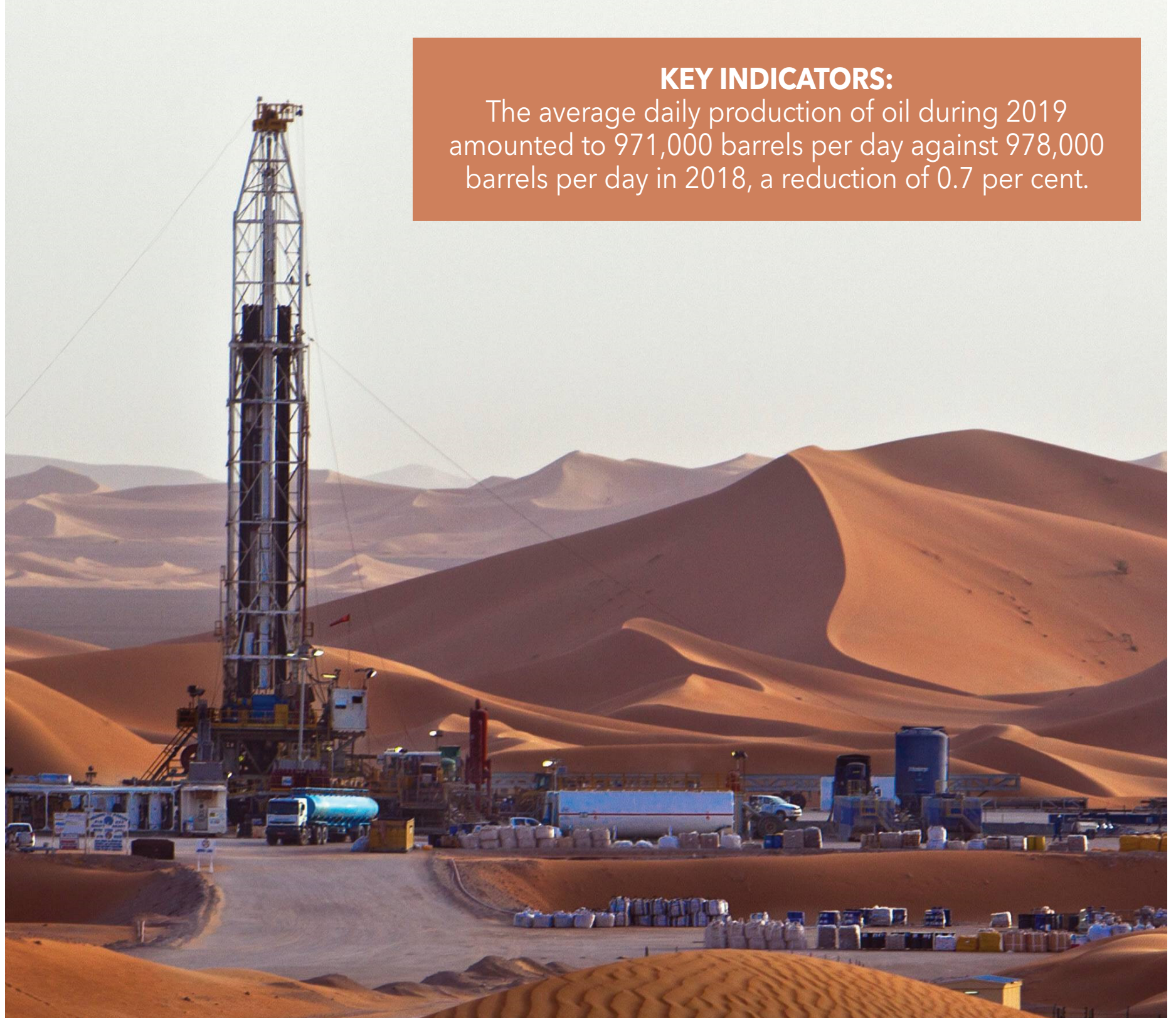
Total reserves of natural gas in the Sultanate at the end of 2019 was estimated to be 23.8 trillion cubic feet (TCF), 53.7 per cent of which is the estimated reserve of PDO, followed by BP (Khazzan and Ghazeer) with 41 per cent, and 5.3 per cent of other companies.

The average daily production of oil during 2019 amounted to 971,000 barrels per day against 978,000 barrels per day in 2018, a reduction of 0.7 per cent. The Sultanate maintained its level of oil production in compliance with the agreement to curb output among the Opec and non-Opec producers in order to stabilise the international oil supply and demand.

The total exports of oil and condensates during 2019 amounted to 310 million barrels. China topped the list of the countries importing crude oil from Oman, with 78 per cent, followed by Japan with 8 per cent. The rest of the countries represented 14 per cent of the total exports of crude oil and condensates in 2019.

In 2019, the average price of Omani crude oil reached \$63.58 per barrel, decreasing by 9.2 per cent against 2018. Omani crude oil prices averaged at a minimum of \$57.33 per barrel in February and a maximum of \$71.15 per barrel in June.

Total petroleum products



KEY INDICATORS:

The average daily production of oil during 2019 amounted to 971,000 barrels per day against 978,000 barrels per day in 2018, a reduction of 0.7 per cent.

output of OQ reached about 112 million barrels.

The contribution of Mina Al Fahal Refinery was 35 million barrels, and Sohar Refinery contribution was 77 million barrels. The production of gas oil (diesel) was about 22 per cent of the total production of the two refineries of OQ.

The total sales of petroleum products during 2019 is estimated to be 27 million barrels, of which 2 million barrels were sold by Mina Al Fahal Refinery, and 25 million barrels were sold by Sohar Refinery. OQ's sales of naphtha represents 41 per cent of the total domestic sales of petroleum products in 2019.

According to the Ministry's report, the oil and gas companies operating in the concession areas in 2019 drilled, tested and evaluated 25 exploration and appraisal gas wells, 8

of which were drilled previously, but tested and evaluated in 2019.

The analysis and productivity tests in some of the wells showed positive results, adding new gas reserves, it said.

Average production of natural gas during 2019 amounted to 122.2 million cubic metres per day, 19 per cent of which was associated gas at an average of 22.8 million cubic metres per day. Non-associated gas constituted 81 per cent of the total production at an average of 99.4 million cubic metres per day. In addition, natural gas was imported through Dolphin Energy Company at an average of 5.3 million cubic metres per day.

The total consumption of natural gas during 2019 reached 46,554 million cubic metres. Oman LNG and Qalhat LNG projects

ranked highest in terms of natural gas consumption, accounting for about 16,129 million cubic metres, or 35 per cent of the total consumption in 2019.

This was followed by local industrial projects, with 27 per cent consumption, 22 per cent for field operations and other uses, and 16 per cent for power and desalination plants. Consumption at industrial areas constituted only 1 per cent of the total consumption of natural gas.

Total exports of LNG during 2019 amounted to 10.6 million metric tonnes in 165 shipments.

The export of gas condensates were 0.282 million metric tonnes in 43 shipments. At the end of 2019, Oman LNG represented 71 per cent of the total natural gas exports, while Qalhat LNG accounted for about 29 per cent of the total, the report added.

BUSINESS



Oman’s first ‘Green Zone’ to come up in Muscat’s Al Khuwair district

CONRAD PRABHU

MUSCAT: Parts of the ‘Ministries District’ in Al Khuwair in Muscat Governorate have been designated a ‘Green Zone’, serving to exemplify the Omani government’s ambitions in championing the adoption of rooftop solar PV systems, coupled with the retrofitting of government buildings to make them more energy efficient.

The landmark initiative is being spearheaded by the Authority for Electricity Regulation (AER) Oman, which is driving both the Sahim project – centring on the installation of solar PV capacity atop residential and office buildings – and the concept of energy efficiency in buildings.

In the case of the latter, the best hope for government ministries to cut their energy costs – by as much as 30 per cent – lies in striking long-term partnerships with Energy Services Companies (ESCOs) – a business model that has proven to

work successfully across the globe.

Seeking to progress both programmes, the Authority along with the Supreme Committee for Planning (SCP) initiated the establishment of Oman’s first ‘Green Zone’ last year.

It combines the ESCO model with the Sahim residential solar project “to improve building energy efficiency and installation of solar capacity in government buildings located in Muscat’s ministries district”, said the Authority in its newly published 2019 Annual Report.

“The initiative will help reduce consumption and cost of electricity, reduce reliance on conventional fuels, enable the government to align itself with international efforts and push towards a greener

future,” it further noted.

Following a first-ever energy audit of a number of government buildings, the uthority for Electricity Regulation (AER) Oman launched a programme to enable government facilities to acquire the services of ESCOs.

LANDMARK ENDEAVOUR:

THE INITIATIVE SEEKS TO COMBINE THE SAHIM SOLAR ROOFTOP PROGRAMME OF THE AUTHORITY WITH ITS DRIVE TO PROMOTE ENERGY EFFICIENCY IN GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS.

In Phase 1 of the programme, as many as 14 government buildings have been selected for retrofits and energy conservation enhancements.

Interested ESCOs were invited to submit Energy Conservation Measures (ECMs) for individual buildings as part of a competitive tender floated last August. A total of seven proposals were received from interested ESCOs.

An award however is subject to the finalisation of an Investment Grade Audit (IGA) of each govern-

ment building, according to AER.

“The IGA is a detailed energy audit that analyses the financial aspects of energy savings and the return on investment. Upon agreement of the IGA report submitted by the selected ESCOs, the awarded ESCOs will commit to retrofitting buildings through signing Energy Savings Performance Contracts (ESPCs) with the government entities,” the Authority explained.

Going forward, the Authority plans to conduct a site assessment study of the buildings within the ‘Green Zone’ over the course of 2020 and to hire a technical and legal advisor who will develop the project’s framework and prepare documents for tendering the buildings for energy efficiency and solar services. To assist in the procurement and delivery of the ESCO programme, the Authority has appointed Danish Energy Management (DEM) as its Technical and Legal Advisor.

ALIZZ ISLAMIC LAUNCHES ‘WE COME TO YOU’ SERVICE



MUSCAT: Alizz Islamic Bank is the first bank in Oman to launch a ‘We come to you’ service whereby the bank visits customers in their homes or offices to open a bank account for them. This service has been received well and generated praise from the public. All a customer has to do is send a private message with their contact

details to the bank on their social media platform of choice and the direct sales team coordinates with them within 5 hours to set up an appointment to visit them and open the account for them based on the customers chosen timing and preferred location.

Speaking about pioneering this service in the Sultanate, Mohamed al Ghassani, Assistant General Manager - Head of Retail Distribution and Wealth Management at Alizz Islamic Bank said: “At Alizz Islamic Bank our key focus is to provide the very best banking experience for our customers, whenever and wherever our customers need. Throughout the bank’s history we have been at the forefront of customer service in Oman and we are delighted to further reinforce this with our ‘We come to you’ service which gives customers the flexibility of opening a bank account without the limitation of banking hours.”

UK set to ban Huawei from 5G



Pedestrians walk past an advertisement promoting the 5G data network at a mobile phone store in London.

— Reuters

Bank Nizwa’s mobile app offers money transfer feature



MUSCAT: Bank Nizwa's mobile app recently introduced a new feature that allows customers to make local as well as international transfers through a simple, fast, and secure channel to their loved ones.

For local transfers, customers can avail of this service to make instant transfers to any bank in Oman round-the-clock. Keeping it hassle-free, registering the beneficiary does not involve any lengthy process or even the beneficiary's account number. To initiate the

transaction, only the beneficiary's card number needs to be added under the 'Instant Transfer Within Oman' option. Once the transfer is executed, the funds are debited instantly from the customer's account, and the beneficiary can be assured of an immediate credit.

“At an age when everything is going digital, we want to make it easier for our customers to carry out essential transactions through our mobile application. We understand the

importance of being able to transfer funds easily, quickly, and securely, and want to make our financial services more accessible to our customers. With the newly added feature, transferring money is now just a matter of a few clicks on the smart phone device,” said Mujahid Said Al Zadjaly, General Manager IT & Operation at Bank Nizwa.

MEDC offers convenience with Green Bill



MUSCAT: Muscat Electricity Distribution Company (MEDC) is urging its customers in Muscat Governorate to take advantage of the electricity bill service “Green Bill” by registering and requesting this bill on the company’s website or contacting the call center on the

of the landlord or tenant are updated in the company's billing system. It also enables the customer to obtain an electronic bill through text messages or e-mail.

The monthly electricity bills are available for everyone electronically only, through multiple electronic

channels, including: the company's website: www.medcoman.com; Instant chat with Noor via WhatsApp on: 72727770; the company's mobile application: MEDC MyAccount; mobile apps: ONEIC Bill & Pay or OIFC Khedmah; and local bank mobile applications.

One of the advantages of this service is that the data



A man walks past the sign of "Google for India", the company's annual technology event in New Delhi, in this file photo. — Reuters

India IT hub locks down as virus ravages UK, Singapore economies

BANGALORE: India's IT hub Bangalore was set to go into a new week-long lockdown on Tuesday as the number of coronavirus cases surged, while new economic figures from Singapore to Britain revealed the shocking extent of the damage wreaked by the global pandemic.

After imposing one of the world's strictest lockdowns in late March, India had been steadily easing rules to lessen the huge economic impact.

But infections have continued to soar, passing 900,000 on Monday with almost 24,000 deaths, according to health ministry figures that many experts say underplay the severity of the situation.

Bangalore, home to more than 13 million people, has emerged as a new hotspot and a seven-day lockdown in the southern city is set to begin at 8:00 pm (14:30 GMT).

FIRMS IN BANGALORE'S LIFEBLOOD IT

SECTOR HANDLING THE BACK-OFFICE

OPERATIONS OF GLOBAL CORPORATIONS CAN

OPERATE, BUT WITH ONLY 50 PER CENT OF STAFF

ALLOWED ON PREMISES AT ANY ONE TIME.

Transport will be banned except for emergencies and only shops selling essential items allowed to open.

Firms in Bangalore's lifeblood IT sector handling the back-office operations of global corporations can operate, but with only 50 per cent of staff allowed on premises at any one time.

The western city of Pune has imposed a fresh lockdown after reporting a record 1,333 new infections on Monday and other states, including Uttar Pradesh, home to 200 million people, have also introduced new restrictions.

Many countries have been reimposing restric-

tions as new infections spread like wildfire.

"There will be no return to the 'old normal' for the foreseeable future," said World Health Organization chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, warning that without governments adopting a comprehensive strategy, the situation would get "worse and worse and worse".

California drastically rolled back its reopening plans on Monday and ordered all indoor restaurants, bars and cinemas to close again as coronavirus cases soared across America's richest and most populous state.

Churches — as well as

gyms, shopping malls, hair salons and non-essential offices — must also shut indoor operations in half of the golden State's worst-hit and most densely populated counties, including Los Angeles.

"We're moving back into a modification mode of our original 'stay-at-home' order," said Governor Gavin Newsom, whose state was the first to close down in March, but began easing restrictions in May.

The move came as California reported 8,358 new daily coronavirus cases, bringing its total to nearly 330,000 including more than 7,000 deaths.

The bruising economic impact of the pandemic was starkly shown in Singapore, where the economy shrank more than 40 per cent in the second quarter, plunging the Southeast Asian financial and trading hub into recession for the first time in a decade. — AFP

SPORTS

ROCKETS GUARD WESTBROOK TESTS POSITIVE FOR COVID-19

HOUSTON: Houston Rockets guard Russell Westbrook said on Monday that he had tested positive for COVID-19 ahead of the team's departure to Orlando where the NBA plans to restart its season.

Westbrook, the 2017 Most Valuable Player and nine-time All-Star, said he was in quarantine and would only rejoin the squad when he was cleared.

"I tested positive for COVID-19 prior to my team's departure to Orlando," Westbrook, 31, said in a statement posted on Twitter.

"I'm currently feeling well, quarantined, and looking forward to rejoining my teammates when I am cleared. Thank you for all the well wishes and continued support.

Please take this virus seriously. Be safe. Mask up!"

Westbrook has been one of the Rockets' key players this season after his move from the Oklahoma City Thunder, averaging 27.5 points per game. The Rockets are currently the sixth seed in the Western Conference with a 40-24 record.

Twenty-two teams began arriving last week at the Disney ESPN Wide World of Sports complex in

Orlando, where they will be housed in a quarantined bubble to train ahead of the scheduled July 30 restart.

The NBA on Monday said 322 players were tested for COVID-19 since arriving on the campus on July 7 and two have returned confirmed positive tests while in quarantine.

Those players never cleared the mandatory 48-hour quarantine upon arrival and have

since left the campus to isolate at home or in isolation housing.

Since in-market testing began on July 1 before the players left for Orlando, 19 have tested positive, the league said.

Those players are staying in their so-called home markets and recovering until they are cleared under the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines and NBA rules for leaving home isolation and joining the campus.

Sacramento Kings forward Richaun Holmes on Monday apologised after he "briefly and accidentally" crossed the campus line to pick up a food delivery.

He is now in quarantine and can rejoin his team in eight days. — **Reuters**



SPORTS



OBA BOARD ANNOUNCES
NOVEMBER 17 AS DATE FOR
NEXT BOARD ELECTION

ADIL AL BALUSHI

MUSCAT: The Oman Basketball Association (OBA) Board of Directors held a virtual meeting on Tuesday. The online meeting was chaired by Dr Farid bin Khamis al Zadjali, OBA Chairman, and in the presence of all the board members.

OBA board discussed many essential topics and decided the date of the election for the next board period on November 17.

The chairperson and members agreed on establishment of a committee to prepare all the protocols required after the resumption of the sporting activities by a decision from the Supreme Committee. The meeting also addressed a set of essential topics including the date of the next annual



DR FARID BIN KHAMIS AL ZADJALI AFFIRMED IN A PREVIOUS PUBLISHED INTERVIEW THAT HE IS READY TO SUPPORT ANY QUALIFIED CANDIDATE FOR THE CHAIRMANSHIP POSITION IF HE HAS A FULL VISION AND PLAN TO DEVELOP THE STRATEGY OF BASKETBALL IN THE SULTANATE.

general meeting on August 19. The board discussed the FIBA rules and

regulations which was to be taken prior to the commencement of any events

and games and the board decided to follow this in line with the domestic health body directions.

Dr Farid affirmed in a previous published interview that he is ready to support any qualified candidate for the chairmanship position if he has a full vision and plan to develop the strategy of basketball in the Sultanate.

He mentioned that he will apply for the chairman position only in one case if there are no competent personnel and without detailed mission on the future of the sport. The existing chairman of OBA completed the eighth year in his position as chairman of OBA and would like to continue with the previous built work and push Oman's basketball to better development.

Oman Badminton Committee receive international membership approval



ADIL AL BALUSHI

MUSCAT: The Oman Badminton Committee (OBC) recently received the approval of membership at the Badminton World Federation (BWF). The committee which set up earlier last year aimed to boost the badminton sports among the domestic clubs and juniors.

Since its formation, OBC had conducted a series of events in the previous and current year including the dedicated championships for students in schools and the clubs.

In last March, the committee had organised some elementary courses for the referees as an encouragement step to have more Omani umpires. More than 40 referees from Sultan Qaboos University (students) and sports teachers from Ministry of Education took part at the workshops. According to the OBC's plan for this year, there were many open championships and events scheduled but most of them postponed and cancelled due to



the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and OBC board will review the new schedules and dates after resuming the sporting activities.

Commenting on joining as an official member at the BWF family, Dr Badriya al Haddabi, chairman of Oman Badminton Committee, affirmed that being a part of the BWF was one of our top priority since formation of the committee last year.

"I believe it's a significant step for our forthcoming work to spread the badminton sports in the Sultanate and expand further in our next plans and strategies."

Definitely, we as a committee will be much closer

now with BWF and will attend the AGM to receive all the recent updates in the rules and regulations of the sports. Moreover, it will be a golden opportunity to have better exposure with the members from different parts of the world and learn from their experience. It is a new horizon for the committee to develop further and take more participations at the regional and international level," the OBC chairperson added.

The chief of OBC pointed out that the committee will seek for membership approvals at the Asian and Arabian level as well in the next period. "This is our next step as we are trying



I BELIEVE IT'S A
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BADMINTON SPORTS
IN THE SULTANATE
AND EXPAND FURTHER
IN OUR NEXT PLANS
AND STRATEGIES

DR BADRIYA
AL HADDABI,
CHAIRMAN OF
OMAN BADMINTON
COMMITTEE

to expand our relations with all the federations and learn from them.

Another target that the committee is working to see our domestic teams are impressing at the abroad level and raising the national flag," she concluded.

SPORTS



‘CITY CAN’T AFFORD TO LOOK BEYOND REAL IN EUROPE’

LONDON: Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola said on Friday he was not looking ahead to a potential Champions League quarterfinal tie against Juventus because any loss of focus could result in elimination by Real Madrid in the last 16.

City lead Real 2-1 heading into the return leg at the Etihad Stadium on August 7 and would face Cristiano Ronaldo's Juve in the quarterfinals if both teams were to progress. The Italians are 1-0 down versus Olympique Lyonnais from the first leg in France.

"In this organisation there is no one who knows Real better than me. They are the dominant team in the Champions League and we have to focus on

them," Guardiola told reporters ahead of Saturday's Premier League clash against Brighton & Hove Albion.

"We think about Real. If we think about the next step when we are playing against the king of this competition, they will put us out." Guardiola confirmed Argentine striker Sergio Aguero, who had knee surgery in Barcelona last month, would be unavailable for the fixture against the 13-time European champions.

The club's record goalscorer limped off with a knee injury in last month's 5-0 Premier League home win over Burnley. City's appeal against a two-year suspension from European football was heard last month at the

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**PEP
GUARDIOLA,
MANCHESTER
CITY MANAGER**

Court of Arbitration of Sport (CAS) and Guardiola was confident the UEFA ban will be overturned when the decision is announced on Monday.

"The intention every season is to play in the Champions League and do the best possible. It is not about what will happen on Monday," he said.

"I'm confident because I saw the arguments of the club that next season we will be there but we have to wait and after I give my opinion or the club will give their statement."

A win at Brighton would confirm City's berth in the top four and snap a run of three straight league defeats on the road — the worst away run in Guardiola's managerial career. — **Reuters**

FEATURES

MANDALA ART: INSPIRED BY CULTURE, RELIGION, AND A LOVING FAMILY

As old as time, Mandala Art has spiritual and ritualistic symbolism as a representation of the universe, and there is significant belief throughout many Asian cultures that encouraged by the kaleidoscopic art form, guides one on a transformative journey to a happier life. Reetu Jaitly works away at her artistry, drawing her inspiration from the traditional Indian Mandala art form... **page 20**



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duty in a chic restaurant
in virus-hit Montreal



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guests as they reopen under
new COVID-19 guidelines



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FEATURES

Mandala Art: Inspired by culture, religion, and a loving family

RAY PETERSEN

Nestled on the outskirts of the old capital of Nizwa, Reetu Jaitly works away at her artistry, drawing her inspiration from the traditional Indian Mandala art form, her husband Sandeep and daughter, Jahnavi.

As old as time, Mandala Art has spiritual and ritualistic symbolism as a representation of the universe, and there is significant belief throughout many Asian cultures that encouraged by the kaleidoscopic art form, guides one on a transformative journey to a happier life. Jaitly herself phrased it as, "A centering space for the self and the soul, an art therapy tool for making order out of disorder" while she added that her art is also strongly influenced by the Madhubani art form, which uses brighter colors, and has a significant focus on Hindu deities and nature.

Born in Delhi, the artist had always enjoyed art when she was young, drawing, painting, and doing pottery, however as the wife of a busy hospitality CEO, she had put her artistic thoughts aside. She continues her story, "Sandeep and Jahnavi have always encouraged and pushed me to challenge and rediscover myself and restart my artistic journey. Then, when my husband went to Germany on business, he returned from Germany with a gift of artists supplies that rekindled the desire."

"At the same time Jahnavi travelled abroad to study and encouraged me to use my leisure time artistically," so she delved further into the Mandala perspective. "I was fascinated by its designs, its sense of forming order out of disorder, as the different strokes, textures and patterns initially appear chaotic, but order and beauty eventuates, which is pleasing to the eye."

The artist varies her materials, and her painting base, sometimes an easel, sometimes a table or bench, and likes to listen to relaxing music while she works, saying, "It helps me relax, yet concentrate my body and mind." Questioned as to the origins of each piece she responded, "It is a mix of various things, my art form is basically derived from Indian folk art and mythology, while some ideas come from work by other artists, and as I begin to draw lots of things keep forming in my mind which I then translate to paper."

Jaitly enjoys reading, loves to travel and experience different cultures, and is also passionate about cooking, and when prompted as to what she wants, and gets from her art, she responded that the detail and minutiae of her art are like "relaxation therapy, which gives me contentment, fulfillment, happiness, satisfaction, and an inner peace of mind." Truly then, this artist is achieving the spiritual and artistic objectives of the art form.



FEATURES

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



faizahmxd • Follow



Bidiyah Desert Camp



haani_saleh • Follow



Tharmad, Al Bāṭinah, Oman



sooraj.jayaraj • Follow



Salalah, Oman



Mannequins do double duty in a chic restaurant in virus-hit Montreal

IN ONE MONTREAL restaurant, patrons are getting a fashion-food two-for-one: Mannequins placed at tables not only ensure social distancing but also sport chic outfits that can be purchased to benefit charity.

With Quebec province at the forefront of Canada's coronavi-

rus pandemic, businesses have been reopening cautiously.

Le Monarque, a fashionable restaurant in Old Montreal, reopened its doors just a few days ago — but not without putting some creative safety measures in place first.

“We wanted to give customers

more space,” chef and owner Jeremie Bastien said. “But we didn't want to remove tables or put up Plexiglas panels.”

BRINGING WORLDS TOGETHER

So when Le Monarque fired up its ovens a few days ago, it took several steps to ensure

social distancing.

The idea of filling some seats with mannequins, thus providing separation between human clients, came from the team behind the Sarah Pacini clothing line, including prominent Quebec menswear designer Philippe Dubuc.

“We wanted to make a stylish, high-end installation because we are bringing two worlds together, those of fashion and gastronomy,” said Dubuc, adding, “I think these two worlds have always been close.”

The restaurant's 29 mannequins all sport Sarah Pacini and Philippe Dubuc designs. They are meant to be “visually beautiful,” both inspired by and fitting in with their elegant surroundings.

“We are there, of course, to create and market our clothing,” Dubuc said. “But we are also there because our job is to make people dream.”

SILENT AUCTION

Nassim Habashi, who was enjoying lunch at Le Monarque, approved, saying, “I think it's a wonderful idea both to mark the separation between tables and to make the atmosphere much more pleasant, given the current situation.”

At the end of each meal clients are given a gift certificate redeemable in Sarah Pacini and Philippe Dubuc outlets.

Chef Bastien says the partnership has been “very advantageous” for both sides. But he stresses that it is about more than just “creating distance or dressing up the space.”

The idea, he said, was to “go a bit deeper (and) figure out what we can do to help the people around us who have suffered during the pandemic.”

The mannequins' clothes are not yet for sale. But restaurant patrons will eventually have a chance to take part in a “silent auction” and purchase the clothing they see — with all profits going to charities.— **AFP**

FEATURES



I am at home, what about you?

EVER SINCE THE novel coronavirus reached Cuba, a tall cardboard box with arms and legs can be seen tottering around a Havana suburb, popping into the bakery or butchers, or browsing the newspaper stand.

This is Feridia Rojas, 82, who decided to build and wear mobile housing to shield herself from the virus that is particularly deadly to seniors in a country where personal protective equipment is not sold at stores.

"I am at home, what about you?" reads a message on her box, in a witty nod to Cuba's coronavirus slogan "Stay at home."

The widower, whose daughters both live in the United States, said that with no one to run her errands she had to find a way to do so safely by herself, illustrating the resourcefulness and humor for which Cubans are renowned.

"I was worried about the asymptomatic cases who

could cough just as I passed," she said. "So I thought: I'll do a little house with a cardboard box and wear it."

The retired Cuban nurse salvaged the box from the pharmacy in her Palatino neighborhood and cut arm holes and a window for her face that she covered in clear plastic.

On top, she glued cake boxes to make it look more like a house with a roof than a flat-topped apartment building.

"She's very creative," chuckled her neighbor Zayda Echemendia, adding that Rojas still helped locals with injections at home and the like.

While her mobile home may be less necessary as Cuba's outbreak appears to have come under control, Rojas said it still provided necessary comic relief.

"In the midst of this pandemic, this stress and anxiety all the time, my little home makes people laugh," she said.—Reuters

Oman hotels welcome guests as they reopen under new COVID-19 guidelines



HOTELS ALL OVER the country are reopening and welcoming guests after the country imposed lockdown and closure which lasted for nearly three months.

In Jabal Akhdhar, Sahab Resort and Spa opened on July 4th together with other luxury hotel and resorts brand under Al Nahda Hotels and Resorts portfolio which included Dunes by Al Nahda and Al Nahda Resort and Spa.

The hotels are opened with strict adherence to the guidelines released by the Omani government. The health and safety of all guests will continue to be a priority.

Based on expert advice and guidelines from the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the Government of Oman, the three hotels offer guests a minimal contact experience with the utmost safety, and health and wellbeing put into mind. The following initiatives will be undertaken:

- ARRIVAL, CHECK-IN AND FRONT DESK OPERATIONS**
To ensure a smooth and seamless check-in and departure, staff have been trained to deliver a high standard of service with minimal physical contact. Guests will receive a temperature check upon arrival and daily throughout their stay and staff have been trained to identify any guests with respiratory symptoms. All luggage will be disinfected as will each 4x4 vehicle between the guest arrival and departure
- WELLNESS AND CARE COMMITMENTS**
Staff will provide guests with safety amenities such as mask, gloves and sanitizers to guests upon request.

- PUBLIC AREAS**
Staff will frequently disinfect and sanitise all public areas using cleaning products that comply with the stringent WHO and Omani government guidelines
Hand sanitation dispensers at points of entrance in all public outlets

- HOUSEKEEPING SERVICES**
In addition to the twice-daily housekeeping service, each room will be cleaned and there will be a 24-hour vacancy period between each guest arrival to ensure each room is kept scrupulously clean and hygienic. All surfaces, including identified high touchpoints such as door handles, drawers, TV remote and bedside tables will be cleaned and disinfected daily.